Moving Forward with the Time: the Evolution of China’s African Policy

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Abstract

Being the largest developing country in the world, China has always attached great importance to develop good relations with Africa, the continent where the largest number of developing countries is located. To strengthen the unity and cooperation with African countries is always the basic foothold and important strategic foundation of China’s independent and peaceful foreign policy.

Generally speaking, the fundamental principle and guideline of China’s African policy in the fifty years are coherent and consistent. But with the development and changes of international situations and China’s comprehensive diplomatic strategy, China’s African policy has also developed and enriched with the time.

From 1949 to the end of 1970s, faced with diplomatic isolation and the strategic besiege from the former Soviet Union and the US, the newly born Chinese government turned its eyes to “the third world” including Africa. Sino-African relationship was naturally expressed with rich ideology and reinforcement of political benefits.

In the whole 1980s, since China itself has adopted “reform and opening-up” policy and its relations with the western countries has been normalized, the guiding principle of China’s diplomacy has been changed from ideological idealism to pragmatic realism, from the unconditional internationalism to the priority of the national interest. Sino-African relations in this period were expressed with weakening ideology and valuing economic benefits. China has firmly supported African countries making their own choice on the way of development and to seek economic cooperation and common development.

After the cold war and until now, China has attached importance to Africa in both political and economic benefits and developed bilateral relations with African countries in an all-round way. The bilateral relationship has not only expressed in the field of politics and economics, and also focused on cultural, security, personnel exchange and training. The FOCAC (the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation) established at the end of 2000 is a new impulse for promoting Sino-African relations.
It has been serving as a platform and mechanism for strengthening mutual consultation and cooperation in the era of globalization. With the issue of the white paper on “China’s African Policy” in the early 2006, to establish a new type of strategic partnership with Africa, featuring political equality and mutual trust, economic win-win cooperation, cultural exchange and learn from each other, security cooperation and coordination in the international affairs, has serving as the new core element of China’s African policy.

A new milestone in the history of China-Africa relations has just erected not long ago when African leaders gathered in Beijing with their Chinese counterparts for the First Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation and its Third Ministerial Conference in early November.


The series of events speak of the great importance the Chinese Government and leaders attach to China-Africa relations. At the same time, they are indicative of the fact that China-Africa relations have moved into an era of rapid development characterized by cooperation half a century after the establishment of bilateral diplomatic ties.

With the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, Africa lost its much-valued geopolitical status. As a result, the attention the West devotes to Africa has been constantly on the decline. The continent is being marginalized in the diplomatic strategies of major Western countries. However, China is as always committed to developing relations with Africa. Although the fundamental principle and guideline of China’s African policy in the fifty years are coherent and consistent, with the development and changes of international situations and China’s comprehensive diplomatic strategy, China’s African policy has also developed and enriched with the time.

The importance of Africa in China’s foreign policy agenda

The importance of Africa in China’s foreign policy agenda can be understood at least in political and economical fronts respectively.

Politically, China has always regarded Africa as its most reliable ally in the international struggle. The development of Sino-African relations has had an important political meaning for both China and Africa and even the developing countries as a whole.
First of all, the strengthening of Sino-African relations will be beneficial to unity and cooperation among developing countries. China’s non-aligned foreign policy and the national characteristics of its socialism have underscored that it always firmly stands with numerous developing countries, no matter in the past, present or future. At present, the total strength of developing countries is increasing in both their shares in international trade and their rights to speak on international affairs. China is the largest developing country in the world, and Africa is a continent that has the greatest concentration of developing countries. The development of Sino-African relations will have very real meaning in raising the international status of the developing countries as a whole. It will also help establish a new international order that will promote South-South cooperation and the common prosperity of developing countries. In the context of the widening gap between the South and North and the looming terrorist threat, the common prosperity of developing countries and their sharing of the fruits of globalization have far-reaching implications for world peace and development.

