

## China 'deeply regrets' Panama's exit of Belt and Road initiative

Panama has been under pressure from the Trump administration in recent weeks over its relations with China and the Panama Canal.

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Credit: ACP

China's Assistant Foreign Minister Zhao Zhiyuan met with Ambassador of Panama to China Miguel Humberto Lecaro Barcenas and lodged solemn representations with the Panamanian side over its plan to terminate the Memorandum of Understanding on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Zhao said, [China](#) deeply regrets Panama's recent announcement that it will terminate the MoU on the BRI. Under the framework of Belt and Road cooperation, China-Panama practical cooperation in various fields has developed rapidly and achieved a series of fruitful results, bringing tangible benefits to Panama and its people.

More than 150 countries have actively participated in the Belt and Road cooperation, and the outcomes have benefited people of many countries, including [Panama](#), which was the first Latin American country to sign onto China's Belt and Road Initiative.

Zhao stressed that "China respects Panama's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and holds that all countries, big or small, are equal, and should respect each other and honour their commitments. China firmly opposes the United States wantonly undermining China-Panama relations and smearing and sabotaging Belt and Road cooperation through the means of pressuring and threatening.

"China-Panama relations never target any third party and should not be disrupted by any third party. China hopes that the Panamanian side will eliminate external interruption and make the right decision while keeping in mind the overall bilateral relations and the long-term interests of the people of the two countries."

**Related:** [Are Panama and Trump on a collision course over the Canal?](#)

Miguel Humberto Lecaro Barcenás said that Panama attaches great importance to its relations with China and will report to the Panamanian government immediately.

Earlier in February, Panamanian President announced that Panama would not renew the Belt and Road Initiative MoU signed with China as well as the termination of the related agreement ahead of schedule right after a meeting with US officials.

The move by Panama to exit the BRI followed claims by [US](#) President Trump that the [Panama Canal](#) was under Chinese control.