

Summary Report

The Virtual Dialogue on China-Africa Health Cooperation

October 2021

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Abstract

With COVID-19 threatening public health in countries and regions worldwide, international health cooperation is increasingly needed to recover from the pandemic, strengthen health systems and accelerate development. To enhance communication and cooperation on health between key stakeholders in Africa and China, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) partnered with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to organise the “Virtual Dialogue on China-Africa Health Cooperation” with support from the African Union Commission (AUC) and several Chinese institutions. The Dialogue was hosted on ZOOM on 23rd September 2021, organised by Development Reimagined.

UNAIDS and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation jointly organised this Dialogue in recognition of the major role that health cooperation plays in the development plans of many African countries. This type of cooperation requires both scaling up and improvements: A healthy population is essential for prosperity as reflected in the UN Sustainable Development Goal (2015), and in particular SDG3 for good health and wellbeing. The principle is also reflected in the African Union 2063 Plans of Action – for instance through the setting up of an African Medicines Agency (AMA). In addition, health has been a long-standing key component of commitments from China to African countries, and thus provides opportunities for further collaboration between both sides.

The Dialogue provided an opportunity for experts and participants to exchange their views regarding the immediate and consequential impact of COVID-19 on the entire world, revealing insufficient systems for tackling infectious diseases. This summary report provides a comprehensive overview of the key suggestions and outcomes highlighted by the Dialogue participants and notes three key takeaway messages for consideration: 1) The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) has grown into an important platform for collective dialogue and practical cooperation between China and African countries; while health cooperation has scaled up over time through its mechanisms, there are great potentials and necessities of further prioritising it on the agenda; 2) China is an important partner for the systemic and integrated approach on promoting access to and local production of health technologies in Africa; and 3) China has the opportunity to support the strengthening of Africa’s health systems and the building of its pandemic/epidemic response capacity and advocate for equal access to COVID-19 vaccines, diagnostics, tests and treatments for all.

Six proposed next steps on China-Africa health cooperation going forward have been provided. These include; 1) China-Africa health cooperation can develop towards the formulation of medium and long-term plans, with measurable goals and clear priorities; 2) Emphasis needs to be placed on accurately matching health needs with demands and work on the priorities identified; 3) Continue to invest in health development through joint research and innovation programmes, experience sharing, and capacity-building initiatives on the platform of South-South Cooperation; 4) Continue to explore forms of collaboration on Global Health, including through multilateral collaboration and public-private partnerships; 5) There is an urgent need to accelerate the implementation of the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan of Africa (PMPA), the African Medicines Regulation and Harmonisation (AMRH) program, and the establishment of the African Medicines Agency (AMA). These joint commitments can be made to continue support to the local production of medical equipment and products in Africa. Finally, 6) Joint efforts to advocate for equal access to COVID-19 vaccines, diagnostics, tests, and treatments for all people, ensuring the people in Africa can benefit from these public goods and health equality.

The Virtual Dialogue on China-Africa Health Cooperation

Introduction

Health cooperation has been an increasingly important component of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation. Its input can be reflected in the 2018 Beijing Action Plan, where section 4.2.4 addresses China's "support of the Catalytic Framework to End AIDS, TB, and Eliminate Malaria in Africa by 2030" by "cooperation on drugs and medical equipment regulation", "encouraging Chinese medical institutions and companies to partner with African entities in hospital operation, pharmaceutical production, and the improvement of information systems", and "[collaborating] to make health and clinical services and medical products more accessible and improve Africa's capability for independent and sustainable development in medical and health-related areas." Section 4.2.9 also highlights China's promise to "assist Africa to halt and reverse the double burden of communicable (HIV, TB, Malaria, and Schistosomiasis) diseases".

The 2021 FOCAC presents an opportunity to learn from past experiences and advance sustainable cooperation on health development in an equitable and inclusive manner. The Foreign Minister of China, Wang Yi, articulated a seven-point proposition to upgrade China-Africa Cooperation in January 2021, that included China's preparation to assist Africa on major disease prevention and step-up industrial capacity to build a stronger African manufacturing base – including for pharmaceutical and medical products.