Secondly, Sino-African cooperation will be beneficial to the trend of multipolarization of world politics. It will also enhance the positions and influence of China and Africa internationally. Since China adopted the reform and opening up policy, its economy and prestige have grown rapidly. Its influence on international affairs has also increased. Likewise, Africa is an important player in international affairs. After suffered from political turbulence and economic recession in the early time of post-Cold War, most African countries have now become politically stable and economically recovered. Besides, their international position and image have improved.

China and Africa share a broad consensus on major international issues. They have traditionally cooperated with each other in this regard. Enhanced coordination on these matters serves the common interests of both sides. They are expected to step up collaboration to promote multilateralism and democracy in international relations and UN reform and work together for peace and harmony in the world.

Finally, Sino-African cooperation can contain the elastic diplomacy of Taiwanese authority, oppose the “two China” or “one China, one Taiwan” movement, and benefit the accomplishment of the cause of reunification of the motherland. In order to extricate itself from international isolation, Taiwan authority is taking Africa (especially west Africa) as the focus for developing its diplomatic relations. Although most African countries are insisting on “one China policy” and keeping good relations with China, but there are still a few African countries who can’t keep out the lure of money and maintain “diplomacy” with Taiwan which has some bad influence on China’s African policy to some extent.

Economically, to develop Sino-African relations is the requirement for China’s economy to carry out sustainable development. Africa’s rich-produced natural resources and potential market advantages have great strategic meaning to China’s economic development in the 21st century. With China’s rapid pace of modernization and economic reform, China must expand into new overseas markets and secure the supply of raw materials since they are very important for sustaining the
growth it needs for national development and stability. After China’s accession to WTO in 2001, the Chinese government has made further moves to encourage Chinese enterprises “going out” to join global competition and expand new markets.

The Evolution of China’s African Policy


**Background:** — Diplomatic isolation and the “Three worlds divided” theory

In the year of 1950s and 1960s, the New China was faced mainly by security threats. Not only the West led by the US had not recognized new China, and with the Korea War broke out in 1950, Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1958 and the Vietnam War broke out in 1961, the new-born China was facing the military challenge from the powerful United States in three directions. And in the early of 1960s, with the split of the China-Soviet alliance, China’s diplomatic room in international stage was getting smaller than before.

In order to break through the strategic besiege from the former Soviet Union and the US as well as China’s diplomatic isolation, late Chairman Mao put forward the famous “three worlds divided” theory. It is regarded that the former Soviet Union and the US are the first world, the Asia, Africa and the Latin American developing countries including China are the third world, and the developed countries between the above two are the second world. He thought that only the countries and people of the third world could be called the basic power in the struggle of against imperialism, colonialism and hegemonism. We should mainly rely on them and united with them as our direct allies (the second world was the indirect ally). Mao pointed out clearly, “In making friends in the world, we should put the stress on the Third World”. The struggle and victory achieved by the other third world countries could weaken and destroyed the colonial system of imperialism. “This will divert the enemy’s power and lighten the pressure on our shoulder”.1 On the basis of this principle, the Chinese government provided a large number of sincere and selfless political, economic and military supports to the African people in their struggle for national liberation and against apartheid. It did this although China herself was in serious financial difficulties then.

**Manifestation:**

— China support the African countries’ just struggle for national independence and against imperialism and colonialism

After World War II, especially after the Bandung Conference in 1955, the struggles of the African peoples against imperialism and colonialism and for national liberation and independence entered into a new high. The Chinese government and people have spared no efforts to support this struggle. For example, in September 1956, Chairman Mao Zedong met with the Egyptian ambassador to China and said, “the Chinese people firmly behind Egypt in its struggle to resume sovereignty over

the Suez Canal. China is willing to do its best to help Egypt without attaching any conditions and to offer what you need within our power.” In the 1960s, Mao frequently met with African leaders and the leaders of independence movements.

In order to strengthen Sino-African relations, the late Chinese Premier Zhou En-lai visited Africa 3 times successively including 11 African countries in 1960s. During his visit, Premier Zhou proposed the Five principles for developing relations between China and the African and Arab states and the Eight principles governing China’s foreign aid which defined the basic political and economic norms for developing Sino-African relations.

