

External Relations

The Central People's Government is responsible for the foreign affairs of the Macao SAR. When the MSAR was established, the Central People's Government set up the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macao Special Administrative Region, to handle foreign affairs issues related to Macao.

The Central People's Government also authorised Macao to manage certain external affairs in accordance with the regulatory framework stipulated in Chapter 7 of the Macao Basic Law.

As a non-sovereign region, Macao enjoys wide-ranging and close relationships with most countries and regions throughout the world. This is an advantage for Macao in its longstanding, extensive, direct, friendly and beneficial relationships, particularly those with European Union (EU) member states and Romance language-speaking countries.

To facilitate Macao's further development, the Government frequently conducts external activities and makes great efforts to foster interactions and collaboration with countries and regions around the world, in areas such as the economy, trade and culture.

Mutual Exemption from Visa Requirements

One of the Government's major tasks is to promote the Macao Passport and other travel permits. With the Central People's Government's support and assistance, it has made substantial progress in negotiating with other countries and regions to grant visa-free access to holders of Macao Passports and travel permits. By April 2023, a total of 144 countries and regions had agreed to grant visa-free access or visas on arrival to holders of Macao SAR Passports (see Appendix 9, "Visa-free Access for Holders of Macao SAR Passports and Travel Permits", for more details). In addition, 14 countries have agreed to grant visa-free access or visas on arrival to holders of MSAR travel permits.

The Government also grants visa-free access to nationals or citizens of 81 countries and regions (see Appendix 10, "Countries/Territories Granted Visa-free Access by the Macao SAR", for more details). Nationals or citizens of these countries and territories who are in possession of valid passports can stay in Macao for periods of 14-90 days. Visitors from certain countries, such as the United Kingdom, may be given permission to stay for up to six months.

Consulates in Macao

Under the provisions of Article 142 of the Macao Basic Law, the establishment of foreign consular and other official or semi-official missions in the MSAR is subject to approval by the Central People's Government. Consular and other official missions established in Macao before the Handover by states with formal diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China were allowed to remain. According to individual circumstances, consular and other official missions established in Macao by states with no formal diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China were allowed either to remain, or to change to semi-official missions. States not recognised by the People's Republic of China were only allowed to establish non-governmental institutions in the MSAR.

By the end of December 2022, various countries had reached agreements with the Macao SAR on establishing a total of 90 consular services in Macao or had extended the duties of their consulates general in Hong Kong to include Macao, or had empowered them to execute consular duties in Macao (see Appendix 8, “Countries Exercising Consular Jurisdiction in the Macao SAR”).

Angola, Mozambique, the Philippines and Portugal are the four countries (in alphabetical order, similarly hereinafter) 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.

International Organisations and Multilateral Treaties

As a modern international city, Macao participates in various international organisations and multilateral treaties. This helps it to maintain its unique position in the world and to develop external relations in areas such as economics, trade, finance, aviation, transportation, culture, education, environmental protection and health.

International Organisations

The principles in Articles 136 and 137 of the Macao Basic Law regarding the appropriate participation of Macao in international activities form the legal bases on which the Central People’s Government and the MSAR Government handle issues relating to Macao’s participation in international activities.

Since the establishment of the MSAR, the Central People’s Government has assisted and supported Macao’s participation in relevant international conferences and activities in accordance with the Macao Basic Law, and has also shown concern for and safeguarded Macao’s rights and interests in these international organisations.

The Government participates in intergovernmental organisations in one of two ways: 1. As a full member of the organisation concerned, with the identity of a separate region that undertakes international obligations and enjoys corresponding rights and interests; or 2. As an associate member (or affiliate member) or member without voting rights that speaks as “Macao, China”. Hence, Macao undertakes its international obligations and enjoys corresponding rights and interests, subject to certain conditions.

In addition, Macao attends meetings of other intergovernmental organisations as a delegation member of the Central People’s Government. Its delegates may express opinions on matters relevant to the MSAR in the name of “Macao, China”. Macao may also attend non-governmental, regional and specialist meetings of international organisations.

Following the establishment of the MSAR, Macao’s participation in international activities of non-governmental organisations should fall within the sphere of Macao’s autonomous affairs. Hence, such participation is left to Macao’s own discretion, and according to its needs.

