

External Relations

As a non-sovereign special administrative region, Macao enjoys wide-ranging and close relationships with most countries and regions around the world. According to the Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region, Macao may develop bilateral relations with other countries or regions, and participate in international organisations and multinational treaties on its own under the name ‘Macao, China’ in the areas of commerce, trade, finance, aviation, communication, tourism, culture, technology and sport.

Consulates in Macao

By the end of 2022, 90 countries had established consular services in Macao or extended their consular services in Hong Kong to Macao, or had empowered them to execute consular duties in Macao.

Angola, Mozambique, the Philippines and Portugal are the four countries that have established a consulate general in Macao.

Sixty other countries have assigned their consulates general in Hong Kong to cover consular affairs in Macao, including several countries that may execute consular duties in Macao. These are: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Brunei, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, the Czech Republic, Dominican Republic, Egypt, the European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea, the State of Kuwait, Laos, Malaysia, Mexico, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Poland, Qatar, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, the Republic of Vanuatu, Venezuela, Vietnam and Zimbabwe. (Note: Antigua, Barbuda, Belarus, Samoa, the Bahamas and Denmark have not yet established consulates general in Hong Kong, but their agreements with China on provision or expansion of consulate services are still in force.)

Eight countries have appointed honorary consuls to Macao: Cape Verde, Estonia, Grenada, Mali, Nigeria, Peru, Tanzania and the United Kingdom. (Note: Bhutan, France, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Sri Lanka and Suriname have signed consular agreements with Macao, but their honorary consular posts in Macao are temporarily vacant.)

Eighteen countries with honorary consulates in Hong Kong cover or extend services to Macao: Côte d’Ivoire, Cyprus, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iceland, Kenya, Lithuania, Maldives, Morocco, Namibia, Norway, Rwanda, San Marino, Seychelles, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sudan and Uruguay.

Mutual Exemption from Visa Requirements

By October 2023, 144 countries and regions allow visa-free or visa-on-arrival entry to MSAR passport holders. In addition, 14 countries or regions give visa-free or

visa-on-arrival entry to holders of MSAR travel permits.

Macao and the European Union

Official relations between Macao and the EU have been steadily built on the foundation of the Macao-EC Trade and Cooperation Agreement signed in 1992. Macao has maintained good relations with the EU in terms of economic and trade affairs ever since the establishment of the MSAR. The Macao Economic and Trade Office at the Brussels headquarters of the EU seeks to enhance Macao's relationship with the organisation.

Under the agreement, both sides cooperate in industry, investment, science and technology, energy, information, training and other areas. Joint committees of both parties hold annual meetings to review the implementation of the agreement and discuss its future development. Macao and Brussels take turns to hold such meetings, and 23 such sessions had been held.

Since the agreement was signed, the EU has funded cooperative projects with Macao. The projects included: training for the tourism industry (1999-2001); a European studies programme (1999-2001); a services development programme (1999-2001); the Asia-Invest programme (2001 and 2002); the EU-Macao Legal Cooperation Programme: First Phase (2002-2007), Second Phase (2010-2013) and third Phase (2016-2019); the Training Scheme on Immigration Affairs (2006-2007); EU Trade information Cooperation Scheme (2009-2012); Training Scheme on Chinese-Portuguese Translation and Interpretation (2010-2014); Macao-EU Studies Programme (2012-2016); Training Cooperation on Chinese-Portuguese Translation and Interpretation (2016-2020); and the EU Horizon 2020 Scheme (2016-2020).

Also, joint projects inaugurated by Macao and the EU were: the Macao-Europe Centre for Advanced Tourism Studies (ME-CATS) and the Institute of European Studies of Macao.

In 2022, the total value of Macao's exports to the EU was 170 million patacas; while imports from the EU were worth 45.85 billion patacas.

Visa-free Access

At present, MSAR Passport holders have been allowed to remain for 90 days or six months without a visa in the 27 EU member countries that are signatories to the Schengen Agreement. These countries are: Denmark, Belgium, Lithuania, Spain, Hungary, Greece, Croatia, Poland, Finland, France, Latvia, Bulgaria, Ireland, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Slovak Republic, Austria, Italy, Cyprus, Estonia, Sweden, Portugal, Germany, Luxembourg, Romania and Malta.

To enhance relations with EU member countries and increase economic and trade relations with them, the first and second Chief Executive Edmund Ho led delegations to visit Portugal, France, Belgium and Germany in 2000, 2001 and 2004. During 2006, Edmund Ho led a delegation to Portugal and Belgium, including the EU headquarters in Brussels. In 2012, Chief Executive Chui Sai On led a delegation to

visit the EU. In April 2023, Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng led a delegation of government officials and entrepreneurs to visit Portugal, Luxemburg and Belgium in a bid to strengthen cooperation in trade, tourism, education and culture between Macao and the three countries.

Macao and Portugal

Since the establishment of the MSAR, Macao has remained on good terms with Portugal. The Macao Economic and Trade Representative Office in the Portuguese capital, Lisbon, further strengthens the relationship between Portugal and Macao.

The Agreement on Mutual Encouragement and Protection of Investment between the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China and the Portuguese Republic, and the Cooperation Framework Agreement between the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China and the Portuguese Republic, as well as the bilateral cooperation agreements between Macao and Portugal in the areas of administration and legal affairs, health care, technology, sports and audit have strengthened exchanges between the two parties. The agreements have promoted greater cooperation between the MSAR and Portugal in the areas of economics, finance, science, technology, culture, internal public security and justice.