To enhance communication and cooperation on health between key stakeholders in Africa and China, UNAIDS and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) co-hosted the Virtual Dialogue on China-Africa Health Cooperation, with support from the African Union Commission and several Chinese institutions. The Dialogue was hosted on ZOOM on 23 September 2021, organised by Development Reimagined (DR).

Objectives, Participants and Agenda

Objectives

- Review the implementation of the Beijing Action Plan 2018-2021, identify new challenges, and recommend areas and ways of China-Africa health collaboration for the next three years.
- Generate broader awareness on pandemic/epidemic response to infectious diseases based on the lessons learned from HIV; promoting access to quality and affordable medicines and health products including collecting demands from African countries; as well as the use of innovation and digital services in shaping the longer terms of health cooperation among key stakeholders of Africa and China.
- Promote collaboration and partnership between key stakeholders of China and Africa to share knowledge and tools to reinforce the fight against COVID-19 and colliding epidemics to strengthen universal health coverage and health preparedness.

Participants

A total of 125 people watched the Dialogue online. This included: government organisations, research institutions, civil societies, development partners, and Chinese pharmaceutical companies. Fifteen speakers, including senior leadership from the African Union Commission, Africa CDC, African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa's Development (AUDA-NEPAD), African Diplomatic mission to China, China Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation (CAITEC) and China Chamber of Commerce for Import & Export of Medicines & Health Products (CCCMHPIE), the National

Medical Products Administration, UN representatives, academia, and the private sector, provided insights into China-Africa health cooperation.

Those watching the webinar were encouraged to submit questions and comments through the Q&A chat box. Chinese, English, and French Simultaneous Interpretation was provided for speakers and participants.

Agenda

The virtual dialogue was divided into four sessions. First, the dialogue opened with welcoming remarks from a number of key interlockers in China-Africa Health Cooperation. This included the Department of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development at the African Union Commission; the Embassy of Senegal to China (as Co-chair of FOCAC); UNAIDS Ethiopia Country office and Liaison Office to African Union & UNECA; CCCMHPIE; BMGF, and the CAITEC.

Second, the Dialogue welcomed three keynote presentations in the technical area of disease control and regulatory of medicines and health products. This included: the Africa CDC; Health Programmes and Pharmaceutical Coordinator at AUDA-NEPAD, and the Department of Medical Device Regulation of the National Medical Products Administration of China.

Third, there was a lively panel discussion exploring the key areas of China-Africa health collaboration in the post-COVID era. Speakers included: the Embassy of Tanzania in China; the China-Africa Business Council; the Embassy of São Tomé and Príncipe in China, and Tsinghua University. Finally, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in China and the Permanent Representative of the African Union to China provided closing remarks.

The sessions were moderated by Dr Zhou Kai, UNAIDS Country Director a.i, China, Dr Xu Fujie, Deputy Director of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and Mrs Hannah Wanjie Ryder, CEO of Development Reimagined.

The Full Agenda with speakers can be found in the Annex.

Key Messages from The Dialogue

China has long supported the development of African countries and sees the China-Africa friendship as one of its most important foreign relations subjects. The 2018 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation's (FOCAC) Beijing Summit was a new milestone in China-Africa cooperation, bringing together China and 53 African countries and producing an Action Plan that launched eight major initiatives, namely industrial promotion, infrastructure connectivity, trade facilitation, green development, capacity building, health care, people-to-people exchange, and peace and security.

UNAIDS has been an advocate for increased investment allocation to the health development sector of this forum. Result can be seen, amongst others in the Beijing Action Plan, Section 4.2 which is on Medical Care and Public health. Introduced before the COVID-19 outbreak, the Beijing Action Plan puts emphasis on the prevention and control of communicable diseases, citing their impact on the underdeveloped public health infrastructures in Africa and stressing the necessity for strengthening Africa's public health control, prevention, and treatment systems. This has become ever more critical as the COVID-19 pandemic has ravaged across the world.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 outbreak has demonstrated the strong leadership of African nations in tackling health challenges collectively, such as border closures, curfews, and crowd control measures, but it has also exposed the deficiency of the existing risk assessments of preparedness of the African continent, as well as the deficiencies of international cooperation in terms of providing fair and equal access to health investments, medicines, and technology. The challenges posed by COVID-19, however well managed, have

collided with the continuing HIV epidemic in several African nations by slowing the progress made towards ending HIV and meeting the health targets.