Over the years, China has provided African “freedom fighters” with aid in the form of material, military equipment and funds. And the military training to liberation organizations was usually went through the OAU and several countries that had won independent earlier, such as Egypt, Morocco, Tanzania and Zambia. According to the OAU Liberation Committee, during 1971 and 1972, 75 percent of the military aid given to the OAU from outside Africa came from China. And many of these “freedom fighters” have later become important government figures, cabinet ministers and even

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2 From December 1963 to the early of 1964, Premier Zhou paid the first visit to 10 African countries, including Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Ghana, Mali, Guinea, Sudan, Ethiopia and Somal. The second time was from March to April 1965, he visited Algeria and Egypt. The third time was in June 1965, he visited Tanganyika and Egypt.

3 The Five principles are as follows: 1. China supports the African and Arab peoples in their struggle to oppose imperialism and old and neo-colonialism and to win and safeguard national independence; 2. It supports African and Arab states pursuing a policy of peace, neutrality and nonalignment; 3. It supports African and Arab people who wish to realize their unification and unity in the way which they chose by themselves; 4. It supports African and Arab states resolve their disputes through peaceful consultation; 5. It advocates that the sovereignty of African and Arab states’ should be respected by all countries. It strongly against the aggression and interfere from any aspects.

4 The Eight Principles are: 1. Chinese government have persistently been providing assistance to foreign countries according to the principle of equality and mutual benefit, never regard the assistance as the grant by one-sided. Chinese government maintains that assistance should be mutual; 2. While providing foreign aid, Chinese government strictly respects the sovereignty of recipient countries, no strings attached and no privilege required; 3. In order to relief the burden of recipient countries, Chinese government provides economic aids in the way of interest-free or low-interest loan, the time limit of repayment could be delayed when it is needed; 4. The purpose of Chinese government providing foreign aid is not to make recipient countries being dependent on China, but to help recipient countries gradually develop on the track of self-reliance and economic development independently; 5. For the projects constructed through China’s foreign aids, Chinese government does its best to make quick effects through small investment. Thus, the governments of recipient countries could increase income and accumulate money; 6. Chinese government provides the best quality equipment and material of its own manufacture at international market prices. If the material and equipment provided are not up to the agreed specifications and quality, the government undertakes to replace them; 7. While providing technical assistance, Chinese government assures to teach recipients to fully master this kind of technology; 8. The experts who are dispatched by Chinese government to help recipient countries carrying out construction, should be paid as same as their own experts of recipient countries. They are required to not have any special requirement and enjoyment.
heads of State.

— China has actively helped the African countries develop their economies and consolidate independence (such as TaZara Railway)

Although China was facing a very difficult economic situation and a blockade and pressure by the imperialists, it has selflessly provided tremendous support for African countries, making a great contribution to develop their economies and consolidate independence. Since 1956, China has rendered assistance to the best of her ability to African countries in a variety of aspects such as agriculture, infrastructure, forestry, animal husbandry, fishery, food processing, textile and other light industries, energy, transportation, broadcasting and communication, water conservancy and power industry, machinery, public buildings and housing, culture, education, health, arts and handicrafts industry, etc.

Of all the projects, TaZara (Tanzania-Zambia) Railway is the most well known. After the independence in the early part of 1960s, both Tanzania and Zambia, in order to get rid of the transportation control by the Southern Africa’s racial apartheid regimes, urgently need a railway for exporting their goods. They once raised the request to the World Bank, Soviet, Britain and Canada respectively, but have been refused in the excuse of “lack of economic value”. When they ask the help from China and immediately get the “yes” answer. Chairman Mao once said, we will help Africa to build this railway even though China itself doesn’t build railway. From Oct. 1970 to July 1976, engineers and workers from China, Tanzania and Zambia worked in the extreme heat and cut through the thick jungles to build the 1860 kilometer-long railway. The railway cost $455 million and more than hundred Chinese engineers and workers sacrificed their lives. This Freedom Railway has contributed a lot to the regional economy and also played an important role in the national liberation movement as well as the struggle against apartheid in Southern Africa.