In May 2014, Portuguese President Anibal Cavaco Silva visited Macao and signed the Amendment of the Cooperation Framework Agreement between the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China and the Portuguese Republic, to further enhance the mechanism for cooperation between the two places by changing the biennial bilateral meeting to an annual one.

In 2010, the Chief Executive of the third and fourth MSAR Governments, Chui Sai On, led a delegation to Portugal in 2010, 2016 and 2019 to strengthen bilateral ties in various fields.

Macao's imports from Portugal during 2022 totalled 278 million patacas. Its exports to Portugal totalled 831,000 patacas.

Macao and the United States

Since the Handover, interaction and cooperation between Macao and the United States have expressed readiness to promote trade and investment.

The value of Macao's gross exports to the United States during 2022 accounted for 610 million patacas, while Macao's total imports from the United States were valued at 9.59 billion patacas.

After the liberalisation of Macao's gaming industry, three US-based companies were granted casino concessions.

Macao and Portuguese-speaking Countries

Besides its close links with Portugal, Macao also has traditional and special relationships with other members of the community. It is the only Chinese city capable of developing special relationships with the Portuguese-speaking countries on four continents. As a result, Macao has the unique advantage of serving as an economic and trading bridge between China and Portuguese-speaking countries.

In the 12th, 13th and 14th Five-Year Plans, mainland China expressed explicit support for Macao's establishment of "One Centre, One Platform, One Base", the latter of which refers to a business and trade cooperation and services platform for China and Portuguese-speaking countries.

The central government also attaches importance to this role. It arranged for Macao to host the Ministerial Conference of the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries. The First Forum was held in October 2003. China and seven Portuguese-speaking countries sent government and business delegations to this major event. During the forum, ministerial-level officials of China and seven Portuguese-speaking countries signed the Economic and Trade Cooperation Action Plan. They agreed to establish a permanent secretariat for the forum in Macao.

In September 2006, Macao hosted the Second Ministerial Meeting of the Forum, with the theme "Deepening cooperation and developing together". Ministerial-level officials from China and seven Portuguese-speaking countries adopted and signed the Economic and Trade Cooperation Action Plan 2007-2009.

In November 2010, the third Ministerial Conference of the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries was held in Macao under the theme of "Advance Common Development Through Diversified Cooperation". Premier Wen Jiabao attended the event and delivered a keynote speech. Attendees representing different countries jointly signed the 2010-2013 Action Plan on Trade and Economic Cooperation at the conference.

In November 2013, the fourth Ministerial Conference of the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and the Portuguese-speaking Countries was held in Macao under the theme of "New Cycle, New Opportunities". Attendees representing different countries jointly signed the 2014-2016 Action Plan for Economic and Trade Cooperation at the conference. The action plan further reiterates the importance of Macao as a platform; proposes a professional development exhibition in Macao targeting markets in Portuguese-speaking countries; explores the establishment of a commercial and trade service centre in Macao for small and medium enterprises from the countries that attended the forum, as well as a food trading and distribution centre for Portuguese-speaking countries; and promotes Macao as a commercial arbitration centre for handling disputes between enterprises in China and Portuguese-speaking countries.

In October 2016, the fifth Ministerial Conference of the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and the Portuguese-speaking Countries was held in Macao, with the theme "Working towards Stronger Sino-Portuguese-speaking

Countries' Trade and Economic Relations – Combining Efforts, Jointly Building a Platform, Sharing Fruits of Development". Premier Li Keqiang attended the event, and delivered a keynote speech in which he announced 18 new measures for strengthening and deepening the economic and trade cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries. Attendees representing different countries jointly signed the Strategic Plan for Economic and Trade Co-operation (2017-2019) and the Memorandum of Understanding on Promoting Co-operation in Production Capacity.

On 10 April 2022, the Extraordinary Ministerial Meeting of the Forum for Economic and Trade Co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries was held in Beijing and Macao, both online and offline, under the theme "Cooperate to combat the pandemic, Collaborate for common development", with a congratulatory video message from Premier Li Keqiang. The Minister of Commerce and the ministers of the eight Portuguese-speaking countries signed a joint declaration and officially admitted Equatorial Guinea to the forum.

To strengthen sporting exchanges between Macao and Portuguese-speaking countries, Macao hosted the First Lusofonia Games in October 2006.

The Chief Executive of the first and second MSAR Governments, Edmund Ho, paid official visits to Mozambique and Brazil in 2002 and 2005, respectively.

During 2022, the value of Macao's exports to Portuguese-speaking countries was 1.7 million patacas, while imports from Portuguese-speaking countries were worth 1.06 billion patacas.

Engagement in and Support for the “Belt and Road” Initiative

Macao actively participates in and supports the development of the "Belt and Road" initiative to build a "Belt and Road" functional platform. Adhering to the needs of the nation and Macao's advantages, Macao fully leverages its platform advantage as an intersection of the country's dual economic cycle, and establishes diversified cooperation in investment and financing, with exhibitions and conventions as an entry point, while facilitating Macao's economic and trade relations with countries and regions along the "Belt and Road".

In 2022, the value of Macao's exports to "Belt and Road" countries/regions was 520 million patacas, while imports from "Belt and Road" countries/regions were worth 26.21 billion patacas.

The Government also remains committed to strengthening its relations with East Asia, particularly Southeast Asian countries in the area of trade and tourism cooperation.

The first- and second-term Chief Executive, Edmund Ho Hau Wah, led delegations to countries including Singapore, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, and Malaysia. The third- and fourth-term Chief Executive Chui Sai On led MSAR Government delegations for visits to Singapore, Cambodia and Thailand.

11/2022