During 2022, Macao attended several international virtual conferences as a member of Central People’s Government delegations, including:

- Exploration of the interests of members of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO);
- The 15th Session of the Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods;
- The Fifth Meeting of the Special Commission on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, 1993;
- Consideration of the Second and Third Combined Report of the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China on the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of the United Nations;
- Intersessional Meeting of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption;
- The 13th Session of the Implementation Review Group;
- The Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime;
- The 74th Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES);
- Kimberley Process Certification Scheme Plenary 2022;
- The 110th Session of the International Labour Conference;
- 2022 World Bank Group/International Monetary Fund Annual Meetings;
- The 75th Session of the World Health Assembly;
- The 66th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women of the United Nations;

- The 14th Annual Meeting of the International Regulatory Cooperation for Herbal Medicines of the World Health Organization (WHO-IRCH);
- The 41st Session of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Assembly; and
- The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Plenipotentiary Conference 2022.

Also, under the name “Macao, China”, Macao attended virtual international conferences including:

- The 12th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO);
- Online Seminar on the First Tax Administration Day of the Belt and Road Initiative on Tax Administration and Cooperation Mechanism;
- The 51st Annual Meeting of the Study Group on Asia-Pacific Tax Administration and Research;
- The 34th Joint Meeting and Regional Conference of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Commission for East Asia and the Pacific and the UNWTO Commission for South Asia;
- UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) Creative City of Gastronomy Conference;
- Asian Insurance Forum 2022;
- Asian Schools Football Federation (ASFF) General Assembly and Technical Committee Meeting 2022;
- Executive Board Meeting of the East Asian Region Branch of the International Council on Archives;
- The 40th Asian and Pacific Conference of Correctional Administrators (APCCA);
- The 41st General Assembly of the Olympic Council of Asia;
- The 54th Session of the ESCAP/WMO Typhoon Committee;
- The Annual General Assembly and the 29th AICEP Communications Forum of 2022; and
- The 78th Session of the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) of the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

International Treaties

Article 138 of the Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region stipulates the applicability of multilateral treaties to Macao; and this forms the legal and regulatory framework for the Central People’s Government and MSAR Government to implement multinational treaties applicable to Macao.

As of 2022, 740 multilateral treaties were applicable to Macao: 65 treaties on foreign affairs and national defence; 15 on civil aviation; 10 on customs; 23 on drugs; eight on economics and finance; 10 on education, science and technology, culture and sport; 44 on the environment and

conservation; six on health; 20 on human rights; nine on intellectual property; 16 on international crime; two on international trade; 34 on labour; 403 on maritime affairs; 10 on private international law; four on road traffic; 12 on postal affairs and telecommunications; and 49 on the establishment of international governmental organisations (see Appendix 11, “Multilateral Treaties Applicable to the Macao SAR”, for details).

In 2022, the Law Reform and International Law Bureau commented on six international treaties or amendments in accordance with Article 138 of the Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region. The Government also received notifications from the Central People’s Government regarding 29 international instruments applicable to the MSAR: eight multilateral treaties and 21 UN Security Council resolutions and/or sanction lists. It announced 41 international documents: 24 multilateral treaties, one bilateral treaty and 16 UN Security Council resolutions.

In addition, the MSAR Government has continued to follow up regarding the implementation of international treaties applicable to Macao, including through providing requested compliance materials, responses to questionnaires or feedback to international organisations such as the United Nations Human Rights Treaty Bodies and the Hague Conference on Private International Law. Regarding compliance with human rights treaties, the MSAR Government delegation participated in the United Nations committee review sessions on the implementation of the relevant provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Macao, and explained to the committees the legislative and administrative measures taken by the MSAR Government to implement the provisions of the two treaties.

In terms of international judicial cooperation, the Agreement on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons between the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China and the Federal Republic of Nigeria entered into force for both parties on 16 March 2022. This is the third agreement signed between Macao and a foreign country regarding transfer of sentenced persons, after similar agreements with Portugal and Mongolia.

In terms of inter-regional judicial cooperation, the Arrangements Concerning Mutual Assistance in Court-ordered Interim Measures in Aid of Arbitral Proceedings by Mainland China and the Macao Special Administrative Region, signed between the Government and the Supreme People’s Court, came into effect on 25 March 2022. The signing of the arrangements is an important measure for implementing the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and the Master Plan for the Development of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, and will better protect the legitimate rights and interests of arbitration parties, strengthen judicial cooperation between both sides in the area of civil and commercial arbitration, and serve the development of the Greater Bay Area and the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin.

