

## **Join Hands to Overcome Difficulties for New Prospects of China-Africa Cooperation**

Remarks by Ambassador Chen Xiaodong at the Webinar Hosted by  
Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflections (MISTRA)

14:30 March 17 2021

Excellency Program Director Ambassador Omar,

Honorable Executive Director Dr. Mthembu,

Excellency Deputy Director General Ambassador Sooklal,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon!

It is my great pleasure to attend today's Webinar and I thank MISTRA for the kind invitation.

MISTRA is a leading think tank in South Africa focused on major global and African strategic issues deeply valued by various parties.

Executive Director Dr. Mthembu is a well-known South African scholar and an old friend of the Chinese Embassy.

DDG of DIRCO and my old friend Ambassador Sooklal is

also with us at the Webinar. Excellency Ambassador, we look forward to your insightful intervention today.

Dr. Mthembu, I have carefully read the Working Paper and I am deeply impressed by your insightful perspectives.

I would like to commend Dr. Mthembu for his long-standing interest in China, especially through his research on China's COVID-19 response, foreign policy, and the Belt and Road Initiative.

The world today is indeed witnessing major changes as well as a pandemic unseen in a century. Complex and deep shifts are taking place in the international order and landscape.

In this context, humankind is faced with unprecedented challenges and the international community need to work together to help each other overcome these challenges.

I would like to take this opportunity to share a few observations:

**First, in the face of COVID-19, the world needs to work together more than ever to fight the virus.**

The pandemic has taught us that all countries are in a community with a shared future, that no one can do well alone in a major crisis, and that solidarity and cooperation are essential to meeting the challenges.

As one of the first countries in the world to put COVID-19 under control, China has carried out the largest emergency humanitarian operation since the founding of New China. We contributed our share to the global response.

To date, China has provided COVID-19 response assistance to more than 150 countries and 9 international organizations.

We dispatched 36 medical expert teams to 34 countries, provided free vaccines to 69 developing countries and exported vaccines to 43 countries.

We provided more than 200 billion masks, 2 billion pieces of protective clothing and 800 million testing kits.

In the fight against the virus, China and Africa have looked out for and helped each other in solidarity and cooperation. We once again demonstrated a brotherhood of tiding over difficulties.

The two sides jointly proposed to hold the Extraordinary China-Africa Summit on Solidarity Against COVID-19 to discuss pandemic response and show mutual support.

China has so far provided nearly 120 batches of emergency PPEs to Africa and sent medical experts to 15 African countries.

We have provided and will provide vaccines to a total of 35

African countries as well as the AU.

The construction of the Africa CDC headquarter with Chinese assistance has already kicked off, and cooperation between 30 pairs of Chinese and African hospitals are also being advanced quickly.

**Second, in the face of a changing international landscape, the world needs to practice multilateralism more than ever.**

This pandemic has once again proved that a zero-sum approach cannot solve national problems or deal with international challenges.

However, some individual countries and politicians are creating obstacles in the global response to the pandemic. They are making self-centered moves to do damage by smearing, slandering and making political viruses against others.

These practices undermine global efforts against the pandemic and will surely be rejected by people in the world and by history.

Just now, Dr. Omar and Dr. Mthembu have both mentioned China and US relations. I want to emphasize that the fundamental reason for escalated tensions in China-US relations during the the past four years is that the US does not accept

China's sustainable development and worries about possible challenge to its hegemony.

As you can see over the past years, the US leveraged all means possible, such as Xinjiang, Hongkong and Taiwan issues to slander, attack and contain China.

The new Biden administration, however, has on the one hand claimed to review the China policy of the Trump administration, but on the other hand listed China as a serious competitor.

Tomorrow China and US will hold a high level dialogue, which would be the first high level face-to-face exchange between the two sides.

We hope that through this dialogue, the two side will build relations based on non-conflict, non-confrontation, mutual respect, and win-win cooperation, manage differences, and promote sound and steady development of China-US relations.

As a responsible major country, China has always advocated and practiced multilateralism. We firmly uphold the UN-centered international system and the basic norms of international relations with the UN Charter as a cornerstone.

We actively promote the development of global governance system toward a more just and reasonable direction.

China has always adhered to the path of peaceful development. We work to foster a new type of international relations and a community with a shared future for mankind.

We will forever be a builder of world peace, a contributor to global development and a defender of the international order.

As the world's largest developing country, China will always stand together with developing countries including Africa.

No matter how the international situation evolves, China will never waver in its determination to strengthen China-Africa solidarity and cooperation. We will always be a sincere friend and reliable partner of Africa.

**Third, with a global economy in deep recession, the world needs a coordinated response more than ever.**

For the first time in history, the virus has caused major global economies huge damage all at the same time, and there is now great uncertainty in the prospects of global recovery.

In order to secure recovery and development post COVID-19, it is important to be even more committed to extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits, so as to achieve win-win cooperation and common development.

President Xi Jinping has stressed on many occasions that

the BRI is not a geopolitical tool, but a pragmatic cooperation platform. It is not a foreign aid program, but a joint development initiative that honors extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits.

The BRI has shown strong resilience and vigor in the face of COVID-19.

