



Interview: Belt and Road Initiative provides Australia with new opportunities

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by Xinhua Writers Xu Haijing, Zhao Bo

CANBERRA, May 11 (Xinhua) -- The China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative provides opportunities for its cooperation with Australia, especially in developing 17 million hectares of arable land in northern Australia, a former official has said.

Andrew Robb, a former Australian federal minister for trade and investment, will attend the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation scheduled for Sunday and Monday in Beijing.

Robb, now an advisory board member of Australia-China Belt and Road Initiative, an Australian government-supported policy institute, said: "We always, at least since European settlement, needed money and expertise from foreign countries in the last 200 years. We still need them today as much as we ever have."

"China is at the stage, who not only got capital, informed capital, but also expertise they can bring," he said.

Robb cited Australia's largest construction company John Holland, which was acquired by China Communications Construction Company.

The cooperation between businesses of the two countries would take the Australian businesses to a lot more areas, he said.

"It would also help build mutual relationships. Once you have mutual trust and understanding, you will get opportunities not only in China, not only in Australia, but also in the Belt and Road countries and around the world," he noted.

"What we see from the initiative is almost a next stage where we companies from Australia feel comfortably to approach Chinese companies to do partnership to jointly develop roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, in the region around us. We can help both our countries further develop all those countries around us. And we will benefit at the same time," he said.

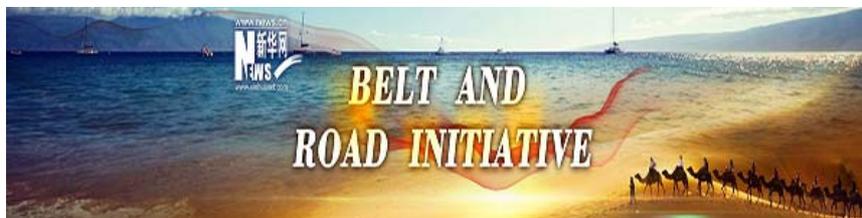
Robb added that the Belt and Road Initiative is not only about projects, but also looks at balanced development in countries.

"Soft infrastructures, schools, hospitals, aged care facilities ... Australian companies have great strength in many of these areas, including health services, education services," he said.

Jean Dong, CEO of Australia-China Belt and Road Initiative, also said Australia's world-leading public-private partnership development experience and membership of the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank boast immense opportunities and huge potential in cooperation by jointly developing the international capital market with China.

"Australia's financial services, professional & management consulting, and technical, trade-related businesses offer both excellent reputations worldwide and embedded participation in Southeast Asia, which could play an important role in implementing mutually acceptable Belt and Road projects," she said.

Dong, who will also attend the Belt and Road forum in Beijing, said the Australian government and business sector should do more to explore ways of engaging in the Belt and Road Initiative in terms of policy coordination, financial integration, infrastructure connectivity, unimpeded trade and people-to-people bond.



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