

Africa rejects criticism of falling into so-called China's debt trap

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Chinese Ambassador to Nigeria, Dr. Zhou Pingjian delivers a remark at the Flag-off Ceremony of the Expansion and Dualization of the Abuja-Keffi-Lafia-Makurdi Road Project, late last month.

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Africa rejects criticism of falling into so-called China's debt trap

At a time when some critics are busy hyping the "Chinese debt trap" theory, which refers to loans to African countries and other emerging economies, those nations who are benefiting from the win-win cooperation with China have refuted the criticism.

Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta recently spoke with CNN's Richard Quest and asked why critics only focus on Kenya's debt to China, while other countries that have lent money to Kenya go unchallenged.

"Why are we focusing ourselves only on one lender?" Kenyatta asked.

"As far as I am concerned, we have a very healthy mix of debt from the multilateral lenders - who are basically the World Bank and the African Development Bank - to bilateral lenders like Japan, China and France, all who are participating and working with us to help us achieve our objectives," he added.

"We are borrowing from China. We have borrowed from the United States. We are working together with companies like General Electric who are the backbone of what we are doing in our health sector. When it comes to energy, we are working very closely with the World Bank and the African Development Bank," Kenyatta explained in response to tough questions.

On the question that China may use debt to influence African countries, Kenyatta said the Kenyan perspective is that "we have a development agenda; we have a social agenda; we have an economic agenda, and we are willing to partner with all countries that help us achieve our objective."

Kenyatta is not the only African leader to reject criticism of China's development projects on the continent, particularly China's Belt and Road Initiative, often cited by critics as the vehicle that is worsening debt problems in some countries.

Speaking at the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) held in September this year, Senegalese President Macky Sall said, "Everything we do with China is perfectly under control, including on the financial and debt side. We shouldn't let our conscience be disturbed by criticism made regarding the nature of our relations with China."

Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari, who also attended the FOCAC Summit, also stressed that his country's relations with China fall within relevant economic plans of the government and that Nigeria was not being trapped by Chinese money. "Let me use this opportunity to address and dispel insinuations about a so-called Chinese 'debt trap.' These vital infrastructure projects being funded are perfectly in line with Nigeria's Economic Recovery & Growth Plan. Some of the debts, it must be noted, are self-liquidating," he said.

Buhari added that Nigeria was fully able to

repay all its loans as and when due.

Zimbabwean President Emmerson Mnangagwa took the opportunity to comment on the debt issue on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in September this year. He dismissed the fears that Zimbabwe could fall into a trap with Chinese debt. "During [Zimbabwe's] period of isolation, very few countries outside the West assisted us. Some of the notable countries which came to our assistance are China, India, Brazil, Russia and Malaysia. And when things are good, you then do not forget your friend who stood with you during bad times," he said.

Mnangagwa gave the example of the expansion of Kariba South and Hwange power stations, which are financed with Chinese capital. "I do not see any danger where you have a project which becomes productive in terms of revenue streams to pay for itself," he said.

Rwandan President Paul Kagame, who chairs the African Union, is equally critical of observers warning of debt traps in Africa, saying the question to be asked should be why other countries are not giving Africa as much assistance as China?

"We have benefited a lot from China's support in our social and economic programs, and that has continued to strengthen the partnership between China and Rwanda," Kagame told the People's Daily.

Kagame also hailed forums like FOCAC, which he said "can show the world how countries can work collaboratively at a time when issues like trade protectionism continue to brew."

Research by the UK-based Jubilee Debt Campaign showed that debt in some Sub-Saharan Africa countries has increased by 50 percent in the past two years, the highest level since 2005. International organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have also issued warnings about potential debt crisis in Africa. In May, the IMF warned that Sub-Saharan African nations were at risk of debt distress due to heavy borrowing and gaping deficits, despite an overall rise in economic growth.

In fact, the current African debt crisis is partial, with 12 African countries recording high debt risks, accounting for only 22 percent of the total number of African countries. In addition, compared to the highest point of historical African debt, the current African debt risk is relatively controllable. In 1999, Africa's external debt reached \$350 billion, equivalent to 93 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) of African countries (excluding South Africa). At present, Africa's external debt accounts for less than one-third of total GDP. From 2015 to 2017, Africa's external debt accounted for 27.8 percent, 31.1 percent and 32.4 percent of GDP respectively.

The current increase of debt in Africa is mainly a result of decreased commodity prices and a

slowdown in economic growth.

In recent years, due to the sluggish global economy, weak demand for bulk commodities has led to a decline in commodity prices. Taking crude oil price as an example, the price has dropped from \$114.8 per barrel in January 2014 to an average of \$43 in 2016. In addition to crude oil, metal raw materials fell by 6 percent in 2016 compared to 2015. Since 2014, the commodity price index has fallen by more than 40 percent.

The economic structure of African countries is singular and the economies have a huge dependence on the world market. The changes of global commodity prices have a great impact on economic development of African countries. In recent years, the continuous decline in commodity prices in the global market has heavily impacted Africa's economic development, especially those relying on the export of raw materials. The economic growth rate in Africa has dropped from around 5-6 percent to 3.7 percent in 2015 and on to 1.7 percent in 2016. Taxation in African countries has also decreased from \$499 billion in 2014 to \$444 billion in 2016. The income decline in return affects their ability to repay debts.

In addition, with the strengthening of the U.S. dollar and the depreciation of Africa's national currencies, the debt burden of some African countries has been increased. Since 2014, the appreciation of the U.S. dollar has reached 15 percent. In some African countries, large currency devaluation has occurred. For example, Mozambique's currency, Metical, depreciated 56 percent against the U.S. dollar, and the Angolan currency Kwanza has depreciated by 41 percent against the U.S. dollar.

Alleviating debt burden

Every country needs financing support during the economic take-off phase, especially in the initial stage of industrialization. Without financial security, industrialization and modernization in Africa are difficult to achieve. China is not the main creditor of African countries. China's financing support for Africa is mainly invested in infrastructure construction and production areas, which have greatly improved the economic development environment and helped Africa attract foreign investment, and enhance its independent development capability.

China's loans to Africa are mostly concessional loans with low interest rates. In addition, the three major advantages of Chinese infrastructure construction enterprises - high cost performance, fast administrative approval process and high quality - save a lot of infrastructure construction costs for relevant countries and created a lot of employment opportunities for the locals. It has been recognized by the international community that Chinese investment has boosted Africa's economic growth.

African companies return with goodies from Expo

Africa's small and medium agro-processing firms were the biggest winners of the China International Import Expo (CIIE) in Shanghai that saw them sign lucrative deals worth millions of dollars.

The companies said that the deals with Chinese businesses will stabilize price volatility experienced in their markets and boost productivity while enhancing efficiency in a bid to meet high standards set by the Chinese market.

