DEVELOPMENT REIMAGINED

FORUM ON CHINA-AFRICA COOPERATION

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE FOCAC9



AUGUST 2024

Table of Contents

1. What is FOCAC and why was FOCAC created? 3

2. Why is FOCAC important to China and African states 5

2.1 African perspective 6

3. What key areas has FOCAC covered and the dynamics of focus? 10

4. What are the key achievements and announcements so far? 14

5. Do African countries have other FOCAC-like mechanisms and why is FOCAC unique? 19

5.2 The uniqueness of FOCAC 23

6. Highlights of FOCAC 8 25

7. Emerging topics and what to expect in FOCAC 9 26

List of Figures

Figure 1: A Timeline of Previous FOCAC Ministerial Conferences and Summits 3

Figure 2: FOCAC's Cooperation Areas over Time 10

List of Tables

Table 1: FOCAC's 8 Major Initiatives and How They Are Conceived by China 12

Table 2: The Main Themes under Nine Programmes 13

Table 3: Africa's Plurilateral Platforms 19

Table 4: FOCAC Coordination Mechanism 24

1. What is FOCAC and why was FOCAC created?

The creation of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2000 was in fact a response to African countries' request on seeking more coordination in their bilateral relationships with China.[1] The FOCAC mechanisms are built at three levels: (1) The Ministerial Conference takes place every 3 years and is held in China and an African country alternately.[2] (2) The Senior Officials Follow-up Meeting and the Senior Officials Preparatory Meeting for the Ministerial Conference are held respectively in the year and a few days before the Ministerial Conference. (3) The consultations between the African Diplomatic Corps in China and the Secretariat of the Chinese Follow-up Committee are held at least twice a year.[3] There have also been summits in 2006, 2015 and 2018.[4]

Figure 1: A Timeline of Previous FOCAC Ministerial Conferences and Summits



Every FOCAC Ministerial Conference has two key elements that can be identified. The first is high-level, numeric and input-based, continent-wide pledges from China to African countries. These pledges are often made within the overall "Declaration" for the meeting, and/or within speeches by the highest-level Chinese representative. The second key element is the identification of broad priority areas of cooperation, which provide the backdrop for delivery of many of the high-level pledges and are typically listed in the "Action Plan".

[1] Anshan Li et al., FOCAC Twelve Years Later: Achievements, Challenges and the Way Forward, Discussion Paper 74 (2012). Available from: http://osf.org.za/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/FOCAC-twelve-years-later-achievements-challenges-and-the-way-forward.pdf

[2] Senegal, Ethiopia, Egypt and South Africa have been previous hosts.

[3] FOCAC Mechanisms. Available from: http://www.focac.org/eng/ltjj_3/ltjz/

[4] Summits are upgraded Ministerial Conferences, see FOCAC Mechanisms. Available from: http://www.focac.org/eng/ltjj_3/ltjz/. For 2018 FOCAC Summit, see FOCAC Summit. Available from: http://focacsummit.mfa.gov.cn/eng/.

Besides the aforementioned three levels of FOCAC, various sub-forums have been established within the framework, including the China-Africa People's Forum, China-Africa Young Leaders Forum, Ministerial Forum on China-Africa Health Cooperation, Forum on China-Africa Media Cooperation, China-Africa Poverty Reduction and Development Conference, FOCAC-Legal Forum, Forum on China-Africa Local Government Cooperation, China-Africa Think Tanks Forum[5] and Forum on China-Africa Agricultural Cooperation.[6]

The Chinese Follow-up Committee of FOCAC was established from the beginning in November 2000, with 37 member departments or agencies. The Committee has a secretariat comprised of director-general level officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and the competent department of the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. With the director-general of the Department of African Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the secretary-general, the Office of the Secretariat is set up in the Department of African Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[7] The main objectives of FOCAC are: Equal consultation, enhancing understanding, expanding consensus, strengthening friendship and promoting cooperation.[8]