In 2020, China's trade in goods with countries along the route grew by 0.7% year-on-year. Our non-financial direct investment in BRI partner countries increased by 18.3% year-on-year.

In the first two months of this year, China's trade with BRI countries totaled 1.62 trillion yuan, up 23.9% year-on-year.

The family of China-Africa Belt and Road cooperation is growing stronger, with 46 African countries having signed BRI cooperation documents with China.

Despite the impact of COVID-19, more than 1,100 BRI projects in Africa are operating against the odds.

Nearly 100,000 Chinese technical and engineering personnel are still working hard in Africa, and a number of railroad, highway and power station projects have resumed, making important contributions to local economic and social development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

China's prospects of sustainable development are very promising.

As China works to balance pandemic response and economic recovery, we have achieved a growth of 2.3 percent in 2020, which means we are the only major economy in the world to achieve positive growth.

This year, China's economic growth is expected to hit above 6 percent, contributing more than one-third of global growth.

President Xi Jinping has recently announced that nearly 100 million Chinese rural residents living under the current poverty line have been lifted out of poverty.

This means that China has completed the arduous task of eradicating absolute poverty and fulfilled the poverty reduction targets of UN Agenda 2030 ten years ahead of schedule.

China's achievements in poverty reduction have not only made significant contributions to global development, but also explored feasible paths for developing countries to achieve development and prosperity.

This year marks the centenary of the Communist Party of China. With a hundred years of history, the Party is still moving

forward like an energetic young person.

As China enters a new stage of development, upholds the new development philosophy, and fosters a new development paradigm under CPC's leadership, it is like a China Express with stronger power and greater carrying capacity accelerating toward new goals.

We will further open up to the outside world, better connect the two major markets at home and abroad, better integrate and coordinate imports and exports, and help accelerate the building of an open world economy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

China and Africa are true friends, good partners and real brothers with each other.

China-Africa cooperation has set a fine example for South-South cooperation and international cooperation with Africa. No matter how the international situation changes, China and Africa will always be a community of shared future.

African friends are most welcome to get on board the "express train" of China's economic development to achieve win-win cooperation and common development.

To this end, I would like to make a three-point proposal:

**First, it is important to work together to meet**

**challenges and further deepen solidarity and cooperation in COVID-19 response.**

As the virus is still raging in Africa and around the world, China is ready to work with the African side to implement the outcomes of last year's Extraordinary Summit on Solidarity Against COVID-19.

We are ready to promote China-Africa cooperation in health, resumption of work and production and improvement of people's livelihood.

We are ready to continue to provide PPEs, share experience in response, carry out vaccine cooperation, promote cooperation between paired-up Chinese and African hospitals, and accelerate the building of Africa CDC headquarters according to Africa's needs.

China will move forward vaccine cooperation with African countries. We are also exploring vaccine cooperation with South Africa, including the local production of vaccines, so that the South African people will benefit from Chinese vaccines at an early date.

In the context of COVID-19, we are willing to work together with our African friends to build a China-Africa community of health for all and set a good example for global

health cooperation.

**Second, it is important to use collective cooperation mechanisms to further expand the areas of win-win cooperation between China and Africa.**

The next FOCAC meeting will be held in Senegal in the fourth quarter of 2021.

China and Africa are actively preparing for and designing the outcomes of the meeting to promote cooperation post COVID-19, to better meet the needs of both sides and to work toward higher quality and more benefits to people's livelihood.

China is ready to work with the African side to strengthen connection between the BRI as well as AU's Agenda 2063 and the development strategies of each country.

We are ready to improve the mix of production capacity investment, and to upgrade China-Africa cooperation with improved quality.

China is ready to take the opportunities delivered by the new development paradigm and the launch of AfcFTA to import more of Africa's high-quality products and strengthen the links between the two supply chains.

We are ready to expand cooperation in the digital economy, smart cities, clean energy, 5G and other new models of business,

promote the circulation of both the Chinese and African economies and jointly build a market of 2.7 billion people in China and Africa.

**Third, it is important to strengthen international solidarity and collaboration to firmly safeguard the common interests of developing countries.**

It is the common responsibility of the international community to support Africa's development, and countries need to cooperate with Africa based on respect for Africa's sovereignty and voice.

China firmly supports Africa's active participation in international affairs and in boosting its international influence.

We are ready to strengthen strategic communication with the African side on major international and regional issues in a timely manner and safeguard the common interests of developing countries.

We are ready to work with Africa to oppose external interference, safeguard fairness and justice, and promote a more equitable and reasonable international order.

However, at present, China and Africa are more likely to get information about each other through Western media, which makes easy misinterpretation and even misunderstanding.

The right to tell beautiful stories of China-Africa cooperation should be in the hands of the Chinese and African peoples, and not third parties who only seek to skew facts and discredit others with ulterior motives.

In this regard, I sincerely hope that the press, scholars and think tanks of China and South Africa can explore new ideas.

It would be useful to use online exchanges to enhance communication, to provide more comprehensive, impartial and genuine perspectives, as well as to deliver intellectual support and create a good public opinion atmosphere for China-Africa friendship and cooperation.

The Chinese Embassy in South Africa is also very much ready to provide necessary facilitation and support to that end.

Thank you!