In Rwanda, Gashora Farm secured a half-year contract to supply chili oil to Kaijiang Tasty Food Factory in Dazhou city, southwest China's Sichuan province. The deal, worth \$2 million, starts this month and runs to the end of May 2019.

The managing director of the farm, Dieudonné Twahirwa, said the deal will offer a real solution to price volatility of the product in the international market.

"It means we are going to give supply contracts to farmers on fixed price and amount. Farmers can use these contracts to secure loans from the bank because there will be a reliable buyer of their produce," he said. The farm works

with about 1,500 farmers growing crops on about 200 hectares of land in eastern Rwanda.

Irene Mumo, managing director of Trueways Enterprise Ltd, in Kenya said that enterprises will have to inject investments toward innovation and value addition. The honey manufacturer said the region has to undertake an aggregation exercise to audit the sector and formulate a strategy to grow local value and add capacity.

"With the signing of the

Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures agreement between China and Kenya, local producers, therefore, have to enhance their efficiency," she said.

There is low awareness of Kenyan products in China, she said.

"Chinese dealers know of multifloral honey products from the Scandinavian countries and were truly surprised that Kenya produces varieties that have a different taste, feel and look. Demand for organic and unique

as tea and coffee.

Steve Malonza, director of Primax Agencies Ltd regional dealers specializing in production and export of pulses and oil grains based in Kenya, said the Shanghai expo opened the Chinese market to regional agricultural products. He said that discussions with Chinese firms will see his company ship grains --including soya beans, macadamia nuts and sesame seeds -- to China starting in December.

"Nevertheless, there is need

Kenya.

"Guangdong Silk-Tex Group of China, has announced its plans to set up a silk processing plant and a silk farm in Kenya that are expected to create more than 300,000 jobs for Kenyans. Right after the Expo, three Chinese delegations are visiting the country to scout for investment opportunities.

"They are organized, respectively, by the Council of Promoting South-South Cooperation, Provincial Governments of Anhui and

Zhejiang, and there will be altogether 200 entrepreneurs coming along. I am fully confident that China-Kenya economic and trade cooperation will be elevated to a much higher level which will ensure a greater sense of fulfillment for people of all walks," he said.

Rajneesh Bhuee, an economic consultant based in Kenya, said the CIIE presented an ideal platform to speed up trade cooperation between China and African countries.

"The expo has strengthened private-to-private partnership linkages," she said.

"This is an off-shoot from the government

to-government cooperation that has dominated the landscape in the last decade," she said, adding that the CIIE will be a game changer in the continent that is working toward increasing its participation in global trade, especially in finished products.

Around \$57.83 billion worth of deals were agreed for the year ahead at the CIIE. According to Li, China's import of goods is expected to exceed US\$30 trillion in the next 15 years.



South Africa pavilion at the first China International Import Expo (CIIE) in Shanghai, east China, early last Month.

agro-processed products in China is high," she said, adding that understanding the market would increase Africa's ability to widen its market share in the Asian market.

There were at least nine Kenyan entrepreneurs that participated in the event. They took part in business-to-business meetings with distributors who had reached across China, e-commerce platforms and consumers who were interested in buying African products such

for a sound and sustained strategy to enhance regional production to serve this emerging market. We also need financial products that would boost our capacity," he said.

Li Xuhang, charge d'Affairs of the Chinese Embassy in Kenya, said Chinese investors are keen on investing in the sector.

In a press briefing, Li said besides expanding exports to China, the event provided an excellent platform for foreign direct investment (FDI) into

Nigerian bank launches Africa-China banking center in Lagos

Stanbic IBTC Bank Plc has launched an Africa-China Banking Center (ACBC) in Lagos, Nigeria's economic hub, for the Chinese businesses operating in Nigeria and Nigerian companies trading with China.

The center, according to Yinka Sanni, Chief Executive Officer of Stanbic IBTC Holdings, is a direct link between Nigeria and China for all financial services.

He spoke at the official launching of the center at Ilupeju area of the state.

The center was to deepen the bank's connection with the Chinese business community, with special focus on Nigeria and China, he added.

Wang Lubin, chief executive officer of Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), Africa, told the gathering that the bank has demonstrated huge capacity to deliver world class services to its customers.

Liu Junsheng, Chinese commercial consul in Lagos, said this is good for the banking industry and the economies as well.

ACBC will look to provide a long-awaited platform to link Nigerian and Chinese clients with China's digital



Chief Executive officer of Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), Mr. Wang Lubin addresses the gathering during the launching ceremony of Africa-China banking center in Lagos

banking ecosystem through Stanbic IBTC's Africa-China Banking value proposition, says Stanbic IBTC Bank Plc in a brochure.

Staffed by bankers with Chinese language and cultural capability, ACBC

will be a virtual finance hub that offers seamless consultation and advisory services via telephone, online or email platforms to Nigerian and Chinese banking and investment clients, says the bank.

Africa-China Studies Center launched in Johannesburg

The Center for Africa-China Studies (CACS), which officials and scholars believed will play a pivotal role in gathering data and assessing the development of Africa-China relations, was launched at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa.

"We need to concentrate on having reliable statistics. We as scholars, don't have analytical stats on projects done due to the Africa and China relations," said David Monyae, CACS director and co-director at the Confucius Institute at the University of Johannesburg.

Misinformation about relation between Africa and China was due to lack of verifiable public data, said Monyae.

He said that the center will focus on relations

between Africa and China and measure the impact of major infrastructural projects in Africa, including the Belt and Road Initiative, industrial revolution, people-to-people exchanges and bilateral relations.

Chinese Ambassador to South Africa Lin Songtian said the center would be crucial in deepening relations between China and South Africa, as well as the rest of the continent.

Lin said the center will be in a better position to verify "misunderstanding"



Chinese Ambassador to South Africa, Lin Songtian

about the relations between Africa and China.

"Examining the impact of these projects on the ground is very important. We need to measure the

tangible benefits of the deals being invested in Africa on the lives of ordinary people," Emmanuel Matambo, a local scholar who will join the center, told newsmen.

Confucius Institute opens classroom in Tunisia



Chinese Ambassador to Tunisia Wang Wenbin (R) shakes hands with Olfa Ben Ouda, president of the University of Carthage, during the opening ceremony of Tunisia's first Confucius Institute in Tunis, Tunisia.

Tunisia's first Confucius Institute (Institute of Chinese Language and Culture) opened classroom on Monday at the Higher Institute of Languages (ISLT) under the University of Carthage in Tunis,

capital of Tunisia.

This Confucius Institute will be open to all Tunisian students, researchers and the general public.

The director of Confucius Institute in Tunisia Xu Rixuan said

"our specific objective is to teach Chinese language, to train teachers in Chinese and to promote cultural and academic exchanges between Tunisia and China."

"We have been working on this great project for many years. It is the result of cooperation with China, a privileged partner for us," the president of the University of Carthage Olfa Ben Ouda told newsmen.