[5] FOCAC Mechanisms. Available from: http://www.focac.org/eng/ltjj_3/ltjz/
[6] Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of the People's Republic of China (MARA). 2nd Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in Agriculture Convenes. November 15, 2023. Available from: http://english.moa.gov.cn/news_522/202311/t20231117_301290.html
[7] Chinese Follow-up Committee of FOCAC. Available from: http://www.focac.org/eng/ltjj_3/zfhxxdwyh/
[8] FOCAC Mechanisms. Available from: http://www.focac.org/eng/ltjj_3/ltjz/

2. Why is FOCAC important to China and African states

There are several ways in which the Chinese government can and does justify the engagement with African countries. In particular, four major reasons typically emerge in government documents and academic literature.

First, China's International responsibility. According to China's most recent White Paper,[9] China views its development cooperation with African countries as a form of mutual assistance between developing countries. Specifically, China classifies this to be in the realm of South-South Cooperation – including notions of "win-win" and "non-interference" in political and policy affairs. By doing so, such cooperation has been distinguished from North-South cooperation. The White paper suggests that China will continue to shoulder more international responsibilities as it grows and develops, with discovering further forms of cooperation to promote common development.



Second, China considers Africa an important new market for Chinese products due to the latter's potential demographic dividend. According to forecasts, Africa is going to experience significant population growth reaching nearly 2.5 billion by 2050 and may overtake Asia's population by 2100.[10] Therefore, Africa has the potential to become a significant market for Chinese products, and even services. In line with this, while Africa currently accounts for a small percentage of China's overall trade, amounting to only about 4% percent of Chinese foreign trade across the globe, while China absorbs about 11% of Africa's global export of goods,[11] Africa is nevertheless a vital market for China's machinery as well as electronic products. For example, Transsion phones whose brands included Techno, Infinix and Intel dominates Africa's smartphone market with 48% share of the Africa's smartphone market.[12]

[9] Available from: http://english.www.gov.cn/atts/stream/files/5ffa69cac6d0cc300eea77af
[10] Available from: https://www.statista.com/statistics/1224205/forecast-of-the-total-population-of-africa/
[11] Available from: https://www.orfonline.org/research/china-in-africa/
[12] Available from: https://www.theafricareport.com/73472/chinas-transsion-dominates-smartphone-market-in-africa/

Third, China considers African countries as ideal potential locations for offshoring low-cost manufacturing in future. As poverty falls, and incomes and wages rise in China, the cost of production in China will inevitably increase, leading its light industrial manufacturing sectors to look at low-cost alternatives overseas. With demographic dividends expected, many (although not all) African countries offer ideal conditions for this strategy.[13]

Fourth, China considers African countries as a source of diverse imports - including raw materials for its industries. Recent analysis shows that Africa's exports to China in relation to Africa's exports to the world have been steadily increasing since 2000.[14] The main exports of African economies to China include minerals, metals, agricultural products, and crude oil. However, more recently, trade flows of agricultural products from several African countries to China have risen with products including tea, coffee, avocadoes, chillies, oilseeds, oil meals and grains, and wine amongst others.[15]

Beyond these four reasons, some experts suggest that Africa is important to China for geopolitical reasons. Other analysis points to African countries "siding" with China in various UN forums (see detailed analysis in Part 5).[16]



[13] Available from: https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/03/what-the-shift-in-chinas-economy-means-for-africa/

[14] Development Reimagined (2021), From China-Africa to Africa-China; A Blueprint for a Green and Inclusive Continent-Wide African Strategy towards China page 16, available at https://developmentreimagined.com/portfolio-posts/china-africa-to-africa-china/

[15] Much writing has been done on how international supply chains want to diversify away from China reliance (so called "China plus one" strategies) but not enough on how China is planning to diversity its own supply chains. One example is here: https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-11-02/china-s-xi-also-wants-to-diversify-supply-chains-amid-u-s-curbs

[16] Available from: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-56717986

2.1 African perspective

From African countries' standpoint, the significance of cooperation with China can be summarized from six perspectives.