— African countries supported China’s reunification cause and resumption of China’s legitimate seat at the United Nations

African countries and people highly appreciate China’s support and take China as the most reliable friend. They support China’s just cause of safeguarding national sovereignty and realizing reunification, condemning the US’s interference in Taiwan affairs. In the 26th United Nations Assembly in 1971, African countries have played a very important role in the restoration of China’s legitimate seat at the UN. Among the 76 votes for China, 26 were from African countries, making one third of the total. Chairman Mao had said it was African friends who raised us into the UN.

Above all, Sino-African relationship in this period embodied with rich ideology and reinforcement of political benefits. According to an American scholar’s opinion, the international influence that China has gained in the year of 1950s and 1960s were “well beyond its material or military strength”. And this had become, “one of the paradoxes of power in the contemporary international system”.5 One Chinese scholar also thought, “China’s political prestige in Africa in the 1960s was of important political interest. Depending on the political prestige, China has gained the support

from African countries and broken imperialism’s strategy on isolating China.”

Frankly speaking, most Chinese aid projects conducted in this period were mainly started from ideological idealism and unconditional internationalism. Political interest and political effect were the priority consideration and the economic result has been totally neglected. Moreover, the development of the relationship with the African countries bore a thick ideological flavor. In the 1960s, there was a tendency to draw a dividing line according to one’s attitude towards the US and the old colony countries. In the 1970s, the judging criterion has been shifted to one’s attitude towards the Soviet Union, thus adversely affecting the development of relations between China and Angola, Ethiopia and other countries.


**Background:** At the end of the 1970s, with the improvement of Sino-US relations and the formation of the US, China and the USSR “big triangle”, China’s foreign strategy changed. Then it turned from the old “one-line struggle” (uniting the US against the USSR) strategy and begun to pursue a policy of nonalignment, independent and peaceful co-existence. Deng Xiaoping was quoted as having said, “China will not play either the card of the US or the USSR, and it will not allow others to play the card of China. The purpose of Chinese foreign policy is to strive for world peace. Only under the prerequisite of world peace can China concentrate on its modernization and development, as well as constructs socialism with Chinese characteristics.” It is clear that the guiding principle of Chinese diplomacy has changed from ideological idealism to pragmatic realism and from unconditional internationalism to a priority of national interest. To strive for and maintain world peace and seek national economic interest has become the first objective for Chinese foreign policy.

**Manifestation:**

In terms of Sino-African relations, China will no longer develop relations with African countries merely according to their social systems and ideology, and will not draw a dividing line according to one’s attitude towards the US and the USSR. Now China believes, it is quite normal that the developing countries keep good relations with or get aids from this or that superpower. This pragmatic foreign policy has brought Sino-African relations to a more stable and mature stage. In the 1980s, China has established diplomatic ties with Zimbabwe, Angola, Cote d’Ivoire and Lesotho. The number of African countries having diplomatic ties with China has increased from 44 in the 1970s to 48 in the 1980s. There are also frequent high level visits between each other in this period. From 1981 to 1989, 55 African presidents have visited China, almost 6 per year.

In addition, Sino-African relations during this period manifested a weaker political factor and an increasing economic concern. As is well known, great changes had

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7 *Deng Xiaoping’s Selected Works*, Volume 3, the People’s Press, 1994, p.57.
taken place in China and Africa respectively in the 1980s. In Africa, the whole continent (Southern Africa excluded) had completed the historical task of national liberation and had ushered in a new phase of struggle for economic independence. It has also carried out structural economic changes. Likewise, China has adopted a policy of reform and opening up which focusing on economic reconstruction. Nevertheless, while undertaking large-scale reconstruction China found itself short of capital and unable to provide African countries with as much economic assistance as before. This is why China and Africa need to establish an economic cooperative relationship on the basis of equal and mutual benefits.