We have, of course, classic partners, but it seems important to us to open up new horizons, knowing that the experiences with Chinese are highly successful to strengthen networks in areas such as language teaching, research and other educational projects," said Ouda.

"This institute will allow Tunisians to better know the culture of China and its tradition, as well as facilitating the establishment of educational, scientific and even economic networks," Ouda added.

Wang Wenbin, Chinese ambassador to Tunisia, said "Confucius institutes have become a platform for discovering Chinese culture around the world. Thanks to the Sino-Tunisian joint effort, the Confucius Institute opens at the ISLT, to give an impulse to the cooperation between our two countries."

Chinese envoy urges Kenya to create conducive environment to lure Chinese investments

Chinese envoy has called on the Kenyan government and business community to take concrete measures to create a safer and more convenient environment to lure more Chinese investments.

Li Xuhang, Charge'd Affaires at the Chinese embassy in Kenya, told journalists in Nairobi that Beijing is ready to help increase the value and competitiveness of Kenyan products and expand imports from Kenya.

"The future of our bilateral cooperation is very bright," Li said, calling for efforts to seize the prime opportunity to work harder for more Kenyan products to enter Chinese market, for more Chinese investment to come to Kenya, and most importantly for more tangible benefits to the lives of Kenyans and Chinese.

Li made the remarks during a reception for Kenyan business community who participated in the China International Import Expo (CIIE) that run from Nov. 5 to 10.

The Chinese diplomat said that Kenyan exhibitors had achieved remarkable results during the expo, given that their products including tea, coffee beans, honey, grains, attracted attention of Chinese buyers.

Ababu Namwamba, chief administrative secretary in the ministry of foreign affairs, said the CIIE with its focus on imports is an open and cooperative platform for countries and regions to showcase their achievements and development as well as conduct international trade.

Namwamba said that the expo will promote the Belt and Road Initiative, economic

globalization, inclusive growth and reciprocal development.

He added that Kenya is fully committed to strengthening bilateral trade with China in order for the citizens of both countries to fully realize benefits of the cooperation.

He stressed that there is

great potential to grow the current volume of Kenyan exports given the size of the Chinese market.

Namwamba said that Chinese investments in Kenya are on the rise and currently over 400 companies are operating in the country, employing some 55,000 Kenyans.



Charge'd Affaires at the Chinese embassy in Kenya, Li Xuhang addresses journalists in Nairobi

Egypt, China seek further cooperation via “Belt and Road” investment, trade expo

The second Egypt-China Investment and Trade Expo and the “Belt and Road” China-Egypt Cooperation Forum, has kicked off in Cairo.

More than 300 large and medium-sized Chinese enterprises and organizations participate in the exhibition, bringing advanced technologies and high-quality equipment products in the fields of transport, infrastructure, communications, and mechanical and health care.

The three-day fair, hosted by the Egyptian Chamber of Commerce in China and the Egyptian-Chinese Friendship Association, was held at Cairo International Convention Center.

The main purpose of the expo is to build a better future for Egypt, strengthen the construction of the “Belt and Road,” promote the development of China-Egypt capacity cooperation and economic and trade relations, and attract more Chinese investment.

“The expo is a true chance to strengthen mutual cooperation between Egypt and China in the commercial and investment fields,” Egyptian Minister of Trade and Industry Amr Nassar said at the opening ceremony.

China is Egypt’s top trading partner, while Egypt is China’s fourth largest trading partner in Africa, he noted.

A large number of major Chinese companies operating in the Egyptian market participate in the event, which stands as a platform for them to identify the advantages offered by the Egyptian market in many areas, Nassar added.

The trade between China and Egypt hit 11 billion U.S. dollars in 2017, with around 1,079 Chinese firms currently doing business in Egypt.

Meanwhile, former Egyptian Prime Minister Essam Sharaf praised the importance of the exhibition in promoting cooperation between Egypt and China, particularly in the fields of investment,



Egyptian Minister of Trade and Industry Amr Nassar speaks during the Belt and Road China-Egypt Cooperation Forum in Cairo, Egypt, last month.

development and trade.

In his speech at the inauguration ceremony, Sharaf, also chief of Sharaf Foundation for Sustainable Development and a committee member of the Silk Road NGO Cooperation Network, highlighted that Egypt’s geographical location allows it to be a central hub for many Chinese investments.

In recent years, the Sino-Egyptian ties have been elevated to the level of comprehensive strategic partnership, thanks to the strong support from both leaderships, where China joins hands with the most populous Arab country in implementing mega projects.

Cooperation in ambulatory care is also expected to be strengthened through the expo.

Zhang Zhenzhong, president of the China Ambulatory Surgery Alliance, said ambulatory is a safe and reliable surgical procedure for patients scheduled to be hospitalized, operated, and discharged

within 24 hours.

“Diseases including appendicitis, hernia and many others can now be treated with this procedure with high quality and efficiency as well as low cost,” Zhang told Xinhua.

China’s experience can be transplanted to Egypt and other African countries to help the treatment of their patients, he added.

Secretary-General of the Egyptian-Chinese Chamber of Commerce Diaa al-Fiqy said the exhibition serves as a bridge between Egyptian and Chinese businessmen as well as companies that aim to enhance the two countries’ cooperation in economic fields.

Meanwhile, Salwa al-Hussain, a visitor to the exhibition, praised the pavilions of the participating companies, saying Chinese exhibitors offer very high technological potentials.

“It is an opportunity for many, even for ordinary citizens, to learn about China’s great technological development in various fields,” she told reporters.

China urges international community to support Horn of Africa

Chinese Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ma Zhaoxu has called on the Security Council and international community to provide constructive assistance to the countries in the Horn of Africa.

At a Security Council meeting on Somalia, Ma said that the relations between countries in the Horn of Africa have been

continually improved over past few months.

Ambassador Ma said China hopes the countries in the region will actively seize the current favorable opportunity, strengthen dialogue and consultation, and work in tandem to properly resolve relevant issues.

In a unanimous vote, the Security Council adopted a resolution

to lift a nearly decade-old arms embargo and targeted sanctions on Eritrea after the country’s recent rapprochement towards neighbors in the Horn of Africa.

The Chinese diplomat said the lifting of sanctions is conducive to the peace and development in the region.

Ma pledged that China will continue to work with the

international community to play a constructive role in achieving peace, stability and development of the countries in the Horn of Africa.

The council imposed sanctions on Eritrea in 2009 for its support of Al-Shabaab insurgents in Somalia. The UN’s most powerful body slapped more sanctions on the Horn of African country in three other resolutions from 2011 to 2013.

Rwanda ready to grow its economy through Alibaba partnership

Rwanda is committed to leveraging technology and the internet through its partnership with Alibaba Group to grow its economy from low to high income.

The two parties recently signed three memoranda of understanding, which saw establishment of an electronic world trade platform, or eWTP.

