



ECOSOCC
Economic Social & Cultural Council

**The Voice of the
African Citizenry**

INAUGURAL EDITION

A f r i c a - C h i n a
**PEOPLE TO PEOPLE
DIALOGUE**
非中民间对话

‘Strengthening Friendship, Empowering Communities’

08TH - 09TH MAY 2025

Lusaka International Convention Centre (LICC Ciela Resorts)
LUSAKA, ZAMBIA

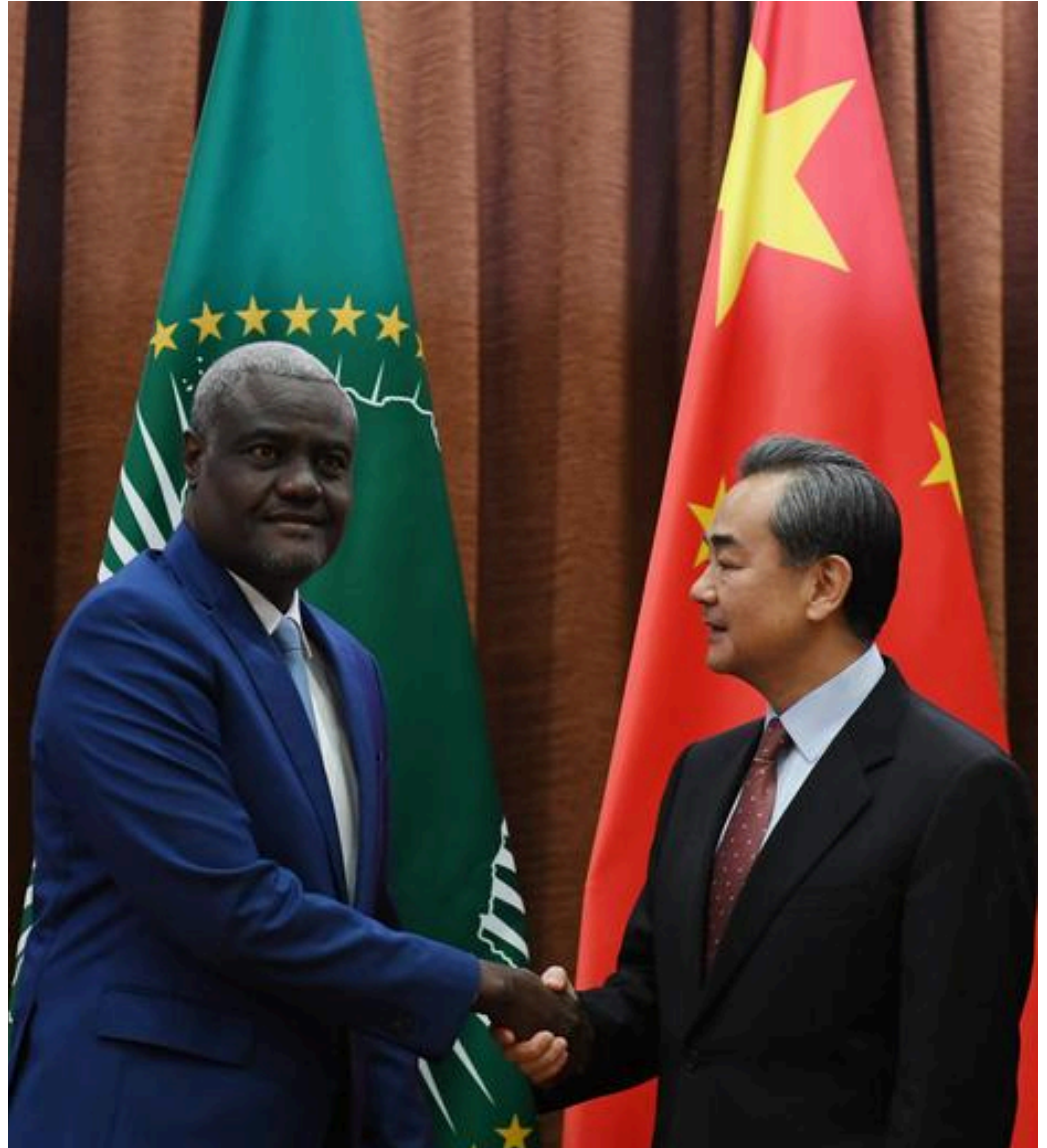
Concept Note



1. BACKGROUND

Africa and China, despite their geographical distance, share rich cultural and historical connections that have evolved over centuries. Both Africa and China have deep-rooted traditions and a vast diversity of languages, beliefs, and practices, highlighting the complexity of their respective cultures. Historically, both China and Africa have experienced significant periods of ancient civilization, while Africa is home to some of the earliest known human societies, with civilizations such as Ancient Egypt and the Kingdom of Kush. The Silk Road facilitated early trade and cultural exchanges between these regions, fostering mutual influence that can still be felt today. The Chinese presence in Africa has significantly expanded over the past two decades, marked by increased trade, investment, and infrastructure development.