It was against the above background that the Chinese Premier at the time, Zhao Ziyang, made a tour of 11 African countries\(^8\) from the end of 1982 to early 1983. During his visit, he proposed four principles for developing economic cooperation with African countries. These included equality and mutual benefit; stressing practical results and varied forms of common development. The four principles derive from the deepening and development of the eight principles that were mentioned before. From then on, the economic technical cooperation between China and Africa has developed rapidly. Apart from the old mode of assistance, i.e. giving loans, China started to engage in various new forms of cooperation such as contracting projects, labor cooperation, joint venture, cooperative production and development, and technological services. Since the relations between China and the west developed countries have been improved greatly in this period, a major opinion maker said, “Sino-African relations in the 1980s had been marginalized in China’s foreign policy.” He added, “as China receives more external aid, the assistance that Africa gets from it has declined.”\(^9\) However, frankly speaking, “marginalization” seems a bit of an overstatement. But, the focus of the bilateral relations had indeed shifted from the political to the economic sphere.

3. Sino-African relationship after the end of the cold war: attaching importance to both political and economic benefits and developing bilateral relations in an all-round way.

At the end of 1980s and the early of 1990s, with the drastic changes in Eastern Europe and the disintegration of the USSR, the bipolar politics in the cold war came to an end. Following the political disturbances in the spring of 1989, China not only suffered from political and economic sanctions imposed by Western countries, but also became a target as a major competitor to the US. Faced with great challenges in the international arena, China emphasized both safeguarding its national political interest and seeking national economic benefits in its foreign strategy.

The highly commendable thing is, when China was facing diplomatic isolation in early 1990s, quite similar with the situation in early 1950s, the very first presidential and premier minister level visits to China were all coming from African countries. “A friend in need is the friend indeed”, China once again realized that Africa is the truly reliable ally and sincerely friend. In return, Chinese foreign minister always starts his

\(^8\) The 11 African countries are: Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Guinea, Gabon, Zaire, Congo, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Kenya.

official visit abroad with a tour of Africa since 1990. This arrangement has become a “routine tradition” carried on by former foreign minister Qian Qichen, his successor Tang Jiaxuan and incumbent Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing. In 1990s, high-level exchanges between China and Africa had increased and political relations had deepened. According to incomplete statistics, around 130 person-time Chinese leaders had visited more than 40 African countries from 1990 to 1997. High-level Chinese leaders including former President Jiang Zemin, former premier Li Peng (he later served as former Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, NPC), former Premier Zhu Rongji had all visited Africa successively. At meantime, there were 43 African Presidents, 14 Premiers and other high-level African leaders who had visited China. Furthermore, there were also frequent contacts between the Chinese National People’s Congress, the People’s Political Consultative Conference and Parliaments of African countries, between the political parties and armed forces of the two sides.

During former President Jiang’s trip to Africa in 1996, he put forward five-point proposal, namely, to foster a sincere friendship and become each other’s reliable “all-weather friend”; to treat each other as equals, respect each other’s sovereignty and refrain from interfering in each other’s internal affairs; to seek common development on the basis of mutual benefit; to increase consultation and cooperation in international affairs; to look into the future and create a more splendid world. When African countries facing great pressure from the West for adopting multi-party democracy, China made it clear that it will hold on to the Five principles of Peaceful Coexistence, 10 respect the choice of political system and development pattern made by the people of each individual African country and refrain from interfering in the African countries’ internal affairs.

Economically, Sino-African economic and trade relations have also developed from the singular pattern of official aid between governments in the past to a mutually beneficial cooperation of diversified forms. While continuing to render traditional intergovernmental aid, China follows the current international practice and provides soft loans with government-subsidized the enterprises from both sides. China hopes that this will help develop more efficient small and medium size productive projects with local resources and serving the local market. Until the end of 2005, China has signed over 40 framework agreements on preferential loans with 25 African countries. Some projects funded by these soft loans have achieved initial success, such as the petroleum exploitation in the Sudan, the railway renovation in Botswana and the Mulungushi Textile Mill, a joint venture in Zambia.

