

Policy Dialogue: China-Africa win-win partnership on climate change and a just transition

15 August 2024

Capital Hotel Menlyn, Pretoria (also online)

08:30-14:00, including lunch

As Africa and China prepare for the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) summit in September 2024, this project seeks to assist African countries and China to deepen their partnerships on the just energy transition and green investment. The Just Transition is defined by the International Labour Organisation as "greening the economy in a way that is as fair and inclusive as possible to everyone concerned, creating decent work opportunities and leaving no one behind". The Forum provides an opportunity to engage with relevant stakeholders and highlight how African and Chinese actors can work together to combat climate change, while at the same time contributing to Africa's development.

The relationship between Africa and China and the FOCAC itself over the last quarter century has been characterised by a focus on development and win-win solutions. As the world nears 2030 and the imperative of attaining the Sustainable Development Goals, there is a growing urgency to tackle one of the most consequential issues facing the world. Decarbonisation is important but so is access to energy and the right to develop. Africa is energy-starved with some 600 million people lacking access to electricity. This hampers economic growth and industrialisation. At the same time there are huge opportunities that can be tapped in terms of green technology and renewables to ensure the energy transition is just.

These issues have been on the agenda of the Africa-China partnership. In 2021 there was a joint Declaration on China-Africa Cooperation on Combating Climate Change, including a vision for Africa-China cooperation until 2035, which aligns with the PRC's own 2035 Vision development plan. Cooperation in green electricity provision has become a prominent part of this relationship, especially since October 2023's third Belt and Road Forum, where renewable energy emerged as a key axis of engagement. President Xi's Global Development Initiative (GDI), announced at the UNGA in September 2021, aims to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, promoting greener, healthier and stronger development around the world. Domestically, President Xi proclaimed in March 2024 the 'new quality productive forces' as China's new guiding principle, where innovation would play a leading role and productivity would be characterised by high-tech, high efficiency and high quality.

Africa itself has identified the importance of moving up the value chain of manufacturing as part of its developmental trajectory and the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area and the green transition. The Nairobi Declaration on climate change in 2023 committed the continent to 'develop and implement policies, regulations and incentives aimed at attracting local, regional and global investment in green growth', and to 'propel Africa's economic growth and job creation in a manner that reflects our commitments to the Paris Agreement and also aids decarbonization efforts, by

HEAD OFFICE, JOHANNESBURG

PO Box 31596, Braamfontein, 2017, South Africa | T +27 11 339 2021 | F +27 11 339 2154 | info@saiia.org.za

CAPE TOWN OFFICE

T +27 21 422 0717 | cpt.admin@saiia.org.za

NATIONAL OFFICE BEARERS

National Chairman: Moeletsi Mbeki | Deputy Chairman: Kuseni Dlamini | Honorary Legal Advisor: Ezra Davids
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leapfrogging the traditional progression of industrial development and fostering green production and supply chains on a global scale¹.

Based on these commitments, the eighth FOCAC has the opportunity to identify and develop win-win partnerships on climate change and the just transition between African countries and China. From an African perspective, exploring the potential of green climate investments as well as collaboration on building green value chains would be very important. For example, China has an 80% share of global solar component manufacturing and more than 75% share of global battery manufacturing. It is becoming clear that any African just transition and development strategy should include planning for integrating China's unique strengths into Africa's priorities as set out in the Nairobi Declaration and in Agenda 2063.

A hybrid in-person and livestreamed policy dialogue will be held in Pretoria, South Africa in on 15 August 2024. It will discuss Chinese commitments in relation to key African regional development, climate and energy frameworks, as well as Africa's aspirations in this regard. It will seek to produce win-win recommendations that can be considered by officials of both Africa and China. The dialogue will focus on how the Chinese government, African governments and the African Union can strengthen their engagement on tangible green investments initiatives that would feed into the 2024 FOCAC summit.

The dialogue seeks to address such questions as:

1. Which key fields of green transition investment (including in green value chains) are opened to Africa through its partnership with China within the context of FOCAC and other Chinese initiatives, like BRI?
2. How should the continent position itself to take advantage of them?
3. Where can China and Africa cooperate in increasing green energy access on the continent?



DRAFT PROGRAMME

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Venue: Capital Menlyn, Pretoria, South Africa

- 08:30-09:00 Registration
- 09:00-09:10 Welcome remarks – Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, SAIIA Chief Executive
- 09:10-09:20 Welcome remarks – WU Peng, Chinese Ambassador to South Africa
- 09:20-09:30 Group photo
- 09:30-11:00 Panel One: Working with China on realising the just transition and dealing with climate change: What can China offer?
- Alex Benkenstein, SAIIA Programme Head: Climate and Natural Resources Programme
- Olufunso Somorin, Regional Principal Officer – Climate Change and Green Growth, African Development Bank
- Dr Zhou Taidong, Vice President, Center for International Knowledge on Development, China
- Chaired by Steven Gruzd, SAIIA Programme Head: African Governance and Diplomacy Programme
- 11:00-11:30 TEA BREAK
- 11:30-12:50 Panel Two: FOCAC in context: How to get win-win outcomes?
- Dr Cobus van Staden, China-Global South podcast and SAIIA Research Associate
- Simbini Tichakunda, Principal Programme Officer – Energy, AUDA-NEPAD
- Professor Zhang Yongpeng, Research Fellow, Institute of West Asian and African Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
- Chaired by Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, SAIIA Chief Executive
- 12:50-13:00 Closing and vote of thanks
SAIIA and Chinese Embassy
- 13:00-14:00 LUNCH