

# OPEC, Non-OPEC Oil Producers Reaffirm Commitment to Production Cut

HOUSTON - The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and some non-OPEC oil producers reaffirmed their commitment to oil production cut reached last year.

To deal with the oil glut and help stabilize oil prices, OPEC and non-OPEC nations, including Russia and 10 other countries, agreed in November 2016 to trim production by 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd), which has stabilized oil prices above 50 U.S. dollars per barrel. The accord became effective on Jan. 1, 2017 and runs until July of this year.

Saudi Arabia Oil Minister Khalid Al-Falih told the CER-AWeek conference, an annual international gathering of en-



ergy industry leaders, experts, government officials and policy makers, that he and his counterparts from other countries were all committed to the pact.

"All of us realize that such an expanded network of producers with a larger share of global production is the only way to achieve a constructive, stable market for all," he said. Al-Falih noted that the timing of OPEC cutting production to stabilize oil prices without the contribution of the non-OPEC nations are gone.

Saudi Arabia would not bear the burden of the oil production cuts and all the 24 partners in the accord would have to pull their weight, he added. As for ... (More on P4)... (21)

## Poland Urges EU to Reject Tusk Presidency

WARSAW - Poland's prime minister on Wednesday stressed her opposition to compatriot Donald Tusk's re-election as EU president on the eve of a European summit overshadowed by the row.

The rightwing Beata Szydlo accused the liberal Tusk of having "brutally violated" the rule of "political neutrality" by becoming involved in domestic political disputes. The attack on Tusk, made in a letter to governments of the 28-member bloc, came a day ahead of a Brussels summit where leaders were expected to rubberstamp a new two-

year mandate for the former Polish premier.

Since winning power in October 2015 elections, Szydlo's right-wing Law and Justice (PiS) government has pushed through a string of controversial reforms that triggered mass protests at home and an EU threat of sanctions over rule of law violations.

"We can't allow a dangerous precedent where the democratically elected government of a member country is politically attacked by the president of the European Council," Szydlo said in the letter, stopping short of citing Tusk by name. (AFP)

## Tusk Closing in on 2<sup>nd</sup> Term as EU Council President

BRUSSELS - Donald Tusk is closing in on a second term as the European Union's Council President despite fierce opposition from his native Poland, whose most influential politician is a bitter rival of the former prime minister.

Tusk's 2 1/2-year term for one of the EU's most prestigious jobs - as the chairman of summits of the bloc's 28 leaders - ends May 31. An EU summit is due to elect the

president Thursday. Poland's nationalist government, which has often been at odds with Brussels and EU partners, has proposed little-known Polish EU lawmaker Jacek Saryusz-Wolski to replace Tusk.

But by Wednesday, diplomats from several member nations said it was clear that Warsaw had little or no support while Tusk had strong backing. (AP)

## Head of UN Refugee Agency Voices Concern about New U.S. Rules

UNITED NATIONS - The UN high commissioner for refugees, Filippo Grandi, on Tuesday voiced his concern about the new U.S. rules, known as the Executive Order signed on Monday by U.S. President Donald Trump, stressing the need to protect people fleeing deadly violence.

"Following the signing of the new Executive Order on U.S. refugee resettlement, UNHCR (the UN refugee agency) has underscored that refugees are ordinary people forced to flee war, violence and persecution in their home

countries and are in urgent need of life-saving assistance and protection," Farhan Haq, the deputy UN spokesman, quoting Grandi as saying at a daily news briefing.

Commenting on the Executive Order, Grandi said that "the imperative remains to provide protection for people fleeing deadly violence, and we are concerned that this decision, though temporary, may compound the anguish for those it affects." UNHCR says it is ready to engage constructively with the U.S. Administration to ensure



all refugee programs meet the highest standards for safety and security," Haq said.

The new executive order prevents nationals of six Muslim countries from entering the United States, excluding Iraq from the list of a previous ban. The new document maintained a 90-day ban on nationals of Syria, Yemen, Sudan, Libya, Iran and Somalia from entering the United States, effective from March 16. (Xinhua)

## Majority of French See Le Pen's Far-Right Party Threat to Democracy: Poll

PARIS - A majority of French voters see presidential candidate Marine Le Pen's National Front party as a threat to democracy, a Kantar Sofres-Onepoint poll released on Tuesday showed.