The agreements are intended to strengthen cooperation in support of Rwanda’s economic development by promoting policy innovation, enabling cross-border trade of Rwandan products to Chinese consumers, facilitating tourism to Rwanda, and providing capacity building to empower the growth of Rwanda’s digital economy.

eWTP is a multi-stakeholder global initiative promoting public-private dialogue to foster a more effective and efficient policy and business environment to enable small and medium-sized enterprises to participate in cross-border electronic trade.

Paul Kagame, the Rwandan president, said the platform will open new frontiers in Rwanda’s e-commerce and tourism, as well as boost the capacity and competitiveness of the entrepreneurs.

He said Rwanda will continue to make major investments in education and broadband infrastructure to accelerate growth in technology-linked industries that drive prosperity in upper income economies.

“In the latest World Bank Ease of Doing Business report, Rwanda ranked as the 29th most business-friendly country in the world, up from 41st position last year. We will work harder, smarter and faster to improve the position. I’m glad that Alibaba Group is helping us to be on the right path,” the president said.

According to Clare Akamanzi, the chief executive officer of the Rwanda Development Board, eWTP



Jack Ma, founder and executive chairman of Alibaba Group, admires Rwandan crafts with Rwandan President Paul Kagame (second right) looks on.

is in line with the country’s development priorities.

“Our development priority as a country is to improve income levels of our people and that means increasing our per capita income. To do that, we need to ensure that our people have sustainable jobs or sources of income,” she said.

Akamanzi said eWTP provides a good opportunity for entrepreneurs to maximize their income. By selling directly to consumers, they avoid costly intermediaries.

“When it comes to the specifics of export numbers, we are improving productivity by using e-commerce. All of these are directly linked with our goal as a country, and so when our president met Jack Ma to discuss about the platform, we were excited because it was a perfect fit in our big development agenda,” she said.

Jack Ma, the founder and executive chairman of Alibaba Group, said Rwanda makes things happen instead of complaining, as evidenced by how it picked up fast after the 1994 genocide.

“What impressed us most

about Rwanda is not only the products but the government’s leadership. The government is efficient and transparent,” Ma said.

Within a short time of piloting the eWTP, he said Alibaba sold more than 1,000 packets of Rwandan coffee to Chinese consumers.

“I’m informed that farmers earn \$8 from the coffee sold to the US. The US on the other hand, can sell the coffee at \$16. However, through the eWTP platform, a farmer can sell his coffee at \$12,” he said.

Ma said Alibaba will work in partnership with the Rwandan government to prove that any country can be successful.

“We believe that Rwanda convinced the Alibaba Group; it changed our vision, and our view of Africa and Rwanda, in particular. Now we will make the world change its view about Rwanda and Africa in general. If Rwanda can be successful, 80 percent of the countries in the world can be successful,” he said.

Ma believes that Alibaba’s eWTP is not helping Rwanda

to globalize, but that Rwanda is helping the globalized to improve globalization.

“In order to face the future, we need to build up the new facility and infrastructure for the global trade. The letter ‘T’ in eWTP stands for trade, training, technology and tourism. Through these four elements, we believe we can enable the small businesses, farmers, youth and women in Africa to succeed,” he said.

Alibaba affiliate Ant Financial will share expertise in inclusive financial tools, such as mobile payments, to support the Rwandan digital economy.

Alibaba also is committed to providing capacity building to academics, policy makers and entrepreneurs on how to grow a digital economy.

This is being done through the Global E-commerce Talent program (GET), a five-day course to boost the competencies of Rwanda University teachers and deepen their understanding of the e-commerce industry, so that they can train digital talent and future entrepreneurs to compete in the global economy.

A portrait of China-Nigeria cultural exchanges

By Edeh Emmanuel

Sino-African relations could be traced to the 15th century, the period the renowned Chinese Admiral – Zheng He – led a fleet of 300 ships to Africa, heralding the birth of the powerful partnership and growing China-Africa community of shared destiny that we are see today. The robust and cordial friendship witnessed today, however, is product of the subsequent establishment of diplomatic ties with the newly formed African States starting from the 1950s where nations began unshackling the bonds of colonization. Egypt was the first country to establish such diplomatic relation, and other African states followed suit. The cooperation became a two-way process even before several African countries became independent.

In 1958, twenty Chinese cultural delegations visited Africa, and in return, forty-five African delegations visited China the same year. This heralded the subsequent establishment of cultural exchanges between China and other African countries like Nigeria, Morocco, Ghana, Somaliland, Uganda, and Angola etc. These delegations, as they do today, included diverse cultural and political icons and groups such as acrobats, sports team, youth delegations, and theater groups. Culture - just like power – is everywhere, in all aspects of economic and social engagements. It is often considered as a necessary tool to understanding other people.

Following these visits, cultural cooperation between China and Nigeria was officially co-signed with the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1971. Soon thereafter, in the spirit of mutual benefits, significant activities in the form of cultural exchanges through migration, education and economic cooperation have been developed. Education serves as a necessary vehicle with which the goodies of cultural creations are imported or exported. And in fact, education – in all its forms,

forms the heart of overall interests that are pursued by both sides. The establishment of Confucius institute in the last decade as a center for promoting Chinese language and culture in Nigeria has, in an especially effective way, facilitated and strengthened cultural exchanges between china and Nigeria. It is of note, that the presence of

Chinese educators at the Institute with their hands-on instructional approaches and their fine understanding of their culture coupled with the appreciation of that of Nigeria's, fosters an atmosphere of deep respect and tremendous exchange of cultures in a way that is, indeed, spontaneous. As expected, cultural activities from the side of the Chinese have included the practice of the Chinese famed martial art– Taichi, and ancient Chinese drawings and paintings, all these along with interactive learning of Chinese Language. On the Nigerian side,

the Chinese educators are introduced to the broader context of Nigerian culture through class projects, presentations and live performances of Nigerian songs, dances, cuisines, display of traditional wears, and demonstration of organization and rituals of essential traditional Nigerian

institutions such as marriage, child christening (naming ceremony), funerals among many others.

Just like in Nigerian, experiences of Nigerian students in China are not dissimilar to the warmth and support Chinese are welcomed with in Nigeria. In much the same way, Nigerians in China (mostly students) choose

(depending on which parts of Nigeria they stay) to their Chinese names. Blend of Chinese-Nigerian names such as Wang Okechukwu, Yang Ifeanyichukwu, Wu Chukwuemeka and many more culturally-spiced up and scintillating names abounds at the Confucius Institute in Nnamdi Azikiwe University. The Chinese in

use of Tong (indicates nothing more than Language fluency—which actually is strongly indicative of the cultural awareness of a person as language is essentially culture. Interestingly, the Chinese and the Igbo languages share, not so small, similarities. For instance, the two languages are tonal languages and the meaning changes with a change of tone. Nigeria-China cultural exchanges are moving into yet another face of augmented exchanges with grander cooperation and initiative such as the Forum for China – Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) with the attendant financial institutions like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).