The upcoming 2021 FOCAC, to be hosted in Senegal in the coming weeks, provides an opportunity to both learn from past experiences and advance sustainable cooperation on health development in an equitable and inclusive manner. Through discussions and interactions among the African and Chinese participants, the Dialogue produced 3 key messages that can be considered for future health cooperation going forward.

In the subsequent section, each of these three key messages has been substantiated with important points and information shared during the Dialogue.

Key Message 1: The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) has grown into an important platform for collective dialogue and practical cooperation between China and African countries. While health cooperation has scaled up over time through the FOCAC mechanisms, there are great potentials and necessities of further prioritising it on the agenda.

The challenge:

Health cooperation has been an important component of FOCAC since 2015 with access to medicines and treatment being one of the greatest concerns. Today this cooperation is facing a new challenge on the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic; the pandemic and the mitigation measures taken to limit its spread have significantly disrupted other essential health services in Africa. This disruption has threatened the control of major high-burden diseases such as HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria.

H.E Mamadou Ndiaye, Ambassador of Senegal to China (as Co-Chair of FOCAC) emphasised: *“As we prepare for the 8th Ministerial Conference for FOCAC, we should reflect on the current situation of China-Africa health cooperation, especially the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. These challenges make health systems more vulnerable and threaten African’s efforts to eradicate certain diseases.”*



H.E. Mamadou Ndiaye, Ambassador of Senegal to China

By the same token, Ms Berthilde Gahongayire, UNAIDS Ethiopia Country Director & a.i. Director of the Liaison Office to African Union & UNECA added that, *“Africa still bears the biggest burden of infectious diseases and accounts for 25% of the world’s disease burden; the continent is now facing colliding epidemics of COVID-19 and HIV/AIDS... The pandemic showed how unprepared we are and the utter need for stronger collaboration and solidarity at a critical moment ahead of FOCAC.”*



*Ms Berthilde Gahongayire, UNAIDS Ethiopia Country Director & a.i.
Director of the Liaison Office to African Union & UNECA*

Additionally, the pandemic has exposed existing inequalities from structural weaknesses of Africa’s public health systems and the over-reliance on import for health commodities and vaccines. FOCAC now is taking place at a critical time to re-examine the demands and supplies and call for more innovative collaborative modalities of China-Africa cooperation in the new era.

The opportunity:

China has been Africa’s main partner in the field of health through the FOCAC mechanism. In this regard, it has mobilised various cooperation tools, shared experience and expertise, conducted research with African countries, built health infrastructure, and provided a large number of medical and pharmaceutical equipment. This cooperation, coupled with the efforts of African countries and the initiatives of other bilateral and multilateral partners, has translated into tangible progress, particularly in covering human resource training and treatment of certain diseases.

H.E Rahamtalla M. Osman, the African Union Representative to China: *“There is no doubt that FOCAC has led to a great deal of cooperation between African countries and China on health which has scaled up over time. The cooperation has spanned from malaria prevention to infrastructure to HIV/AIDS prevention and vaccine donations. China can be a stronger partner to Africa by continuing to make unilateral commitments to supply Africa with vaccines and other essential medicines, and to continue to support intellectual property waivers at the WTO, all as an example to push the rest of the international community to do the same”*. He also looked forward to the launch of more joint R&D programmes and joint labs, which will encourage technology transfer and sustainable development.