China is now one of the continent's largest business partners, investing heavily in sectors such as construction, mining, and telecommunications. Additionally, thousands of Chinese expatriates live and work across various African nations, fostering cultural exchange and collaboration.



As much as Chinese presence is omnipresent on the continent, it is equally true that there is a significant African diaspora in China. The African community in China has been growing steadily, particularly in cities like Guangzhou, where many Africans engage in trade and business. This influx represents diverse nationalities, with individuals often involved in importing goods, studying, or working in various sectors. Cultural pride is evident as Africans in China share their rich heritage through food, music, and festivals, fostering cross-cultural interactions. As both regions continue to engage, the African diaspora in China plays a crucial role in strengthening people-to-people connections and promoting mutual understanding between cultures.

2.0 AFRICA-CHINA PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE DIALOGUE (P2P Dialogue)

2.1 THE ROLE OF ECOSOCC

The 'Africa-China Civil Society Cooperation Dialogue' (henceforth referred to as the 'P2P Dialogue') is a well-thought initiative led by the African Union's Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC). ECOSOCC is an advisory organ of the African Union (AU) that was established to facilitate civil society engagement in the AU's activities. Its primary objective is to foster participatory governance and enhance the inclusion of various societal groups in policy-making processes at the continental level. ECOSOCC works to represent a diverse range of voices, including those from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations, labor unions, women's groups, youth organizations, and the private sector. By promoting dialogue between these groups and the AU, ECOSOCC aims to ensure that the perspectives and needs of African citizens are considered in the AU's policies and Programs. ECOSOCC also focuses on promoting economic development, social justice, and cultural integration across the continent. It serves as a platform for discussing pressing issues affecting Africa, thus contributing to regional stability and sustainable development.

As much as in recent years, the relationship between China and Africa has grown significantly, characterized by increased trade, investment, and cultural exchange; there is a perceived gap that the two 'peoples' are disconnected. ECOSOCC's initiative represents a paradigm in bringing 'the people' together thus setting the stage for collaboration in various fields. However, the present challenge remains the scattered nature of engagement between Chinese and African CSOs, and as the civil society arm of the African Union, ECOSOCC has a lead role to play in ensuring more systematic engagements between the two parties.

2.2 HISTORICAL ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN ECOSOCC & CHINESE CSOS

In 2015, ECOSOCC's late Presiding Officer Dr. Joseph Chilengi met with a high-level delegation from the China NGO Network for International Exchanges (CNIE), led by Mr. Shi Guohi, Deputy Secretary-General of CNIE. The meeting was a follow-up to the 4th China-Africa People's Forum which took place on 26 August 2015 in Yiwu, China, under the formal auspices of CNIE and ECOSOCC. The objective of the meeting was therefore to initiate planning for the implementation of the Forum's outcomes over the next year 3-year period; a Declaration on People-to-People Cooperation between Africa and China was adopted during the same.

For some unfortunate reasons, there was not much progress in the implementation of the Joint Declaration. However, with the relocation of the ECOSOCC Secretariat to Lusaka, Zambia (Nov 2019); there was a renewed call to rekindle the CNIE-ECOSOCC partnership with a trip planned for 2020 but then the whole world was plagued with the COVID-19 outbreak. ECOSOCC once again made deliberate efforts to engage with its Chinese counterparts by engaging the China Mission to the African Union and since July 2024; Chinese CSOs and ECOSOCC have started engaging and collaborating with each other. But again, there is much to be done to bring more synergy and also to explore the wide array of potentialities this 'coming together' will yield to the two giants.

The P2P Dialogue is expected to bridge the African and Chinese Peoples together and foster regular exchanges and participation in activities including side-events around the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), ECOSOCC's Annual Citizens Forum, among others.

2.3 CSOS & THE FOCAC

Under the Framework of the China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) play a crucial role in fostering collaboration and mutual understanding between China and African countries. CSOs represent the interests of various community groups, ensuring that local voices are heard in the context of China-Africa cooperation. They advocate for policies and initiatives that benefit communities and align with sustainable development goals. CSOs further facilitate grassroots involvement by mobilizing local populations to engage with Chinese enterprises and initiatives. This helps ensure that projects meet the needs and expectations of local communities, fostering social acceptance and support. Many CSOs focus on capacity building, providing training and resources to local communities to enhance their skills, knowledge, and participation in projects related to FOCAC.