With the continual exchanges among educational and economic actors, opportunities for bilateral developments involving numerous sectors of the two economies bolster movements between the two countries. The recent population census by Wikipedia had it that, there are 10,000 Nigerians in china as at 2014. A more recent census in 2017, the number of Chinese nationals in Nigeria stood at 40,000. In major Nigerian cities, there are Chinese restaurants, patronized by Chinese and Nigerians. China and Nigeria celebrate their national day and independence respectively in the same day, same month every year (i.e., the 1st of October). During the Chinese New Year and other festivals like the dragon boat festival, Chinese in Nigeria also celebrate with their Nigerian friends by exchanging gifts. New Year celebration is hosted by Confucius Institutes in Nigeria. In the same vein, the Confucius Institute mobilizes Chinese nationals in the celebration of the New Yam Festival celebrated among the eastern Nigerians.

Edeh Emmanuel Chidiebere is a Post Graduate Student at Zhejiang Normal University, China.



Students perform cultural dance at the 2018 China New Year Temple Fair Festival

Chinese names out of affection for their new home and commitment towards understanding and appreciating their host's culture, Chinese teachers in Nigeria also show their love for their immediate environment by selecting (or being helped by a Nigerian to select) indigenous names

Nigeria make impressive efforts to study the Igbo Language (which is the indigenous language used by many Nigerians) and possess reasonable command over the language. This is especially the case with old hands (Nigeria Tong). In China, ZhongGuo Tong is not in short supply either, the

two economies bolster movements between the two countries. The recent population census by Wikipedia had it that, there are 10,000 Nigerians in china as at 2014. A more recent census in 2017, the number of Chinese nationals in Nigeria stood at 40,000. In major Nigerian cities, there are

China donates \$2 million to refugee camp in Zimbabwe

A batch of relief items have been handed over to Zimbabwe's Tongogara Camp in Chipinge, Manicaland Province, as part of a \$2 million donation from China.

The funding was used to buy foodstuff for new arrivals and being given to the refugees in the form of cash.

The World Food Program (WFP), in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other aid organizations, is managing the distribution of the food items and cash transfers.

The WFP now gives \$13 per month per person to more than 12,000 refugees in the camp.

According to the UNHCR, Zimbabwe received 1,382 asylum seekers at the Tongogara Refugee Camp in the first 10 months of this year.

The camp's refugee population has been rising rapidly, from 5,000 in 2015 to the current 20,410, due to escalating conflicts in Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Receiving the donation, camp administrator Johann Mhlanga thanked the Chinese government for the assistance.

He said the Chinese assistance will help to empower and transform the lives of the refugees.

"Through funding from the People's Republic of China and contributions from other donors, the cash-based intervention has greatly transformed the lives of refugees and the host communities," Mhlanga said.

He said the cash given



A mother and her children stand outside their improvised housing at Zimbabwe's Tongogara Refugee Camp

to the refugees had created downstream benefits with some recipients starting micro enterprises.

Economic and commercial counsellor of Chinese Embassy Chen Ning reiterated China's commitment to continued assistance to the refugee camp to improve the lives of the inhabitants.

"We are fully aware that long-term stability, security, development and invigoration for Africa is not only the longing of the African people; it is also the responsibility of the international community. China stands ready to work with international partners including WFP, UNHCR to support African states including Zimbabwe in economic development and social security.

"The Chinese government has worked with UNHCR and WFP on the relief program of Tongogara Refugee Camp

in the form of donating both in-kind and in-cash items," Chen said.

He thanked Zimbabwe's central and local governments supporting and facilitating the implementation of the program.

"Together we have made the camp a second home for the refugees," Chen said, adding that China is ready to bring Chinese medical experts and agricultural experts in Harare to the camp to offer services to the refugees.

WFP deputy country director Niels Balzer paid tribute to China for the generous donation.

"I know we would all agree that there is no place like home, but this is why we are so grateful for the Chinese contribution, which goes a long way toward providing stability and security in Tongogara Refugee Camp," Balzer said.

UNHCR head of field office David Banda said the donation came at a time when funding to the refugee program in Zimbabwe is dwindling.

"UNHCR is grateful to China for the financial assistance they have provided to the refugees program in Zimbabwe," Banda said. "The \$2 million financial support came at a time UNHCR, its partners and the government of Zimbabwe were struggling to address basic essential needs of refugees due to limited financial and material resources."

He said the number of refugees at the camp continues to increase, with an average 150 asylum seekers arriving every month.

Apart from food, the camp is also struggling to provide accommodation and education to the growing refugee population.

China-aided university library complex handed over to Tanzania

China has handed over a state-of-the-art library complex to Tanzania to support the country's education sector.

Tanzanian President John Magufuli thanked China for the 41-million-U.S.-dollar project located in the University of Dar es Salaam at the handover ceremony.

"Many thanks to China and many thanks to the people of China," said the president shortly before the Chinese Ambassador to Tanzania, Wang Ke, handed over the new library to him.

President Magufuli said the friendship between China and Tanzania started many years back with the construction of the Tanzania-Zambia Railway Authority (TAZARA) in the 1970s and the Urafiki Textile Mills.

Magufuli urged Tanzanians to learn Chinese, explaining that with the increasing investments of Chinese firms in the country and the anticipated increased number of Chinese tourists to the country, the future looked bright.

Wang Ke, the Chinese Ambassador to Tanzania, said the library will help accelerate reforms and transformations pioneered by President Magufuli.

"Apart from funding the construction of the library, the Chinese government



Tanzanian President John Magufuli (5th L) and Chinese Ambassador to Tanzania Wang Ke (6th L) attend the handover ceremony of a China-aided library in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

has also provided free information and communication technology, maintenance systems and furniture to the library," said Wang.

The Chinese envoy said the 54 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries were special, adding: "We have every reason to maintain and strengthen this relationship."

Joyce Ndalichako, Tanzania's Minister of Education, Science, Technology and

Vocational Training, said the library will enable university students from across the country widen their knowledge and skills for the welfare of the country.

The library complex covers an area of 4.7 hectares with a floor area of 20,000 square meters. It consists of a library, a Confucius Institute and a Sino-Tanzania Cultural Exchange park. With the capacity of stocking 800,000 books, the library can house 2,100 people at the same time.

Belt and Road Initiative is vehicle to Tanzania's industrialization drive: official

A senior Tanzanian official has described the Chinese-proposed Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as a vehicle towards the industrialization drive of the east African nation.

"When it comes to the Belt and Road Initiative I see it as a development strategy involving infrastructure development and investments in various areas," said Stella Manyanya, the Deputy Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment.

She said the BRI was striving to improve investments and trade facilitation, removing barriers for the creation of a sound business environment.