H.E. Rahamtalla M. Osman, African Union Representative to China

H.E Isabel Domingos, Ambassador of São Tomé and Príncipe to China pointed out that: *“China has played a very important role as a partner. In the very early stage of the pandemic, China sent medical teams to help us design particular strategies and advise us on how to implement necessary measures. China also sent medical equipment for all African countries including Sao Tome. This was a great way to get some material to protect our frontline professionals and help them to fight the disease.”*



H.E. Isabel Domingos, Ambassador of São Tomé and Príncipe to China

H.E. Siddharth Chatterjee, the United Nations Resident Coordinator China, highlighted the importance of research: *“The UN has great capacity through its partnerships with civil society, private sector, and governments to tackle complex health crises. Through joint R&D, there is an opportunity to build technologies that can be adapted to under-resourced contexts. This may be through public-private partnerships, for example, the partnership between Huawei, MSD, Philips, GlaxoSmithKline, and the Kenyan government in 2015. This partnership led to a 1/3 reduction in maternal deaths in the north-eastern Kenyan region bordering areas of Somalia. Moreover, research on COVID-19 self-assessment and remote emergency systems at Tsinghua University has been especially helpful when applied to African contexts.”* He went on to point out that, *“China has a key role in the successes it has had, not only in managing COVID-19, but also, through its experience in the 70s and 80s it would equip African countries with the knowledge needed in terms of what we could share with others.”*



H.E. Siddharth Chatterjee, UN Resident Coordinator in China

Additionally, Dr Margaret Agama-Anyetei, Acting Director, Department of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development raised that: *“During FOCAC, our key area of interest would be the partnership between AMA and our Chinese counterparts... as well as building on our previous work with UNAIDS, to finalise our review of the AU-recognised rights, manufacturing capacity, medicines and medical products and technologies in Africa.”*



Dr Margaret Agama-Anyetei, Acting Director for Department of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development at the AUC provided opening remarks at the Dialogue

Ms Berthilde Gahongayire, UNAIDS Ethiopia Country Director & a.i. Director of the Liaison Office to African Union & UNECA maintained that: *“By brokering partnership at the global, regional, and country-level, and joining important mechanisms such as FOCAC, China-Africa health cooperation has a unique opportunity to look from a broader angle and support a multisectoral response to enhance investment and information sharing on infectious diseases”*. She concluded by saying that *“It is with united action and increased investment that we will be able to respond more effectively to HIV and other pandemics and improve access to quality and affordable medicines and health products in Africa”*.



Dr Margareth Ndomondo-Sigonda, Head of Health Programmes, Pharmaceutical Coordinator at the AU Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD)

Dr Margareth Ndomondo-Sigonda highlighted that: *“The 2021 FOCAC presents an opportunity for us to learn from past experiences, including how the African continent has responded to COVID-19 in addressing medical services disruptions. There is need for sustainable cooperation on health development in an adequate and inclusive manner.”*

Furthermore, to harness the potential of health cooperation in the context of FOCAC, it is essential to utilise the opportunities presented by multilateral mechanisms.

Chinese partners, have and continue to provide support to Africa in terms of health as quoted by Ms Wang Luo, the Director of the Institute of International Development Cooperation, China Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation: *“China has provided support in Africa in terms of health: building hospitals, dispatching medical teams, providing technical support, and trainings to fight against communicable diseases such as malaria and bilharziasis, as well as training support for health education. During the pandemic we provided ventilators and vaccines to Africa and support African countries in their recovery from the pandemic”*. She also stressed the importance of the accurate match of needs and

demands, coordination between public and private sectors while developing an innovative cooperative strategy, and a multilateral approach to optimise the resources.



Ms Wang Luo, Director of the Institute of International Development Cooperation, China Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation (CAITEC)

H.E Mamadou Ndiaye, Ambassador of Senegal to China (Co-Chair of FOCAC): *“The potentials of Africa-China health cooperation are yet to be explored. When we sit together, we have great opportunities that would lead to improved quality of life for millions of Africans”.*

Key Message 2: China is an important partner for the systemic and integrated approach on promoting access to and local production of health technologies in Africa.

The challenge:

Due to the dependence on international vertical health funds, which do not incentivise local production, Africa imports most of its pharmaceutical products, in particular, more than 80% of its HIV drugs and 99% of vaccines. Additionally, there are inefficient transportation systems and a lack of storage facilities for pharmaceutical products – exacerbated by significant infrastructure gaps within and across the African continent.