In addition, there are also great successes in Sino-African cooperation in science, culture, education and health. China has signed science & technical cooperation, education and culture exchange agreements with most African countries. According to these agreements, China and Africa dispatch students and visiting scholars to each other, and co-conduct irregularly some culture activities, such as “Meeting in Beijing”, “China film week”, “The exhibition of Chinese culture” and “The exhibition of

10 The five principles are: 1. Mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty; 2. Mutual non-aggression; 3. Mutual non-interference in each other’s internal affairs; 4. Equality and mutual benefit; 5. Peaceful coexistence.
African handicraft and sculpture articles”, etc. China also dispatched doctors (total about 15,000 person), agricultural experts, physical training coaches, college computer teachers, and present medicine, medical equipment, recreation and sports materials, agricultural machinery and so on. The excellent techniques and the spirit of hard working of Chinese medical team and experts have made a deep impression on African governments and their people, and produced profound influences. Their hardworking scored a splendid recording for Sino-African friendship, and also created a good mass basis for developing a long-term, stable and future forward ties between China and Africa.

FOCAC: An New Impulse for Promoting Sino-African Relations

Background and significance of the Forum

After the Cold War, the international situation underwent great changes. It has become a pressing problem facing the vast majority of developing countries to establish a new, fair and reasonable international political and economic order so as to deal with the challenge of economic globalization and safeguard their legitimate rights and interests. At the end of 1990s, some African countries on a variety of occasions have proposed that as the United States, Britain, France, Japan and Europe have established a contact mechanism with Africa, it is more necessary for China and Africa, whose friendly cooperative relations have a solid foundation, to establish a similar mechanism to fit in with the needs of strengthening consultation and cooperation in the new situation. After earnest study, China decided to echo the suggestions of African countries, and proposed to hold the Forum in 2000.

As major components of the developing countries and important forces in promoting peace and development in the world, China and Africa will strengthen exchanges and coordination, express their common positions regarding major international issues, and jointly outline their future cooperation through this forum of multilateral consultation. In fact, the forum is the first of its kind in the history of Sino-African relations and in the 50 years of the People's Republic of China’s diplomatic history. It is a beneficial attempt as well as an important move for the Chinese government to further consolidate and strengthen friendly cooperative relations at the threshold of the new millennium.

The first Forum: Beijing 2000 Ministerial Conference

In October 2000, the first “Forum of China-Africa Cooperation”(FOCAC) was held in Beijing. The two major topics of the forum focused on how to promote and establish a just and equitable new international order and on how to further strengthen cooperation between China and Africa on economic and social development. This has clearly demonstrated the new character of Sino-African relations in the new era. The forum has reached consensus on a wide range of issues. Two important documents---the Beijing Declaration and the Programme of Cooperation on Economic and Social Development--- were adopted unanimously. The following-up mechanism has also been worked out, that is there will be a ministerial conference
Every 3 years alternatively convened in China and Africa.

During the forum, Chinese government has offered a RMB 10 billion debts write-off to African countries within the set period of 2 years. In fact, the Chinese Government has made good on its promise undertaken at the first ministerial meeting by completing ahead of schedule greater reduction of African debts. By June 2002, China had signed debt exemption protocols with 31 African nations, canceling 156 African debts totaling 10.5 billion RMB. At the same time, China has been actively urging the international community to honor their debt reduction promises without further delay.

Meanwhile, Chinese government also announced that it is going to set up special foundations respectively for encouraging Chinese enterprises to invest in Africa and for helping training all kinds of African professional personnel. Since 1996, China has held training courses for middle and high-ranking African diplomats annually, and launched annual seminars for African economic and management officials from 1998. China-Africa cooperation in higher education and occupational education are also being enhanced. So far, China has offered scholarships to 5,000 students from 51 African countries and about 900 of them are currently studying in China. In addition, the Chinese side will continue to dispatch training personnel to Africa to give short-term training courses. For example, China's Follow-up Committee has sent Chinese experts to six African countries for regional training courses on "malaria prevention and treatment", "maize farming technique" and "applied solar energy technology", etc. These courses have yielded fruitful results.

