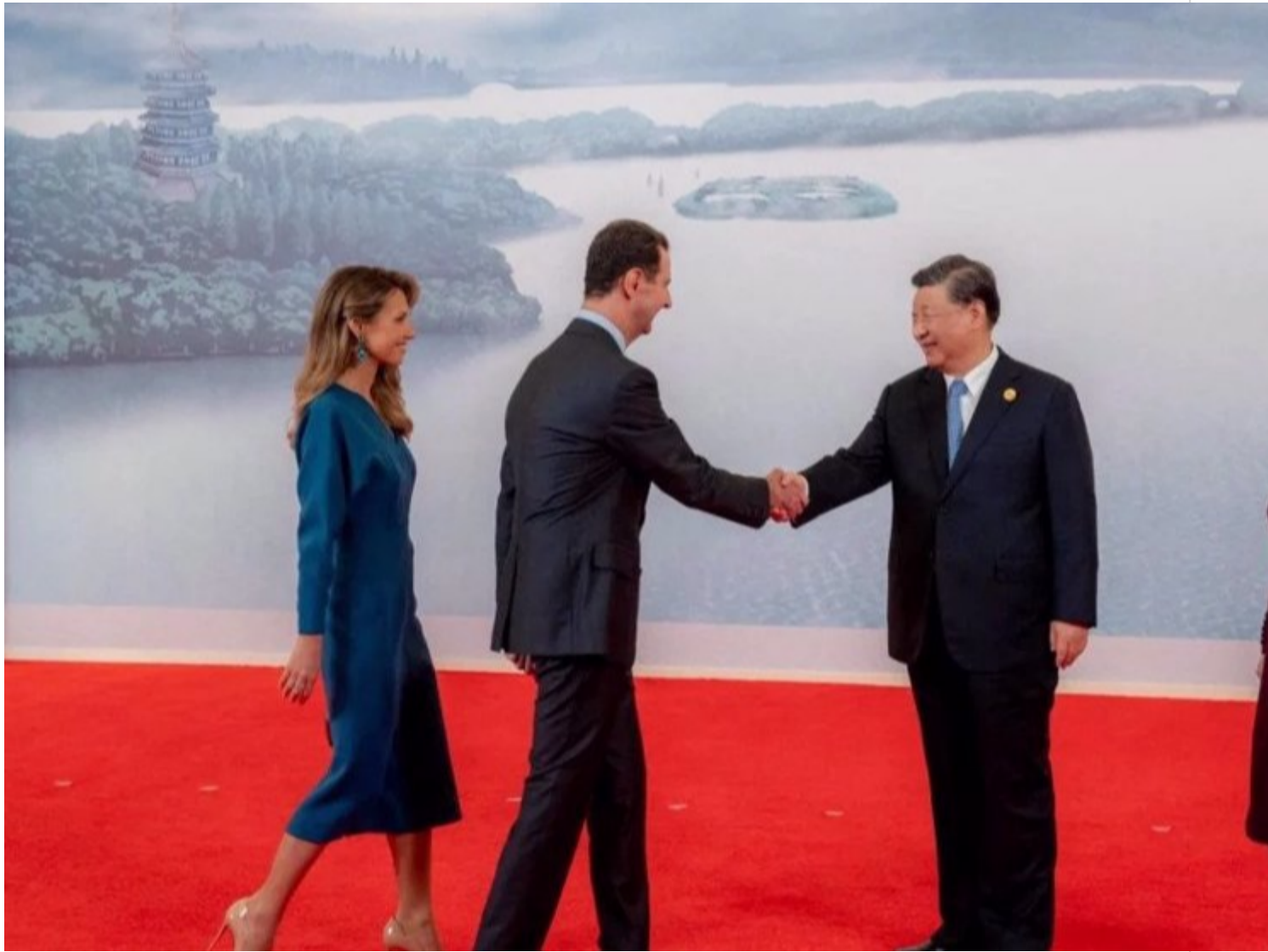


# *China urges lifting of illegal unilateral sanctions against Syria*

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Beijing, September 24 (RHC)-- China has called on countries to lift their “illegal unilateral sanctions” imposed on Syria amid efforts by Beijing to increase its economic engagements with Damascus.

A joint Chinese-Syrian statement published by the foreign ministry in Beijing on Friday said that China will try its best to help Syria’s reconstruction efforts more than a decade after the Arab country became

involved in a devastating war with foreign-backed militants.

“China opposes interference by external forces in Syria’s internal affairs... and urges all relevant countries to lift illegal unilateral sanctions against Syria,” said the statement.

The statement came during a six-day visit by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to China, a first since the start of the Syrian war in 2011. President Assad and Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping pledged after a meeting on Friday to upgrade the level of ties between China and Syria to a strategic partnership.

Xi also welcomed Assad to a Saturday lunch banquet in the presence of foreign officials who have traveled to China to attend the opening ceremony of the Asian Games in Hangzhou. During the banquet, President Xi made a reference to sanctions imposed by the West on Syria by criticizing the “cold war mentality and bloc confrontation.”

Experts say President Assad is seeking China’s investment and funding for a massive reconstruction program that also involves plans to boost Syria’s economic situation. They say China can also benefit from better ties with Syria as the Arab country can contribute to the Belt and Road Initiative, Beijing’s global infrastructure project, through its strategic location on the Mediterranean Sea where China has a sizable trade activity.

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