Central to the Africa-China relationship is a need to apply support and advice to building up the African healthcare infrastructure that already exists. Access to health technologies and pharmaceutical local production are critical to ensure health equality and sustainable development on the continent. For example, African countries need a better African regulatory system to ensure that healthcare products are safe, and that the products that are distributed meet international standards. There is African infrastructure, for example, the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan for Africa (PMPA), that – with further investment, support and advice – can be harnessed to improve regulation across African countries.

Dr Margareth Ndomondo-Sigonda, Head of Health Programmes and Pharmaceutical Coordinator of the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), noted: *“The purpose of the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan for Africa (PMPA) is to strengthen the capacity of national regulatory agencies on the continent and improve access to medical products for the African population.”*

H.E. Rahamtalla M. Osman, the Permanent Representative of the African Union to China, noted the importance of the AMA being integrated into FOCAC health plans: *“Our African Medicines Agency will be at the core of our local manufacturing agenda, and China has already supported the initiation of this and can do so more deeply as we go forward.”*

The opportunity:

China and other emerging economies have made huge progress in the access to and production of affordable and quality pharmaceutical products and have significant lessons to share on their strategies: how to develop and implement incentive policies; how to build up local production capacity from APIs (Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient) to medicines and biomedical products such as vaccines in the face of dependence on vertical funds; reform and strengthening of the regulatory system, and what the transition from being a pharmaceutical manufacturing base to a strategic R&D hub looks like. In this way, China can not only act as a new significant provider of health technologies to prevent, diagnose, and treat HIV infection in Africa in the time of COVID-19, but also act as a provider of longer-term advice and strategic support.

Chinese partners are already assisting Africa to reverse the double burden of communicable diseases by working with African partners to set up industrial capacity to build a stronger African manufacturing base for medical products. Mr Zhou Hui, President of the CCCMHPIE, noted the role of Chinese partners to date: *“The Chamber, supported by WHO, and other partners, has been trusted to organise and facilitate companies to work with African partners on promoting access to and production of medicine in Africa. For example, the chamber has organised roundtables in Zimbabwe, Shanghai, and Beijing and produced a number of reports around medicine... The Chamber has also been working with UNAIDS to support Chinese enterprises to have more knowledge and information on Africa health system and needs.”*



Mr Zhou Hui, President, CCCMHPIE

This was earlier emphasised by Dr Margaret Agama-Anyetei, the Acting Director for the Department of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development at the African Union Commission: *“The various departments hope to continue to champion and build upon the local manufacturing agenda in cooperation with UNAIDS, in particular in China, whereby working with Chinese companies on investment and regulation of drugs.”* And further highlighted by H.E Mbelwa Kairuki, Ambassador of Tanzania to China: *“It is important to focus on building local capacity to produce medicine in Africa, using our cooperation with China. Since 2018, a lot has been done, for example a number of delegations went to Africa to explore opportunities for investment. There are also a number of new projects that were established in Africa for pharmaceutical production, implemented by Africans.”*



H.E Mbelwa Kairuki, Ambassador of Tanzania to China

Furthermore, China can support the African Medicines Regulation and Harmonisation (AMRH) program to improve the effectiveness of the medical products' regulatory system, and to help accelerate the establishment of the African Medicines Agency (AMA). As part of promoting access to medicines and aligned with the African Medicines Regulation and Harmonisation (AMRH) program, China can also reinforce the capacity of drug regulatory authorities to ensure quality medication and other health products.

Chinese partners have - and will continue to - play an important role in this sharing best practice and experience. *"China has introduced a series of policies to deepen the reform of the pharmaceutical review and approval system, implement the main responsibility of enterprises for quality and safety, and strengthen the whole life cycle management of medical devices...China is more than willing to share its experience of regulatory system reform and innovation with Africa, continue to strengthen its partnership in information technology, personnel training and regulatory system construction, and jointly contribute to the coordinated development of global medical device regulation"* noted by Ms Zhang Qi, Deputy Director General of Department of Medical Device Regulation, Chinese National Medical Products Administration.