Manyanya was speaking at

the Conference on Belt and Road Initiative and China-Tanzania Industrialization Cooperation jointly organized by the Chinese embassy in Tanzania and Tanzania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation among other partners in Dar es Salaam.

Manyanya said most of the recently completed Chinese construction of buildings, roads, bridges and other projects in Tanzania bore the symbol of Chinese expertise, skills and hard work.

"I trust that, in the process, Tanzanians have gained profoundly in expertise, experience and industrial discipline," she told the one-day conference at the Julius Nyerere

International Convention Center.

Humphrey Moshi, the Director of the Center for Chinese Studies at the University of Dar es Salaam, said BRI is a platform for scaling up the cooperation aimed at provision of basic infrastructure, regional development connectivity and industrialization.

The professor of economics said the road to achieving an industrial economy in Tanzania was on track in terms of policies, strategies and measures.

"We are seeing railways being built, roads, ports, airports and human development reforms," said Moshi.

Stephen Bainous Kargbo, the United Nations Industrial

Development Organization (UNIDO) Representative to Tanzania, Mauritius and the East African Community (EAC), said the BRI was one key area of cooperation between UNIDO and China, in particular through UNIDO's promotion of cross-border investment among countries participating in the initiative.

"We strongly believe that the Belt and Road Initiative stands to become one of the largest and most effective platforms for international cooperation of the century," he added.

Wang Ke, Chinese Ambassador to Tanzania, said Tanzania as one of Africa's fastest growing economies has also made industrialization an important policy objective.

Algeria, China sign pacts ahead of 6-bln-USD mega phosphate project



Chairman of CITIC Construction Chen Xiaojia (L) and CEO of Algerian energy giant Sonatrach Abdelmoumen Ould Kaddour shake hands after signing cooperation documents in Tebessa, Algeria

Algeria and China have signed cooperation documents for the implementation of a mega integrated project worth 6 billion U.S. dollars for the exploitation of phosphate in the eastern region of Algeria.

The deals were signed by CEO of Algerian energy giant Sonatrach Abdelmoumen Ould Kaddour and Chairman of CITIC Construction Chen Xiaojia in province of Tebessa in east Algeria.

The ceremony was attended by Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia and his cabinet officials, in addition to prefects of four eastern provinces involved in the project.

The two parties are due to meet again in December to sign the shareholder pact for the

establishment of the consortium group, as a final step that precedes the start of the construction stage of the project due early 2019. The production phase is planned for 2022.

The project will be realized in partnership between CITIC Construction and three Algerian groups, namely Sonatrach, Asmidal and Manal.

Ouyahia hailed the project as "the largest industry project in the last decade in Algeria, as it marks the beginning of a real partnership between Algeria and China."

Chen said that "the project reflects a profound wisdom of Algeria in terms of serving its people, and we are proud to be selected to contribute in this process."

For his part, Kaddour said that "the sharp fall

of oil prices forced Algeria to adopt a new strategy that is based on diversifying its oil-dependent economy, and this mega phosphate project is in big step toward reinforcing this strategy."

"This is not the project of Sonatrach or CITIC; it is rather a federating project that will reinforce our partnership," he added.

It will enable Algeria to increase its phosphate output to 10 million tons a year, thus becoming the third largest phosphate reserves in the world.

China's share in this mega project is estimated at 49 percent, while the Algerian party will hold the majority share of 51 percent, in accordance with investment law of the North African country.

This integrated phosphate project is spread through four main places, namely El Hadaba mine in the easternmost province of Tebessa with an investment budget worth 1.2 billion dollars, "Sulphur Stone" area in the easternmost province of Souk Ahras with an investment worth 2.2 billion dollars, "the Black Stone" area in the north-eastern province of Skikda with an investment worth 2.5 billion dollars, and the extension of the port of the northeastern province of Annaba with an investment worth 200 million dollars.

The project will include the duplication of the railway connecting the production site to the port of Annaba, and connecting the sites with industrial water, gas and power.

In its construction stage, the project is due to generate more than 14,600 direct jobs.

Algeria aims through this project to be able to export annually fertilizer quantities worth 2 billion dollars, and gradually manage to increase its phosphate and natural gas reserves through the establishment of structured transformation and wealth-generating industry, which would pave the way for Algeria to become the third largest exporters of fertilizer in the world.

Huawei, Namibian mobile company commemorate decade partnership

Mobile Telecommunications Company (MTC) Namibia and China Huawei have commemorated a ten-year partnership resulting in a substantial market penetration.

Chinese company Huawei and MTC have been in a technological transfer partnership with the Namibian Government owned MTC for the past ten years contributing significantly to the company's growth.

Speaking at the decade anniversary celebrations in Windhoek, Namibian President Hage Geingob said the partnership is a solid foundation of how best South-South cooperation presents fair opportunities for business.

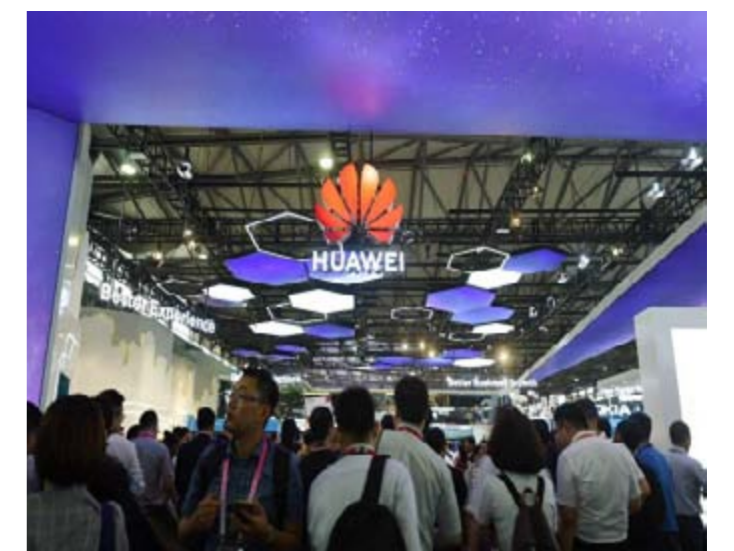
"This partnership has played

a role in ensuring that Namibians have access to the latest in mobile communication technology and ensuring that we remain at par with our global peers," Geingob said.

Geingob also reiterated that the growing partnership between the two companies is a testimony of growing business links between China and Namibia.

"While we encourage smart partnerships between Namibian businesses and foreign businesses, it is important that these partnerships and relations be mutually beneficial, and that Namibians benefit in the short and long-term," he added.

Geingob commended the technology transfer to Namibia driven by the two companies.



Huawei, Namibian mobile company commemorate decade partnership

Chinese firms to construct Economic Zone in central Zambia



Zambian President Edgar Lungu inaugurates the Jiangxi Multi-Facility Economic Zone in Chibombo district, Zambia, Nov. 21, 2018. A consortium of Chinese firms will construct a Multi-Facility Economic Zone in central Zambia.

