

## China expresses support for Asia-Pacific union proposal

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BEIJING -- China expressed its support Thursday for a proposal to create an Asia-Pacific union designed to boost cooperation in economic, security and political matters.

Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has called for creating a body similar to the European Union, saying it reflects the region's growing importance in the world. He wants the new union to be in place by 2020 and span the entire Asia-Pacific region, including the United States, Japan, China, India and Indonesia.

China backs any proposal seeking to enhance regional cooperation, Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang said.

"We hope countries in the Asia-Pacific can make joint efforts to enhance exchanges, political mutual trust and deepen mutually beneficial cooperation so as to promote common development," Qin said. "Any proposal that's in line with this goal, we will support it."

Rudd provided few details on the structure and purpose of what he called the Asia-Pacific Community.

However, the Australian leader said the organization would enhance the region's "fragmented" security and political cooperation, and could help resolve a number of regional conflicts, including the China-Taiwan rivalry, India-Pakistan tensions over Kashmir, and the divided Korean peninsula.

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