Ms Zhang Qi, Deputy Director-General, Department of Medical Device Regulation, National Medical Products Administration

Key Message 3: China has the opportunity to support the strengthening of Africa's health systems and the building of its pandemic/epidemic response capacity and advocate for equal access to COVID-19 vaccines, diagnostics, tests and treatments for all.

The challenge:

Of the global total of 37.7 million people living with HIV in 2020, two-thirds (67%) live in Africa. AIDS-related causes are the leading causes of death for adult women (aged 15 to 49 years) in Africa. Without access to health, many patients die of easily curable or controllable diseases. The lack of responsive and robust health systems has led to a series of factors inhibiting broader health coverage on the continent, including Africa's over-reliance on products from overseas, under-resourced local production, and a shortage of skilled local personnel.

The challenge was emphasised by H.E. Mamadou Ndiaye, Ambassador of Senegal to China (as Co-chair of FOCAC): *"Only 25 percent of Africa's population has robust health systems and more than 90% of its drugs are imported."*



Dr John Nkengasong, Director of Africa, CDC

Dr John Nkengasong, Director of Africa CDC, further noted: *"Less than 10% of GDP is spent on healthcare by African countries and there are only two health workers for every 1,000 people across the continent."*

The global trade disruptions and local social distancing measures required due to the COVID-19 pandemic have further exacerbated the situation, threatening HIV services and stretched thin the supply chains for crucial HIV prevention commodities. There is evidence that the AIDS-related death toll could double in Africa within one year if HIV-product supply chains and services remain severely disrupted — this would mean an additional 500,000 AIDS-related deaths.

Ms Berthilde Gahongayire, UNAIDS Ethiopia Country Director & a.i. Director of the Liaison Office to African Union & UNECA, noted the impact of the pandemic on HIV treatment: *"HIV testing has declined by 41% and treatment by 7% - this is slowing progress towards the 2030 target to eliminate HIV and AIDS."*

Moreover, new infections among children through mother-to-child transmission could increase by more than 100% in some African countries. The WHO also warns that HIV infection increases the risk of severe and critical COVID-19. This underlines the importance of addressing multiple deficits simultaneously in the effort to achieve global health and development for everyone. Africa needs effective health systems and increased capacities to be able to respond more effectively to current pandemic/epidemics and prepare for future ones.

The opportunity:

China through the FOCAC mechanisms has an important role to play in building capacity in strengthening health systems and the capacity of epidemic response, taking the lessons learned from HIV, in particular through the African Continental Free Trade Area.

Dr Margareth Ndomondo-Sigonda, Head of Health Programmes and Pharmaceutical Coordinator of the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), noted: *"The African Continental Free Trade Area in*

2021 provides the opportunity for the greater integration and free trade in a potential healthcare market of 1.3 billion people. The opportunity requires ongoing collaboration between the member states, the reduction and removal of tariffs and non-tariffs, barriers to trade, and enabling less mechanism through strengthening of the regulatory system.”

H.E. Mamadou Ndiaye, Ambassador of Senegal to China, further highlighted the opportunity and importance of capacity building: “Consideration can be given to launching a capacity-building initiative for health personnel training in Central Africa. A major innovation in this regard is the joint search for solutions.”

Additionally, Mr Zhou Hui, the President of CCCMHPIE spotlighted a few suggestions on the future areas of China-Africa health cooperation key among them was: “A strong call to strengthen capacity building of medical human resources in Africa and enhance capacity building of internationalisation and management of pharmaceutical enterprises.”

Foremost on the health cooperation agenda is the COVID-19 response, as pointed out by many speakers. There is urgent need to promote equal access to COVID-19 vaccines, diagnostics, tests, and treatments for all and great potential of expanding these investments to broader efforts in strengthening Africa’s health systems and building its pandemic/epidemic response capacity.

The sharing and building of partnerships around research and technology are key areas going forward for Chinese partners, noted by Dr Yang Bin, Director of the Research Centre for Smart Healthcare at Tsinghua University: “We have a system that is used for self-assessment and remote emergency system that has been used in Africa and we are now working with engineers and EPCs who are working in Africa, and Toyota, Japan on a smart mobile hospital. This is a bus in which you can have screening for citizens, remote medicine, and it can be dispatched for emergency use.”