A consortium of Chinese firms will construct a Multi-Facility Economic Zone in central Zambia's Chibombo district, with President Edgar Lungu saying the project will go a long way in helping the country in its endeavor to ensure value addition to local products.

The ground breaking ceremony of the Jiangxi Multi Facility Economic Zone was held in Chibombo district recently. It will cover 600 hectares of land, with an initial investment of 300 million U.S. dollars in the first phase which will create more than 5,000 jobs.

Speaking during the groundbreaking ceremony, the Zambian leader said the project by a consortium of Chinese companies -- the Jiangxi United Industrial Development Limited, marked another symbol of the strong relationship between the

two countries which dates to pre-independence period.

The Zambian leader said the project was one of the fruits from his recent visit to China where he attended the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) summit held in Beijing in September.

Zambia, he said, has already started benefiting from the 60 billion U.S. dollars in funding support pledged by Chinese President Xi Jinping at the summit to serve China-Africa cooperative projects, as evidenced by the industrial park project.

According to him, the Economic Zone was also a culmination of a business forum the Zambia delegation attended in east China's Jiangxi Province on the sidelines of the FOCAC summit.

"It is indeed a great mark of achievement to see that it's not

long ago that we visited China, but we are already witnessing the fruits of our visit. This is an indication of the importance that People's Republic of China attaches to the bilateral cooperation with Zambia," he said.

The Zambian leader further reaffirmed his government's commitment to create a conducive business environment for their operations and commended the provincial administration in Jiangxi Province to ensure the actualization of the Economic Zone.

He further said his government will continue to encourage the development of multi-facility economic zones, industrial parks and farm blocks in order to foster industrialization and value addition.

Li Jie, Chinese Ambassador to Zambia, said the economic

and trade cooperation zone plays an important role in pushing forward the Belt and Road Initiative and industrial capacity cooperation between China and Zambia.

"We believe that the project will fully take the location advantages of Central Province to promote the agriculture, manufacturing and food processing industries, which will contribute to local economic development and regional industrial upgrading," he said.

Xu Guojian, a representative of all shareholders, said the project was the fulfillment of one of the eight major initiatives proposed by the Chinese president at the 2018 FOCAC Beijing summit where Chinese firms were encouraged to expand their investment in Africa by establishing and upgrading a number of economic and trade cooperation zones.

China, Mozambique entrepreneurs intensify trade cooperation after FOCAC



Cross-section of participants at the meeting of entrepreneurs which held in Maputo, Mozambique last month.

Entrepreneurs from both China and Mozambique have met last month in Maputo to intensify trade cooperation between the two countries, particularly in engineering, construction and agriculture.

The Chinese delegation of entrepreneurs, headed by the deputy governor of Anhui Province Zhou Xi'an, came to Maputo under the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) mechanism to strengthen relations in various sectors together with

local business people and the government.

According to the Chinese Ambassador to Mozambique Su Jian, the visit of the delegation is one of the follow-up actions of President Filipe Nyusi's visit to China.

"Anhui Province is an important base of the manufacturing industry, agricultural production, energy, raw materials, vehicle manufacturing and professional training," Su said.

Mozambican Transport and Communications Minister Carlos

Mesquita said in his speech that from 2013 to 2018, 148 projects valued at 751 million U.S. dollars were approved with direct Chinese investment, making China the largest investor and economic partner of the country.

"The Mozambican government is implementing institutional law reforms aimed at improving the business environment, reducing bureaucracy and simplifying procedures to create a stable, durable and transparent business environment," said the minister.

Mesquita said that facilitation

measures to obtain licenses among other aspects aimed at boosting commercial activity are ongoing.

"Chinese companies are invited to offer their full support, especially in things that Mozambicans do not do effectively and profitably," he said.

Chinese investment in Mozambique has created 20,000 jobs over five years, Mesquita said, adding that investment projects are underway for the production of soybeans, and production and export of sesame and bird feather to China.

China urges international community to support Horn of Africa

Chinese Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ma Zhaoxu has called on the Security Council and international community to provide constructive assistance to the countries in the Horn of Africa.

At a Security Council meeting on Somalia, Ma said that the relations between countries in the Horn of Africa have been

continually improved over past few months.

Ambassador Ma said China hopes the countries in the region will actively seize the current favorable opportunity, strengthen dialogue and consultation, and work in tandem to properly resolve relevant issues.

In a unanimous vote, the Security Council adopted a resolution to lift a nearly decade-

old arms embargo and targeted sanctions on Eritrea after the country's recent rapprochement towards neighbors in the Horn of Africa.

The Chinese diplomat said the lifting of sanctions is conducive to the peace and development in the region.

Ma pledged that China will continue to work with the international community to play

a constructive role in achieving peace, stability and development of the countries in the Horn of Africa.

The council imposed sanctions on Eritrea in 2009 for its support of Al-Shabaab insurgents in Somalia. The UN's most powerful body slapped more sanctions on the Horn of African country in three other resolutions from 2011 to 2013.

Chinese-built hydropower project to boost Equatorial Guinea economy: President

The economy of Equatorial Guinea will be "significantly" boosted following the completion of the Chinese-built regulating reservoir of the Djibloho Hydropower Plant, President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo recently.

The project was completed at a time when Equatorial Guinea aims to enhance development through the provision of clean energy for all, especially in rural areas, Obiang said during the regulating reservoir's completion ceremony, adding that the project has brought more jobs to locals.

The regulating reservoir will bring peace and development to the country, which aims to make energy for all a reality, according to the president.

With a 120-MW capacity, the Djibloho Hydropower Plant is the largest of its kind in the country, and is able to satisfy about 90 percent of the electricity need of Equatorial Guinea's continental part since 2011, said Liu Bao, a senior executive of the Chinese company Power China that has built the Djibloho plant and the regulating reservoir with financing from the Export-Import Bank of China.

Inconsistent rainfall, however, adversely affected the constant supply of power. During dry seasons, the electricity production usually depends on polluting diesel fuel, hence the necessity of a regulating reservoir, Liu said.



Equatorial Guinea's President, Teodoro Obiang Nguema speaks during the ceremony of regulating reservoir completion

During Saturday's ceremony, Liu and one of his colleagues were decorated by President Obiang for their contribution to the country's development.

According to Minister for Industry and Energy Miguel Ekuo Ondo, the completion of the regulating reservoir will alleviate poverty in the country.

"We now have the possibility to reduce electricity prices for the population,"

Ondo told journalists.

Equatorial Guinea wants to eliminate its reliance on imported diesel fuel and use local resources, including hydropower and gas, Ondo said.

The "timely" completion of the reservoir has rekindled the country's 2020 vision that aims at expanding the sources of production to achieve a competitive economy, he said.