The second Forum: Addis Ababa 2003 Ministerial Conference

From 15 to 16 December 2003, the Second FOCAC was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, which was the first time that the meeting held in Africa. The main task of the second meeting was to review the implementation of the two documents passed by the first session and to explore new ideas and measures to deepen cooperation in key fields such as human resources development, agriculture, infrastructure construction, investment and trade. The meeting finally passed Addis Ababa Action Plan (2004-2006) which reflected the consensus of the China-Africa sides on political issues and other important international issues of common concern and particularly laid down the concrete ideas about the two sides’ cooperation in various fields in the next three years. Furthermore, during the meeting, apart from the official Ministerial conference, another parallel China-Africa Business Conference was conducting at same time. Representatives from nearly 100 Chinese enterprises discussed business directly with their African counterparts and signed many intentional contracts on the spot.

The major concrete measures that China promised to take in the Forum are including:

First, China will grant some African countries tariff-free treatment for their export to China. To help the least developed countries (LDCs) in Africa expand export, increase revenue and alleviate poverty, China has decided to exempt import tariffs for certain commodities of these countries so as to facilitate their entry into the Chinese market. Negotiations to this end have already started since 2004.

Second, China will pump more resources into the African Human Resources Development Fund. China has decided to launch the 2004-2006 China-Africa
Inter-governmental Human Resources Development Plan under the Fund. The 33 percent increase in the fund available will allow China to hold 300 training courses in three years for some 10,000 African professionals in various fields. At the same time, China will provide more scholarships for African exchange students.

Third, China will step up cooperation in tourism by encouraging more Chinese citizens to travel to Africa. Apart from the original travel destination of Egypt, South Africa and Morocco, China has decided to grant new eight applying countries the Approved Destination Status. They are: Mauritius, Ethiopia, Tunisia, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Zambia, Tanzania, and Seychelles.

Fourth, China will hold a series of events, including the "2004 China-Africa Youth Carnival", "Meet in Beijing" - an international art festival focusing on African arts and the "Voyage of Chinese Culture to Africa", with a view to promoting better understanding between the peoples, especially the younger generations of the two sides.

In addition to above four respects endeavors, Chinese government also promised to gradually increase the aids to Africa. In September 2005, when President Hu Jintao attended the Summit on the UN High Level Meeting on Financing for Development, he called for the UN to play a bigger role in the development area and declared that China will take important measures in such fields as tariff, debt, preferential loans, public health and human resources to help other developing nations, especially African countries accelerate development. These measures are including:

—— In the coming two years, China will write off or cancel in other ways all interest-free or low-interest government loans which the poor and heavily-indebted countries having diplomatic relations with China have failed to repay in due time by the end of 2004.

—— China will help the developing countries train 30,000 people for various professions in the coming three years.

—— China pledges US$10 billion of concession loans to developing countries in the next 3 years within the framework of South-South cooperation.

In short, through 6 years experience, FOCAC has been proved to be an important platform and dialogue mechanism for strengthening China-Africa cooperation and solidarity, and safeguarding common interest. At the end of 2006, the third Forum together with the first Sino-African summit will be held in Beijing. During the summit, according to Premier Wen, “China and Africa will focus on reducing and remitting debts, economic assistance, personnel training and investment by enterprises.”

The new-type China-Africa strategic partnership

Early this year, China issued the white paper of “China’s African Policy”. In April 2006, President Hu Jintao delivered a key speech in Nigerian congress. The white paper and President Hu’s speech all focused on a new concept of “developing a new type of China-Africa strategic partnership” which not only clearly defined the nature

of China-Africa relations but also charted the future course for the relations.

The new-type China-Africa strategic partnership features cooperation in the political, economic, cultural and security fields as well as in international affairs. In the political sphere, China and Africa have always been equal strategic partners that trust and support each other. China respects African countries’ right to choose the path of development independently.

It supports these countries’ efforts to seek renewal through strengthening unity. It also takes an active part in the international efforts to promote peace and development in Africa. African countries, for their part, support the one-China policy and are opposed to Western countries’ interference in China’s internal affairs in the name of “human rights.”