According to the survey, 58 percent of respondents believed the anti-immigrant and eurosceptic party represents a danger to democracy, up from 47 percent recorded in 2013. Only 19 percent of them said they are in favor of Le Pen presidency for the next five years, with a minority endorsing her pro-

posals to abandon euro and give employment priority to French citizens over legal migrants.

However, a third of people approve its idea mainly in relation with security, the poll figures showed.

"The National Front remains in a certain dynamics after the electoral successes of the European election in 2014 and the regional ones in 2015. Although, the so-called 'glass ceiling' that prevents National Front candidates from being elected to important executive job seems to be maintained,"



Carine Marce, associate director at Kantar Public said. With the conservative contender Francois Fillon's bid in turmoil due to a scandal over his wife's job, and centrist Emma-

nuel Macron's policy untested, most polls see Le Pen is very likely to top the first round on April 23, but consistently predict her losing in the runoff. (Xinhua)

## Germany Urges Turkey to Rebuild Friendship

BERLIN - Germany on Wednesday sought to end a bad-tempered row with Turkey, stressing their long-standing friendship and urging Ankara to work towards restoring frayed ties.

NATO allies Ankara and Berlin have been locked in a new dispute over the past week after several local authorities in Germany blocked rallies by Turkish ministers.

The row is the latest in a long list of problems that have plagued relations and comes just after Ankara's arrest of a journalist



for German daily Die Welt that sparked consternation in Berlin.

On Sunday, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan raised the stakes when he told a rally in Istanbul that the blocking of public appear-

ances by his ministers was "not different from the Nazi practices of the past". German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel, after hosting his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu for talks, ... (More on P4)... (22)

## Iraqi PM Pledges to Fight IS Militants to the End

BAGHDAD - Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said Wednesday that Iraq will continue striking the Islamic State (IS) militants in neighboring countries to protect Iraqi cities.

"I respect the sovereignty of other states, and won't hesitate to strike the positions of terrorists in the neighboring countries. We will keep fighting them," said Abadi in the city of Sulaimaniya in Iraq's northern semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan.

"I say, we want to protect Iraq and its citizens and we want cooperation with the neighboring countries, because there (in neighboring countries) are terrorists send car bombs to Baghdad and other Iraqi cities to carry out terrorist acts," Abadi said in a televised speech. On Feb. 24, Abadi ... (More on P4)... (23)

## Steady, Healthy China-U.S. Ties Benefit Both Countries, Whole World

BEIJING - China and the United States should make concerted efforts to maintain the steady and healthy development of their relations in the face of new challenges, observers have said.

Speaking to reporters Wednesday during a press conference on the sidelines of China's ongoing annual parliamentary session, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said the China-U.S. relationship is transitioning steadily and developing in a positive direction through intense communication and joint efforts of both sides.

"As long as we act on the consensus reached between our presidents, follow the principle of no conflicts and no confrontation, mutual respect and win-win cooperation, there is no reason why China and the United States cannot become excellent partners," he added. Observers believe that achieving the smooth transition of bilateral ties and ensuring the healthy development of China-U.S. relations are not only in the fundamental interests of both peoples, but also exerting a positive effect on the promotion of world peace, stability and development.

### NEW CHALLENGES

China-U.S. relations are facing new challenges as populism in the West is picking up, the anti-globalization trend is surging, the international forces are taking on new faces, and the international order is restructuring. Inside the United States, anti-globalization and isolationism are also on the rise. (Xinhua)

## Nieghbor News

### China Willing to Deepen Cooperation with ASEAN: FM

BEIJING - China is willing to work with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to pursue greater mutual benefit and intensify cooperation on connectivity and production capacity, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said Wednesday.

"We will make sure our peoples benefit from the upgraded China-ASEAN Free Trade Area as soon as possible and wrap up the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiation at an early date," Wang told a press conference on the sidelines of the national legislature's annual session.

Noting that this year marks the 50th anniversary of ASEAN's

founding, Wang said China will support the Philippines in fulfilling its responsibilities as the ASEAN rotating chair and help ASEAN build its community.

China will join hands with ASEAN to ensure the China-ASEAN tourism cooperation year a success, and strive to reach the target of 30 million mutual travels of their people by 2020, the foreign minister said.