China optimistic, revitalized peace deal will hold in South Sudan: diplomat

Chinese Ambassador to South Sudan He Xiangdong has voiced optimism that the recently signed Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) will hold, and vows continued support towards its implementation.

He said China remains hopeful that the peace agreement signed on Sept. 12 between President Salva Kiir and rebel leader Riek Machar in the Ethiopian capital will pave way for genuine peace.

He made the remarks recently in Juba after he signed the document as one of the international community witnesses and guarantors of the peace agreement.

China has been a very active supporter to the peace process in South Sudan working alongside the United States, Britain and Norway and countries of the east African regional bloc Intergovern-

mental Authority on Development (IGAD) which mediated the peace process.

"I hope and would say that I am confident with the support of the international community, regional countries and with the support of South Sudanese, the peace process will move forward and implementation of the R-ARCSS will be a very successful one," said He.

"I would like to say that China's government and people will continue to do our best to support the peace process along with IGAD countries, African leaders, African countries and the international community," he added.

Ismail Wais, IGAD Special Envoy for South Sudan, lauded China for unwaveringly supporting the peace process that left the international community anxious due to the fact the process was slow and several peace deals agreed upon in the

past collapsed.

"From the very beginning and starting from 2015, China was always ready to support the peace process and this we witnessed as IGAD countries," said Wais.

He said they have made progress on peace implementation due to the fact that all key committees charged with monitoring the peace agreement have been reconstituted and all will operate within South Sudan unlike previously when some bodies operated outside the country.

Wais said the reconstituted peace monitoring bodies include the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism, Joint Military Ceasefire Commission, National Constitutional Amendment Committee, and National Pre-Transitional Committee.



The Lekki Free Trade Zone: giving practical effect to Nigeria-China industrial cooperation

Forty-six-year-old Zhang Yongjun is very satisfied about the decision he made eight months ago. In April, he decided to move his Sunshine Houseware Co. from China to Nigeria to further expand his market to more African countries.

Before moving to Nigeria, Zhang's company produced plastic brooms and other plastic articles for home use in Ningbo, east China's Zhejiang Province, for more than 10 years, and his products were mainly exported to the Nigerian market. In April this year, he visited the Lekki Free Trade Zone in Lekki Peninsula in Lagos, the most populous city on the African continent. After some research on the ground he decided to move his company here.

"As my products are targeting Nigeria, producing locally can greatly reduce my production costs up to 20 percent because of the low labor costs and no international transportation fees," Zhang said, adding that the materials are also sourced locally.

After moving to Nigeria, Zhang expanded his production by increasing his injection molding machines from two to six, increasing his annual output value to over 10 million yuan (\$1.45 million).

"What's more, producing in the free trade zone can help me explore surrounding markets in Africa," said Zhang. "I can also enjoy a lot of preferential policies here."

Zhang's company is only one of the Chinese enterprises operating in the Lekki Free Trade Zone. To date, 63 companies have signed investment agreements with the zone, of which, 25 are operational or under construction, mainly engaging in logistics, industrial manufacturing and auto assembly.

All-round planning

Starting construction in 2007, the Lekki Free Trade Zone is an important part of the eight measures to strengthen China-Africa cooperation announced by the Chinese Government at the First Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2006, which was also listed in the FOCAC Beijing Action Plan (2007-09).

After more than 10 years' construction, the zone is now in a fast-developing stage in terms of both construction and operation, according to Lai Siqing, Deputy General Manager of China-Africa Lekki Investment Ltd., which controls 60 percent of the free trade zone. The remaining 40 percent is held by the government of Lagos State.

"It has a long construction process as

we hope to plan it using China's successful experience in developing its special economic zones," Lai told ChinAfrica. "It is not simply an industrial development zone or hi-tech development area, but a zone with various functions and infrastructure like a city."

The Lekki Free Trade Zone covers an area of 30 square km and has been divided into different functional areas that include a manufacturing district, logistics district, business district and real estate development district. In addition, the zone has its own electricity power plant and water supply plant. "Since the power supply in Lagos is not stable, it is important to have



Local staffs work in one of the manufacturing companies situated inside the Lekki Free Trade Zone

our own power plant, which can ensure stable electricity supply for people's daily livelihood and production in the zone," Huang Xigong, Managing Director of Lekki Free Zone Development Co., said.

According to him, the zone will house 120,000 people and will provide nearly 60,000 jobs.

"Our goal is to build the zone into a new satellite city that includes a new airport and a deep-sea port," said Huang.

The Lekki Deep Sea Port, a multi-purpose port at the heart of the free trade zone, began construction by China Harbour Engineering Co. Ltd. in March. After completion, it will be one of the most modern ports in West Africa, offering

enormous support to the development of the export-oriented free trade zone. In addition, a new international airport has been planned 10 km from the zone.

"The new airport and the deep sea port will increase the development potential of this area," said Huang.

Facilitating investment

Like the special economic zones China established soon after it adopted the policy of reform and opening up in late 1978 to attract foreign capital, advanced technologies and management expertise, the Lekki Free Trade Zone also has a series of measures to facilitate investment and to attract technologies.

for export manufacturing and other commercial activities," Nasiru A. Musa, a NEPZA official at the Lekki Free Trade Zone told ChinAfrica. "We also ensure that necessary incentives are given to the zones and enterprises."

According to Musa, who has been working in the zone since 2007, the government encourages the development of free trade zones like the one in Lekki. "The role of the zone is enormous in terms of promoting local development," said Musa, adding that he personally experienced the huge changes that have taken place in the past decade, from almost barren ground to modern facilities in the zone.

To encourage investment to the free trade zone, the Nigerian Government also granted preferential taxation policies. Enterprises in the zone are exempted from tax categories such as corporate tax, enterprise income tax, value-added tax and educational tax. In addition, the zone has a bonded function, meaning that companies do not need to pay tariffs while importing parts and only need to pay the tariff on parts after the assembled products are sold.

Benefiting locally

According to Huang, the development of the free trade zone can not only diversify the country's economy by changing the Nigerian economy's heavy reliance on the oil industry, but also ease the country's heavy unemployment burden. Nigeria's unemployment rate reached 16.5 percent of its total labor force in 2017 according to OpenDataforAfrica.org.

"Our goal is to hire 60,000 local people in the zone," said Huang. He noted that the zone does not encourage companies only engaging in international trade, but welcomes manufacturers. "Trading companies hire fewer people than enterprises in the manufacturing industry," he said. "We hope to provide local people with more jobs."

Currently, the companies in the zone are providing 2,500 jobs for local people. Its developer, Lekki Free Zone Development Co., employs 16 Chinese and more than 100 local people. Elvis Njoku, Human Resources Officer of the company, has been working here since 2014, and is in charge of recruiting new staff and designing people-related policies for the zone. He noted that the zone provides stable employment.

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