First, China has to date been channelling finance to African countries – especially aid (grants) but also loans and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) that is not attached to any internal policy conditions of African countries. In other words, no policy and economic reformation of recipient countries are required when they are receiving grants, loans or equity from Chinese stakeholders, which is attractive from the perspective of African governments.[17]

Second, China has been a source of loans for projects that often will not be financed by other bilateral partners and even many multilateral development banks. These projects range from transportation, communication, and energy infrastructures. China's ability to play a more prominent role in Africa's infrastructure is based on two key factors. First, compared to other development partners, China has been willing to fund these projects through multiple financing models. [18] Secondly, China has the technical capacity in the forms of State-Owned Enterprises who have won various procurement bids from African governments and deployed for tied Chinese loans (e.g. from China Exim Bank) in relative projects. The US and the EU have not been active in addressing Africa's infrastructure deficit when it comes to channeling their concessional finance. [19] Therefore, the financing arrangements with China can be more creative including concessionary loans and natural



[17] Available from: https://qz.com/africa/1787779/what-the-uk-africa-summit-can-learn-from-china/
[18] For more discussion on this see Chapter 2 of Development Reimagined (2021) Options for Reimagining Africa's Debt System, available at: https://developmentreimagined.com/development-reimagined-launches-new-flagship-report-for-reimagining-the-african-debt-system/
[19] Available from: https://www.brookings.edu/articles/competing-in-africa-china-the-european-union-and-the-united-states/

resource backed loans. For instance, in 2018 the Ghanaian and Chinese governments announced a deal of US$2 billion loans in infrastructure that can be repaid in aluminium.[20]

Third, China is an inspiring partner in Africa countries poverty reduction efforts. It is worth noting that whereas there are other countries such as South Korea and UAE have also successfully implemented poverty reduction strategies, China remains the most comparable to Africa in terms of total size and population, even in organisation of society with large informal sectors and primarily small-scale agriculture, and hence offers an ideal model for African countries. Hence, many African countries have shown an interest in adapting China's experience to their national context.[21] Furthermore, African countries can examine and draw important lessons from China in the poverty reduction policies particularly given that China's efforts were largely devoid of aid, based on a largely informal and urbanising society initially, and have been driven by internal policy reforms.[22]

Fourth, China is an important source of machinery and tech transfer (inbound trade) for African countries. China is currently the top bilateral source of imports for 23 African countries. The Chinese capital goods imports are boosted in the presence of large Chinese financed infrastructure projects, which frequently include country-of-origin procurement rules. Also, in terms of cost, Chinese products have often been less expensive than similar products imported from other countries, making them attractive to African counterparts.[23] Further, it has been widely argued that Chinese investment practices and technologies may be more appropriate for Africa in some circumstances than those from OECD countries.[24]

Fifth, African countries consider China a new market for existing and future African products. China's increasing consumer market for raw materials and agricultural products present an opportunity for African countries. China is now the world's largest agricultural importer, surpassing both the European Union and the United States in 2019 with imports totalling

[20]Available from: https://www.ccpwatch.org/single-post/2020/02/27/resource-backed-loans-revisited-infrastructure-for-aluminum-in-ghana-and-guinea
[21] See FAO , China And FAO Partnering For Sustainable Domestic And Global Food Security available at: http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/b04d5c74-e343-4e45-9c74-ae31f557a8c2/
[22] Ibid.
[23]Available from: https://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/Event/Africa/Investing%20in%20Africa%20Forum/2015/investing-in-africa-forum-china-and-africa-expanding-economic-ties-in-an-evolving-global-context.pdf
[24] Kaplinsky, R (2013) What contribution can China make to inclusive growth in sub-Saharan Africa? Development and Change, 44: 1295–1316.

