

FOCAC 2024 SUMMIT: DEEPENING CHINA-AFRICA COOPERATION FOR MUTUAL MODERNIZATION

By

Areeba Arif Khan

Research Associate

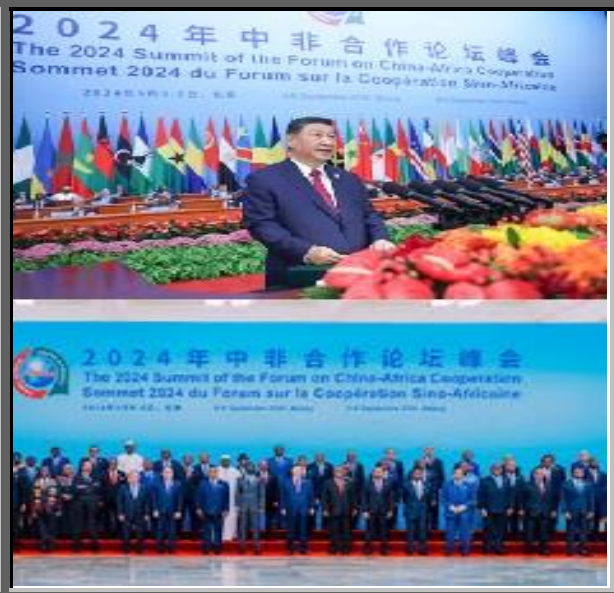
Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East & Africa (CAMEA), ISSI

Edited by

Amina Khan

September 17, 2024

(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do not represent those of ISSI)



The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) Summit was held in Beijing from 4-6 September 2024, marking a significant milestone in the enduring relationship between China and Africa.¹ The Summit was attended by President Xi Jinping, Heads of State and Government from 53 African nations, Chair of the African Union (AU) Commission Moussa Faki Mahamat, and representatives from International Organisations. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was a special guest. The Summit's theme was: "Joining Hands to Advance Modernization and High-level China Africa Community with a Shared Future."² Two major outcomes emerged: "Beijing Declaration" and "Action Plan"-- both of which underscored a clear political consensus between China and African nations to enhance mutual cooperation across various domains, signifying the Summit's resounding success.

Since the creation of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in 2000, the relationship has evolved into a robust partnership focused on economic growth and modernization. The Forum has been convened

¹ Shola Lawal, "China-Africa summit 2024: What's in it for Beijing, Xi Jinping and Africa?," *Al-Jazeera*, September 04, 2024.
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/9/4/china-africa-summit-2024-whats-in-it-for-beijing-and-for-africa>

² "Joining Hands to Advance Modernization and High-level China Africa Community with a Shared Future," *China Consulate*, September 05, 2024.
http://lahore.china-consulate.gov.cn/eng/zgxcw/202409/t20240906_11486351.htm

every three years, and the most recent gathering of the Chinese and African leadership was 9th in that sequence.

Strengthening China-Africa Partnership

During the course of the Summit, President Xi Jinping engaged in bilateral interactions with the participating African leaders, aiming to deepen strategic ties and address key issues of mutual interest. Through these dialogues, China solidified and initiated new strategic alliances with 30 African nations, advancing its goal of building an “All-weather Community with a Shared Future.”³

In line with this, China and Africa have agreed to collaborate on global peace, security, and the improvement of the well-being of their respective populations. President Xi emphasized that China is committed to promoting African regional integration, including support for the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which is a key component of Africa’s Agenda for 2063.⁴

President Xi Jinping’s Six-Point Proposal

President Xi Jinping’s Six-Point Proposal for China-Africa Cooperation on Modernization includes the following key points:⁵

- Modernization should be open, diverse, and inclusive, benefiting all participants without discrimination.
- Prioritizing win-win outcomes for both China and Africa where both parties benefit economically and politically from their corporation.
- Promoting a fair approach to modernization that focuses on improving the quality of life for the people and addressing their core needs.
- Ensuring that development paths are diverse and inclusive, respecting the different social, economic, and cultural backgrounds of countries.

³ Mauro Ramos, “China promises to expand cooperation with Africa and invest US\$ 51,4 billion by 2027,” *Brasil de Fato*, September 6, 2024, <https://www.brasildefato.com.br/2024/09/06/china-promises-to-expand-cooperation-with-africa-and-invest-us-51-4-billion-by-2027>

⁴ Xi encourages African scholars to bolster China-Africa cooperation, Global South development, *The State council of the people republic of China*, September 3, 2024, https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202409/03/content_WS66d66aedc6d0868f4e8ea81b.html

⁵ China, “Africa agree on joint efforts to practice multilateralism, advance modernization: FM”, *Bastille Post Global*, September 5, 2024, <https://www.bastillepost.com/global/article/4135937-china-africa-agree-on-joint-efforts-to-practice-multilateralism-advance-modernization-fm>

- Supporting modernization that is sustainable and environment-friendly, emphasizing green technologies and clean energy.
- Advocating that peace and security are fundamental to the successful modernization of both China and Africa and that both regions must work together to safeguard these principles.