Dr Yang Bin, Director of the Research Center for Smart Healthcare Tsinghua University

Chinese companies are already using COVID-19 as a springboard to invest in Africa, this was noted by Mr Feng Qiang, Deputy Secretary-General of China-Africa Business Council (CABC): “In September last year, BGI group invested in COVID-19 PCR tests. They are going to launch into production and according to demand they can increase their capacity to one million test tickets. Their test kits will not only diagnose COVID-19 but also other diseases. Another example is the Sinovac Vaccine which has a joint venture with another African company. The first line is 200 million doses that can not only serve the Africa population, but also export to other countries. So, every year, they can produce 1 billion doses to satisfy the need in Africa.” He pointed out that, “a unified system would simplify entry into the African market by helping pharmaceutical companies to have the same set of rules or same reference.”



Mr Feng Qiang, Deputy Secretary-General, China-Africa Business Council

Recurring epidemics are one of the major burdens on Africa’s health systems. The ongoing pandemic coincided with persistent epidemics, presents both challenges and opportunities for enhanced cooperation. The exchange and sharing of experiences and technologies have become ever more critical and can help strengthen Africa’s health systems, indicating ways of making them more responsive, inclusive and better able to meet the challenges of coinciding infectious diseases.

This was asserted by Mr Steve Davis, Senior China Strategic Advisor and Interim Director of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation: *“It will be important to adapt China’s proven model for Infectious Disease Prevention and Control for use in some African communities. For example, China’s 137 malaria surveillance and response model in 2015, alongside local partners, supported a successful pilot project of this model in Tanzania.”*



Mr Steve Davis, Senior China Strategic Advisor and Interim Director, BMGF



Group Picture

Proposed Next Steps

Based on the three key messages outlined above, the six proposed next steps aim to inform both Chinese and African governments on key health priorities going forward.

1. China-Africa health cooperation can develop towards the formulation of medium and long-term plans, with measurable goals and clear priorities.

As it stands, Africa's health system can only support 25 per cent of its population. With only 3 million health workers for every 1.2 billion people, and imports of more than 90 per cent of drugs, there is an urgent need for a plan that can be complemented by the optimal allocation of resources and a clear road map to put stop to the spread of AIDS and eradicate certain diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis; which are almost completely eliminated in all regions of the world, except Africa. The formulation of these plans requires strong and targeted measures to effectively respond to current emergencies and priorities and establish resilient and sustainable health systems.

2. Emphasis needs to be placed on accurately matching health needs with demands and work on the priorities identified.

COVID-19 has shed light on the challenge of health financing. Therefore, we need to accurately match needs with demands from both China and Africa and work on the priorities identified. More research is needed to discover what China's strengths are in health that can be applied to Africa.

3. Continue to invest in health development through joint research and innovation programmes, experience sharing, and capacity-building initiatives on the platform of South-South Cooperation.

To ensure sustainable health development and meet the demand and supply of health needs in Africa, investments in smart health systems, joint R&D, capacity-building and experience sharing should be strengthened. This could include the promotion of the implementation of traditional medicines in areas where modern medicines are absent.

4. Continue to explore forms of collaboration on Global Health, including through multilateral collaboration and public-private partnerships.

To better implement the global health agenda, it is essential to coordinate the bilateral China-Africa cooperation with multilateral approaches, in order to improve efficiency and make all interventions complementary. Furthermore, public-private partnership is key for diverse resources. There is need

for the public and private sectors to work and coordinate and develop an innovative cooperative strategy.

- 5. There is an urgent need to accelerate the implementation of the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan of Africa (PMPA), the African Medicines Regulation and Harmonisation (AMRH) program, and the establishment of the African Medicines Agency (AMA). These joint commitments can be made to continue support to the local production of medical equipment and products in Africa.**

China has the opportunity to be a key partner in the future development of AMA by sharing best practice, offering capacity building through training, and technology transfers. Furthermore, as some African countries have the expertise needed to establish the pharmaceutical industry, through China-Africa collaboration, these capacities can be strengthened and supported through technical and commercial partnership between African and Chinese pharmaceutical companies and laboratories with a view to establish regional drug production and medical research centres.