Many CSOs work on critical social issues, such as health, education, and gender equality, aligning their work with the broader goals of FOCAC. They may partner with Chinese organizations to drive initiatives that address these challenges. CSOs also play a vital role in ensuring that FOCAC initiatives are inclusive, culturally sensitive, and beneficial to local communities. Their involvement enhances collaboration, promotes accountability, and contributes to the overall effectiveness of China-Africa cooperation.

As part of this broader cooperation, leading African entrepreneurs who drive innovation and economic growth will share their experiences, showcasing how their businesses have contributed to sustainable development in Africa. Entrepreneurs in sectors such as renewable energy, agriculture, and healthcare are finding innovative solutions to regional challenges, helping foster stronger economic ties between Africa and China. This will highlight the power of entrepreneurship in bridging the gap between the two regions, offering tangible lessons on scaling businesses, overcoming challenges, and driving economic growth.

Building on these efforts, the 2024 FOCAC Summit held in Beijing (September 2024) welcomed the adoption of the 2024 FOCAC Declaration and Plan of Action 2025 – 2027. The Republic of Congo was designated as the African side coordinator for this period, with the summit also calling for the implementation of the FOCAC Plan of Action. One critical question that arises is: How can Africa-China cooperation under FOCAC be leveraged to create more impactful, grassroots-level partnerships?

As the dialogue progresses, it is essential that both regions prioritize meaningful engagement at the grassroots level, where collaboration between African and Chinese communities can generate tangible, long-lasting benefits. By empowering local stakeholders, fostering entrepreneurship, and ensuring that development initiatives are inclusive and culturally sensitive, Africa and China can work together to build more resilient, sustainable partnerships that benefit both continents for generations to come.

3.0 OBJECTIVES.

- Review the 2015 Forum Declaration: Assess progress since the declaration's adoption, identify areas for improvement, and determine next steps for deeper collaboration.
- Establish a roadmap for the implementation of the Forum's outcomes: Develop a clear and actionable plan for advancing people-to-people cooperation, building on previous commitments.
- Foster collaboration between African and Chinese Civil Society Organizations (CSOs): Strengthen partnerships between CSOs in both regions to enhance mutual understanding, cultural exchange, and sustainable development.
- Promote sustainable development through joint initiatives: Identify key sectors (e.g., health, education, gender equality, infrastructure) for collaborative projects, leveraging strengths from both regions.
- Create a platform for knowledge sharing and continuous engagement: Facilitate dialogue on best practices and innovations, and establish a robust framework for ongoing collaboration through regular meetings and a Steering Committee.

4.0 EXPECTED OUTCOMES.

- Renewed commitment to the Africa-China partnership: Strengthened relationships between African and Chinese CSOs, with concrete steps for future collaboration and expanded cooperation.
- Clear roadmap for people-to-people cooperation: A comprehensive plan for advancing the Forum's initiatives, providing strategic direction for future engagements.
- Creation of a joint Steering Committee: A governance body to oversee the execution of people-to-people exchanges and initiatives, ensuring sustained efforts and accountability.
- Identification of new areas for cooperation: Tangible projects in sectors such as trade, cultural exchange, community development, and entrepreneurship. Leading African entrepreneurs will share strategies for overcoming business challenges and fostering sustainable partnerships.
- Enhanced African diaspora participation in China: Increased involvement of the African community in China, strengthening cultural ties and fostering greater people-to-people connections, supported by a framework for ongoing dialogue.

5.0 PARTICIPATION.

The P2P Dialogue will be conducted entirely in person, featuring a mix of in-house discussions, focus group sessions, exhibitions, and cultural exchanges, all held at the Lusaka International Convention Centre (LICC Ciela Resorts).

6.0 DATE AND VENUE

Date: 08th to 09th May 2025

Venue: Lusaka International Convention Centre (LICC Ciela Resorts). Lusaka, Zambia.

7.0 EXPECTED PARTICIPANTS.

- China NGO Network for International Exchanges - CNIE
- High-Level delegation from the People's Republic of China
- Senior AU Officials and representatives of AU Organs and Specialized Agencies
- Ambassadors and members of the Diplomatic Corps based in Lusaka
- Civil society leaders and youth representatives from Africa and China
- Private sector actors and trade associations from both regions
- Academics, researchers, and cultural influencers
- International media and development partners
- Leading Africa entrepreneurs and businesses
- China Charity Alliance
- China Economic and Social Council
- China-Africa Business Council
- Mission of China to the African Union
- Africa China Centre for Policy & Advisory
- Global South North Centre
- African & Chinese CSOs/NGOs
- Chinese NGOs

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