These proposals highlight a shared vision for a cooperative future that aligns the interests of both China and Africa in pursuing sustainable and inclusive growth.

Three-year plan for Comprehensive Cooperation

The Summit also unveiled a comprehensive three-year plan to enhance China-Africa partnership in critical areas, such as trade, industrial collaboration, infrastructure, agriculture, public health, and green development.⁶ China pledged to generate over one million jobs in Africa, boosting trade and providing zero-tariff treatment to the least developed African countries.⁷ To bolster these initiatives, President Xi announced that China would provide RMB 360 billion (approximately \$5.14 billion) in financial assistance over the next three years. This funding would come in three forms: RMB 210 billion in credit lines, RMB 80 billion in various types of support, and RMB 70 billion in investments by Chinese companies in Africa. These commitments are expected to significantly enhance China-Africa cooperation across a wide range of sectors, ensuring practical results.

Responding to the “Debt Trap” criticism

The Summit took place against a backdrop of ongoing Western criticism of China’s involvement in Africa, often framed as a “Debt Trap”. In his address, President Xi pushed back against these accusations, stating that China’s investments are aimed at fostering win-win outcomes. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), China’s bilateral debt only accounts for 12% of Africa’s total external debt. Many African leaders, in turn, highlighted how China’s investments have contributed significantly towards the development of infrastructure and economic growth across the Continent.⁸

⁶ Qaiser Nawab, “China as beacon of hope and South-South Cooperation”, *AZER NEWS*, September 9, 2024, <https://www.azernews.az/region/231022.html>

⁷ “China’s Xi promises one million jobs for Africa”, *Al-Jazeera*, September 5, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2024/9/5/chinas-xis-promises-one-million-jobs-for-africa#:~:text=Xi%20pledges%20%2451bn%20in,Forum%20on%20China%2DAfrica%20Cooperation.&text=Chinese%20President%20Xi%20Jinping%20has,choice%20for%20the%20Global%20South>.

⁸ “The response to debt distress in Africa and the role of China”, *CHATHAM HOUSE*, October 4, 2023, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2022/12/response-debt-distress-africa-and-role-china/02-case-studies-chinese-lending-africa>

Strategic outcomes of the Summit

The 2024 Beijing Summit resulted in several key agreements and initiatives. China and African nations signed the “Beijing Declaration of Jointly Building an All-weather China Africa Community with a Shared Future for the New Era,” reaffirming their commitment to deepening ties. The strategic areas of cooperation outlined were:

Infrastructure and Connectivity: China committed to implementing 30 infrastructure connectivity projects in Africa, including the revitalization of the Tanzania-Zambia Railway Authority (TAZARA) and the development of transport networks, ports, and industrial parks.⁹

Trade and Industrial Chains: Efforts to develop local value chains and enhance Africa’s manufacturing capabilities, with a focus on deep processing of critical minerals and empowering small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) across the Continent.

Health and Public Welfare: China will deploy 2000 health workers, establish joint medical centers, and implement 20 health programs to improve public health infrastructure and services in Africa.

Green Development: With a shared goal of addressing climate change, China pledged to support 30 clean energy projects in Africa, further promoting renewable energy and environmental protection initiatives.

Security and Stability: China will train 6000 African military personnel, provide a military grant worth RMB 1 billion, and help strengthen African nations' capacities to ensure the security of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects.¹⁰

A Vision for the Future

The Beijing Summit underscored China’s commitment to be a reliable partner for Africa in addressing modern-day challenges and fostering mutual growth. With its substantial financial and technical commitments, China is positioning itself as a key ally in Africa’s economic transformation, helping

⁹ “CGTN: Joint pursuit of modernization: China, Africa eye new chapter in building a community with a shared future,” *PR Newswire*, September 6, 2024, <https://www.prnewswire.com/in/news-releases/cgtn-joint-pursuit-of-modernization-china-africa-eye-new-chapter-in-building-a-community-with-a-shared-future-302240248.html>

¹⁰ “Beijing Summit of Forum on China-Africa Cooperation: Key highlights in numbers,” *ARAB TIMES KUWAIT*, September 8, 2024, <https://www.arabtimesonline.com/news/beijing-summit-of-forum-on-china-africa-cooperation-key-highlights-in-numbers/>

African countries achieve their development goals in areas such as infrastructure, healthcare, and climate resilience.¹¹

In conclusion, the 2024 FOCAC Summit marked a new era of China-Africa cooperation, reaffirming both parties' dedication to creating a high-level, all-weather community with a shared future. As the world order continues to evolve, this partnership is expected to play an increasingly vital role in shaping global development, particularly for the 'Global South.'

¹¹ "Joining Hands to Advance Modernization and Build a Community with a Shared Future," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The People's Republic of China*, September 05, 2024, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xw/zyxw/202409/t20240905_11485607.html