China has been ready to offer material and moral support to the African national liberation movement and their struggle against imperialism, colonialism and racism since the 1950s and 1960s. In recent years, it has efficiently participated in UN peacekeeping operations in Africa. To date, it has dispatched more than 3,000 peacekeepers on 12 UN missions in Africa. Today, over 850 Chinese service people are working on eight missions there.

In 1971, the People’s Republic of China was restored to its lawful seat in the UN thanks to the support of African countries. With their support, China has defeated 11 consecutive anti-China motions tabled by Western countries in UN human rights sessions and prevented 14 proposals raised on the General Committee before the annual UN General Assembly for Taiwan to “rejoin or participate in the UN” from getting on the formal agenda since 1990. They also helped China frustrate Taiwan authorities’ attempts to access international organizations that only sovereign states are entitled to join.

Economically, China and Africa are mutually complementary partners that benefit each other. Africa is a promising continent with rich natural and human resources and a huge market. However, having suffered from colonialism and regional conflicts, it is still mired in economic backwardness and lacks the funds, technology and experience for development. China has achieved a remarkable economic takeoff since the advent of economic reforms more than 20 years ago.

Despite the progress, it faces new problems such as a severe energy shortage and escalating competition in its domestic market. Given these factors, the Chinese Government encourages Chinese firms to invest in Africa in various fields such as trade, agriculture, infrastructure construction, mining and tourism while offering an increasing amount of assistance with no political strings attached.

To date, China has spent 44.4 billion yuan assisting African countries with over 800 projects, including textile factories, hydropower stations, stadiums, hospitals and schools. China has trade relations with all the 53 African countries and has established 11 “Trade and Investment Promotion Centers” (i.e., Egypt, Mali, Guinea, Cote d’Ivoire, Nigeria, Zambia, Tanzania, Gabon, Cameroon, Mozambique and Kenya) in the continent. At present, trade between China and Africa is undergoing rapid growth. The bilateral trade volume rose from $12.11 million in the 1950s to $10.5 billion in 2000 and $29.4 billion in 2004, nearly $40 billion in 2005. In recent years in
particular, China has increased imports from African countries and thus maintained a trade deficit with them, enabling these countries to earn a large amount of foreign exchange.

In recent years, Chinese firms have redoubled their efforts to penetrate the African market. To date, direct Chinese investment in Africa has reached $1.25 billion. Over 800 companies are currently operating in Africa, engaged in trade, manufacturing, natural resource exploitation, transportation, agriculture and agricultural processing. Chinese companies have helped create employment opportunities in African countries, increase their tax revenues, introduce practical technologies to these countries, enhance the competence of local workers and improve their productivity.

On the cultural front, China and Africa should become equal partners that jointly promote the prosperity and progress of human civilization. China and Africa are both origins of human civilization, boasting brilliant cultural heritages. At its source, African culture has a lot in common with Chinese culture. For example, both value community spirit and the tradition of yielding personal benefits to the interests of the community. Given these common values, China and Africa are expected to further strengthen their cultural linkages with a view to building a harmonious world where different civilizations coexist in the spirit of tolerance and equality while learning from each other.

In a broader sense, cultural exchange is not limited to exchanging students and teachers and holding arts performances and exhibitions. Chinese medical teams and other flourishing programs such as China’s training of African workers and the exchange of experiences in pursuing development are also part of the China-Africa cultural exchange.

In the field of security, China and Africa should enhance exchanges and consultation, thus raising the awareness of collective security in the international community, promoting a new security concept featuring mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation and shaping an international environment favorable for common development. China also needs to strengthen cooperation with African countries in the nontraditional security field, such as preventing major infectious diseases including bird flu and addressing cross-border crimes so that they can jointly deal with the challenges posed by globalization. China is expected to devote more resources to UN-led peacekeeping operations, thereby playing a greater role in the resolution of international conflicts and disputes in Africa.

The End
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