The Law Reform and International Law Bureau attended or took part in 14 international conferences and events, as a member of the Central People’s Government delegations or under the name of “Macao, China”.

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 their agreement, Macao and the EU may cooperate in areas including industry, investment, science and technology, energy, information, and training. A joint committee established by both parties holds an annual meeting to review the implementation of the agreement and discuss its future development. The meeting venue alternates between Macao and Brussels, and 23 such sessions have been held to date.

Cooperative projects between EU and Macao have included: Training for the Tourism Industry (1999-2001); European Programme Scheme (1999-2001); Services Development Programme (1999-2001); Asia-Invest Programme (2001 and 2002); EU-Macao Legal Cooperation Programme: Phase One (2002-2007), Phase Two (2010-2013) and Phase Three (2016-2019); Immigration Services Training Programme (2006-2007); EU Business Information Cooperative Programme (2009-2012); Chinese-Portuguese Translation and Interpretation Training Programme (2010-2014); the EU Academic Programme (2012-2016); Chinese-Portuguese Translation and Interpretation Training Programme (2013-2016); Chinese-Portuguese Translation and Interpretation Training Cooperation (2016-2020); and Horizon 2020 (2016-2020).

Other 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.

The Business Cooperation Centre of Enterprise Europe Network Central China Macao Office (EENCC Macao Office) has provided useful information about Europe to SMEs in Macao, Hong Kong, the Pearl River Delta and neighbouring regions.

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

Currently, MSAR Passport holders are allowed to remain for 90 days or three months without a visa in the 27 EU member countries. These countries are: Denmark, Belgium, Lithuania, Spain, Hungary, Greece, Croatia, Poland, Finland, France, Latvia, Bulgaria, Ireland, Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Slovakia, 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-term Chief Executive Edmund Ho Hau Wah led delegations to visit Portugal, France, Belgium and Germany in 2000, 2001 and 2004. During 2006, Edmund Ho Hau Wah led a delegation to Portugal and Belgium, including the EU headquarters in Brussels. In 2012, the third- and fourth-term Chief Executive Chui Sai On led a delegation to the EU.

Macao and Portugal

Macao has remained on good terms with Portugal since the establishment of the MSAR. It has

established the Macao Economic and Trade Office in Lisbon, further strengthening the relationship between Portugal and Macao.

The Agreement on the Mutual Encouragement and Protection of Investment between the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China and the Portuguese Republic, the Cooperation Framework Agreement between the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China and the Portuguese Republic – as well as a series of specific cooperation protocols with Portugal, covering administration and justice, medicine and hygiene, science and technology, sports and auditing – have enhanced cooperation and communication between the two sides and promoted greater cooperation between Macao 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 to 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.

In 2010, 2016 and 2019, the third- and fourth-term Chief Executive Chui Sai On led delegations to Portugal.

Macao's imports from Portugal during 2022 totalled 278 million patacas, and its exports to Portugal totalled 831 thousand patacas.

Macao and the United States

Since the Handover, both 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 totalled 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 historical close links with Portugal, Macao also has traditional and special relationships with other members of the Portuguese-speaking 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 a platform for economic and trading cooperation 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", with "One Platform" referring to its role as a platform for business and trade cooperation and services for China and Portuguese-speaking countries.

The Central People's 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. 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, the Second Ministerial Meeting of the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries was held in Macao, 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.

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. 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-sized 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 various 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 first- and second-term Chief Executive, Edmund Ho Hau Wah, paid official visits to Mozambique and Brazil.

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. 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.



Arts and Cultural Festival Between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries





Encounter in Macao – Arts and Cultural Festival Between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries was introduced in 2018, laying the foundation for ongoing exchanges in Macao between China and Portuguese-speaking countries through annual engagement, thereby enhancing the development of Macao as a centre for cultural exchanges between China and Portuguese-speaking countries. The fourth edition of the Arts and Cultural Festival Between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries was held during October and November, with a series of major cultural events including the Lusofonia Festival and the Cultural Week of China and Portuguese-speaking Countries. It attracted participation by both local citizens and tourists. Macao is a meeting place for all, with engaging cultural and arts activities featuring the cream of Chinese and Portuguese cultures.