US$133.1 billion.[25] The above coupled with China's Duty-Free Quota-Free (DFQF) Scheme could have significant implications for African countries through increasing exports to China.

Sixth, and in particular when it comes to investment, China – alongside other emerging economies such as UAE – offer new and different types of investors in comparison to traditional FDI partners. They can often be more positive and even creative for new tools for development, such as the role of e-commerce.[26] This also means that Chinese external-facing banks and dedicated funds such as the China-Africa Development Fund (CAD Fund), can be interested in certain types of investment that other traditional investors would find "unbankable" – e.g. investing in Special Economic Zones (SEZs) or certain ports.

Finally, and seventh, China may well play a geopolitical role for African countries – for example, in the UN, African countries have since its readmission into the UN supported China being part of the "G77+China" grouping. As China is a permanent member of the Security Council, it is possible for both sides to work together to achieve UN objectives.



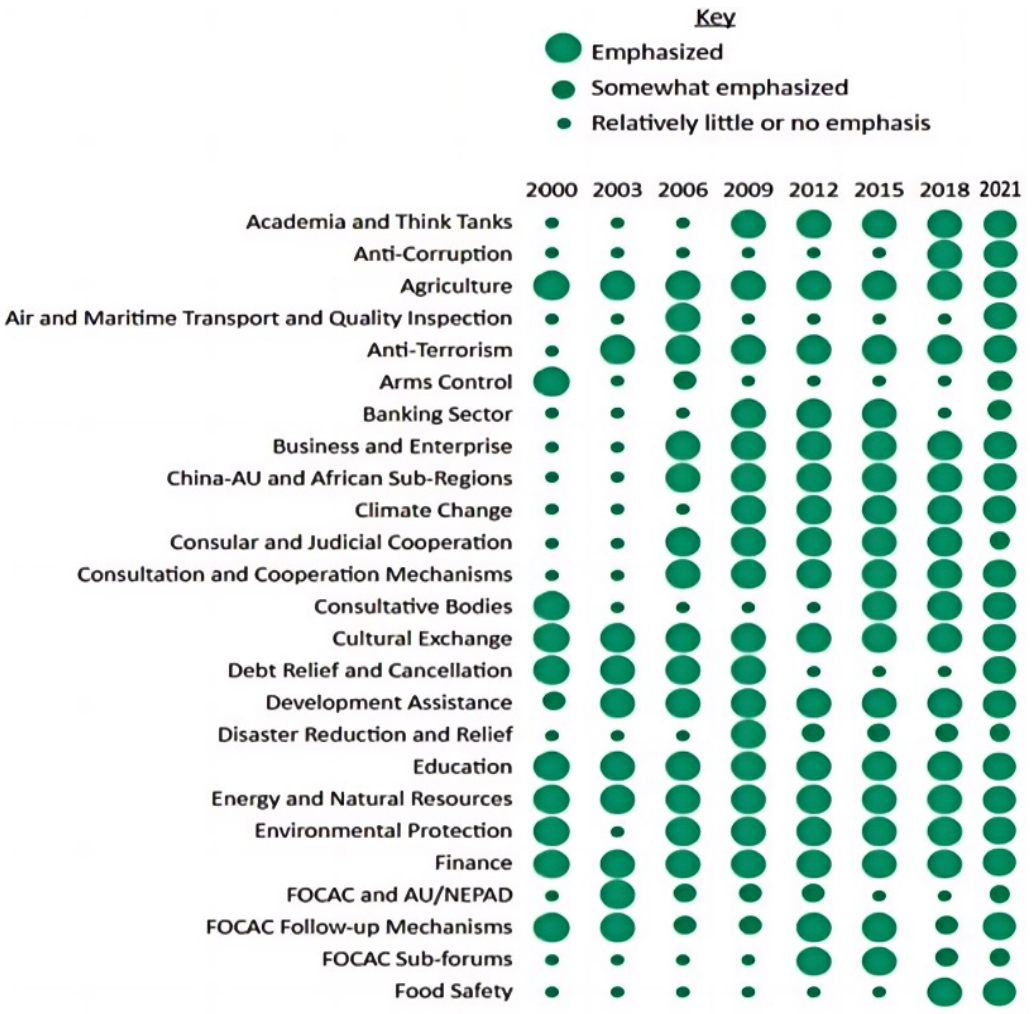
[25] Available from: https://www.fas.usda.gov/data/china-evolving-demand-world-s-largest-agricultural-import-market