- 6. Joint efforts to advocate for equal access to COVID-19 vaccines, diagnostics, tests, and treatments for all people, ensuring the people in Africa can benefit from these public goods and health equality.**

As the pandemic has exposed and exacerbated existing inequalities, it is critical to ensure equal access to essential COVID-19 public goods through the exchange of lessons learnt, provisions of technical support and life-saving vaccines and treatments. The People's Vaccine coalition calls for the COVID-19 vaccine to be seen as a global public good. Therefore, to consolidate deeper health cooperation, continued unilateral commitments are needed for the supply vaccines and other essential medicines equally to all people. No one is safe until everyone is safe.

Annex

Agenda

Virtual Dialogue on China-Africa Health Cooperation Date: 23rd September 2021 Time: 14:00-17:00 (China Standard Time, UTC+08:00) / 09:00-12:00 (Addis Ababa Time, UTC+03:00)			
Opening Address Time: 14:00-14:40 (CST) / 09:00-09:40 (EAT)			
14:00-14:40 (CST) 09:00-09:40 (EAT)	Opening Address	Dr Margaret Agama-Anyetei Acting director for Department of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development at the African Union Commission	Moderator: Dr Zhou Kai UNAIDS Country Director a.i, China
		H.E. Mamadou Ndiaye Ambassador of Senegal to China	
		Ms Berthilde Gahongayire, UNAIDS Ethiopia Country Director & a.i. Director of the Liaison Office to African Union & UNECA	
		Mr Zhou Hui President, CCCMHPIE	
		Mr Steve Davis Senior China Strategic Advisor and Interim Director, BMGF	
		Ms Wang Luo Director of the Institute of International Development Cooperation, China Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation	
Session 1: Keynote Presentation Time: 14:40-15:40 (CST) / 09:40-10:40 (EAT)			
14:40-14:45 (CST) 09:40-09:45 (EAT)	Session Background/ Message from the Moderators		Moderator: Dr Xu Fujie Deputy Director BMGF
14:45-15:00 (CST) 09:45-10:00 (EAT)	Dr John Nkengasong Director of Africa CDC	New Public Health Order: What Africa Needs to Respond to New and Emerging Diseases and Pandemics	

15:00-15:15 (CST) 10:00-10:15 (EAT)	Dr Margareth Ndomondo-Sigonda, Head of Health Programmes, Pharmaceutical Coordinator (AUDA-NEPAD)	Capacity and Regulatory Harmonisation of Africa	
15:15-15:30 (CST) 10:15-10:30 (EAT)	Ms Zhang Qi Deputy Director General, Department of Medical Device Regulation, National Medical Products Administration	Post-marketing Supervision and Administration of Medical Devices in China	
15:30-15:45 (CST) 10:30-10:45 (EAT)	Moderators Summary and Q&A		
15:45-15:50 (CST) 10:45-10:50 (EAT)	Break for 5min		
Session 2: Panel Discussion: Key areas of China-Africa health collaboration in the post-COVID era Time: 15:50-17:00 (CST) / 10:50-12:00 (EAT)			
15:50-15:55 (CST) 10:50-10:55 (EAT)	Session Background/ Message from the Moderators		
15:55-16:50 (CST) 10:55-11:50 (EAT)	Panellist 1:	H.E Mbelwa Kairuki Ambassador of Tanzania to China	Moderator: Mrs Hannah Wanjie Ryder Development Reimagined CEO
	Panellist 2:	Mr Feng Qiang Deputy Secretary-General, China-Africa Business Council (CABC)	
	Panellist 3:	H.E Isabel Domingos Ambassador of Sao Tome and Principe to China	
	Panellist 4:	Dr Yang Bin Director of the Research Center for Smart Healthcare Tsinghua University	
16:50-17:00 (CST) 11:50-12:00 (EAT)	Closing Statements	H.E. Siddharth Chatterjee UN Resident Coordinator	
		H.E. Rahamtalla M. Osman African Union Representative to China	