

Speech at the South Africa-China Dialogue on Belt and Road Initiative “Synergizing BRI with Africa for Win-Win Development”

Cedrick Frolick

Program Director, Prof. Harrison

Prof. Habib, Vice-Chancellor of Wits University

Your Excellency Ambassador Lin Sontian

Ambassador Dr. Manelisi Genge

Prof. Garth Shelton

Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Introduction

South Africa is honored to have received President Xi Jinping on 24 July 2018 for an official state visit to our nation. The visit also marked the celebration of twenty years of diplomatic relations between South Africa and China. As stated by President Xi Jinping: “Our two countries have witnessed increasing political mutual trust, practical cooperation, people-to-people exchanges and strategic coordination”. The state visit

was followed by the tenth BRICS Summit in Johannesburg and was convened under the theme "BRICS in Africa: Collaboration for Inclusive Growth and Shared Prosperity in the Fourth Industrial Revolution". The relationship between Africa and China is not recent or by accident. In 1971, upon China's re-admission to the UN, Chairman Mao stated that "we were carried back into the UN with the support of our African brothers and sisters".

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa then paid an official visit to China on 1 September that further strengthened bilateral relations between our two countries. At the FOCAC (Forum for China-Africa co-operation) Beijing Summit held earlier this month African leaders have applauded Chinese President Xi Jinping's commitment towards cooperation with the continent and the benefits that the Belt and Road Initiative brings. China will implement eight major initiatives with African countries in the next three years and beyond, covering areas such as industrial promotion, infrastructure connectivity, trade facilitation, and green development, as well as provide new funding of US\$60 billion to the continent.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa defended China's involvement on the continent, saying FOCAC "refutes the view that a new colonialism is taking hold in Africa as our detractors would have us believe."

What is the interest of Parliament?

Constitutionally mandated to represent the interests of citizens to make laws, oversee Executive action, to hold the Executive accountable and to process budgets

Since 2006 regular exchange mechanism between the Parliament of the R.S.A and the National Peoples' Congress. PC on Trade & Industry, International Relations, Tourism, Communications, Police, Defence, Arts & Culture and Environmental Affairs.

To provide the legislative framework that will underpin our relationship in the Belt & Road Initiative and to collaborate with other African countries and our colleagues in China.

**SINO-AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE COLLABORATION FOR
ECOLOGY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ALONG THE
BELT AND ROAD**

We like what Bie Tao, an official in China’s Ministry of Environmental Protection said that “no side will win if the environment is neglected, and we have many lessons in this regard.”

- For us, as developing African countries, we see the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as an economic framework developed to increase connectivity between China and us as partner countries.
- The Belt and Road Initiative aims to link different regions through infrastructure construction, transport and economic corridors and by bridging China with the rest of the world both physically, financially, digitally and socially.
- distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, we see the Belt and Road Initiative as an opportunity to strengthen Sino-African relations and provide economic development opportunities for the Continent of Africa.
- There is a strong indication that many African countries are strategically situated or are being repositioned to benefit the most from the Belt and Road Initiative. In fact, China’s social-economic development trajectory can be used as a reference by other developing countries, especially as the BRI is underpinned by the idea that countries should exchange experiences, discuss policy

measures and jointly formulate strategic plans for long-term sustainable development and global governance.

Current Legislative Fora Collaboration

Legislative: IPU; Brics-PF; GLOBE.

Multi-lateral: BRICS; FOCAC; South-South; G20.

We are essentially collaborating on many forums (or fora), including on environmental matters (see above). However, it would be appropriate to adopt a more focused approach to environmental protection along the Belt and Road to ensure that infrastructural development projects along this route do not compromise any aspect of the environmental medium. **This therefore calls for the formal establishment of the Sino-African Legislative Collaboration for Ecology and Economic Development along the Belt and Road. Accordingly, the Sino-African Legislative Collaboration would focus on ensuring that specific provisions on climate change, water conservation, and desertification control and biodiversity protection in Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) Action Plans are implemented.**

POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF A SINO-AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE FORUM

1. Sino-Africa Legislative Collaboration would facilitate sharing of experiences and best practices between the two sides, having fully recognised the importance of environmental protection for achieving sustainable development.
2. Chinese legislators who follow Chinese investments in key infrastructural development projects might need to work closely with their counterparts in host African countries to ensure that those investments achieve the economic development goals that they had been designed to achieve without tempering with the integrity of environmental assets at stake.
3. Similarly, relevant Chinese and African legislators would need to synchronise their oversight to the projects along the Belt and Road to have a shared understanding of the issues to be addressed.
4. The respectful, equal, mutually beneficial, realistic and pragmatic principles that govern Sino-Africa relations at the executive level should equally underpin Sino-Africa Legislative Collaboration for the Environment and Economic Development along the Belt and

Road. We already have something to work with, thanks to the long track record of mutually beneficial relationship between China and the peoples of the great Continent of Africa.

CONCLUSION

I'm reminded by the closing remarks of President Ramaphosa at the last Beijing FOCAC Summit.

“Our political orientation and perspectives are very similar, we have a revolutionary approach and we look at the world in a similar way, we are therefore close friends”. We have entered a golden age. Some are jealous and that’s why they say its a new colonialism”

We appreciate and value the mutual friendship, partnership and respect of the people of China. “

C.T. Frolick, MP

House Chairperson: Committees, Oversight & ICT

National Assembly

Parliament of the Republic of South Africa

Cape Town