Launched in November 2012, the RCEP talks involve 10 members of the ASEAN and its six major trading partners - China, Japan, South Korea, India, New Zealand and Australia - with an aim of facilitating expansion of regional trade and investment. (Xinhua)

### With CPEC in Full Swing, World Sets Sights on Pakistan

BEIJING - Pakistan is poised to take the center-stage in the world trade after the operationalization of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which has become the intersection where many transit trade routes converge connecting Russia with Central Asia, an opinion piece published on 'China.org.cn' said on Tuesday.

According to opinion writer, The Belt and Road (B&R) initiative kicked off with the CPEC, which is the first of its six corridors and the linchpin of the strategy, as it unlocks Central Asia, connects to Xinjiang, leads down to Gwadar port and then onwards to Africa, Iran

and the Middle East. Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed the B&R Initiative in late 2013. It comprises the "Belt," which is a network of roads across the world, and "the Road" which is actually a network of shipping lanes and ports. All this economic activity has also brought about a major geopolitical realignment in the form of the China-Russia-Pakistan power trioka, an equation which provides economic benefit while it addresses mutual security concerns regarding ISIS in Afghanistan. It also consolidates the entire region vis-a-vis the new dimension of U.S.-India ties. (Monitoring Desk)

### Iran Accuses US, UK of Seeking 'To Create Crisis'

TEHRAN - A senior official in Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards on Wednesday accused the United States of provoking tensions after two separate incidents in the Gulf last week.

"A US Navy ship crossing the Strait of Hormuz changed its international route and approached to within 550 meters (600 yards) of Revolutionary Guards' boats in an unprofessional way," Mehdi Hashemi told the Guard's website Sepahnews.

He said actions by the United States and the United Kingdom in recent days showed they have "harmful, illegiti-

mate and provocative objectives."

"Not only do they not want stability and security in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz, but they seek to create tensions and a crisis," he said.

The Pentagon on Monday blasted the "unprofessional" behavior of the Iranian navy.

It said an Iranian frigate last Thursday came within 150 yards (137 meters) of the civilian-crewed USNS Invincible.

Then on Saturday, a number of small assault craft came within 350 yards of the Invincible and other ships. (AP)

### Turkmenistan Hosting Seminar on Caspian Sea Issues

ASHGABAT -The International Ocean Institute (IOI) with the support of Turkmenistan's Foreign Ministry and the State Enterprise on Caspian Sea Issues under the President of Turkmenistan is holding a seminar in Avaza, titled "Caspian Sea - sustainable development and management", which will last

until March 16, the Turkmen government said in a message.

Experts of various ministries and authorities of Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan, as well as international experts - scientific consultants of the IOI in the field of the maritime economy, ... (More on P4)... (25)

### S. Korean Court to Rule on President Park's Impeachment on Friday

SEOUL - South Korea's constitutional court said Wednesday that it will make a final ruling on President Park Geun-hye's impeachment later this week.

The ruling on whether to permanently remove Park from office or reinstate her will be made at 11 a.m. local time (0200 GMT) on Friday, the court said on its website.

It will be broadcast live as public attention is centered on the impeachment. The pleading sessions had also been aired live through the court's website. The motion to impeach President Park was passed on Dec. 9 through the National Assembly by an overwhelming support. If six out of the ... (More on P4)... (24)

### NATO, U.S. Slap Kosovo's Move to Create National Army

PRISTINA - Kosovo signaled on Wednesday it would turn its security force into a national army, plans opposed by its ethnic Serb minority that drew immediate criticism from NATO and the territory's biggest foreign supporter, the United States.

Nearly two decades after the Kosovo war, relations between Belgrade and Pristina remain strained and Serbia continues to regard Kosovo, which declared independence in 2008, as a renegade province. The Kosovo government ordered the creation of a national army three years ago but Serbian deputies said they would block the required

changes to the constitution.

On Wednesday parliament indicated it would bypass that opposition by preparing amendments to an existing law that would allow the Kosovo Security Forces (KSF) to buy heavy weapons, effectively turning it into an army.

NATO, which has some 4,500 soldiers stationed in Kosovo, said the plan raised serious concerns.

"I made clear that unilateral steps such as these are unhelpful," the Atlantic alliance's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said in a statement after talks with the territory's president and prime minister. (Reuters)