[26] For some examples of what difference the "China view" can make to development see: https://www.cgdev.org/publication/e-commerce-and-mobile-money-poverty-reduction-china-lessons-african-countries and https://www.cgdev.org/publication/chinas-model-innovation-are-there-lessons-african-countries

3. What key areas has FOCAC covered and the dynamics of focus?

Areas of cooperation under FOCAC action plans have expanded and become more articulated over time, and emphasis has often been adjusted accordingly. Figure 1 lists a total 56 FOCAC cooperation areas over the years in alphabetical order, and the scale of emphasis reflects the frequency, prominence, and detail of the different cooperation areas as they are noted in the FOCAC action plans.[27]

Figure 2: FOCAC's Cooperation Areas over Time



[27] FOCAC Official Documents. Available from: http://www.focac.org/eng/zywx_1/zywj/



As Figure 1 shows, areas of cooperation have expanded significantly since 2000, and some have remained constant features since then. While 40 issues were emphasised in 2018 compared to those 20 topics mentioned in 2000.

The year 2015 witnessed the 10 major China-Africa cooperation plans, with US$60 billion financial support from China to implement the initiatives. These include US$5 billion of free aid and interest-free loans, US$35 billion of preferential loans and export credit on more favourable terms, US$5 billion of additional capital for the CADFund and the Special Loan for the Development of African SMEs each, and a China-Africa production capacity cooperation fund with the initial capital of US$10 billion.[28]

[28] Xi announces 10 major China-Africa cooperation plans for coming 3 years, 2015. Available from: http://www.focac.org/eng/ljhy_1/dwjbzjjhys_1/hyqk/201512/t20151207_8103669.htm

In the 2018 Action Plan, food safety, industrial cooperation, and ocean economy were incorporated into the action plan. Specifically, 44 specific commitments were categorised under 8 major initiatives.[29] Trade was emphasised with China announcing new initiatives and complimentary proposals for increasing industrialisation and agricultural modernisation to speed up economic transformation and reduce poverty on the African continent (**Table 1**).

Table 1: FOCAC's 8 Major Initiatives and How They Are Conceived by China

FOCAC Initiative	Key Elements of Focus by China
Industrial Promotion Initiative	Increasing investment in Africa, formulating agricultural plans, providing agricultural assistance, improving agricultural technologies, fulfilling social responsibility, deepening financial cooperation.
Infrastructure Connectivity Initiative	Strengthen top-level design, Implementation of key projects, deepening of aviation cooperation, expanding financial channels.
Trade Facilitation Initiative	Provide trade-promoting assistance incl. new expo and trade centers, including to expand exports to China from Africa, strengthen brand marketing, continue preferential trade arrangements for African LDCs.
Green Development Actions	Implement green projects, reinforce environmental cooperation, establish a bamboo center, raise awareness of environmental protection.
Capacity Building	Share development experience, establish Luban Workshops, implement returnee's project[30], train talents, Support innovation and entrepreneurship.
HealthCare Initiative	Build centers for disease control and prevention, upgrade friendship hospitals, strengthen healthcare cooperation, Free clinics and mobile medical services, Help women and children.

[29] Elaboration on the Eight Major Initiatives of the FOCAC Beijing Summit. Available from: images.mofcom.gov.cn/www/201809/20180920082736333.pdf

[30] In China, this is referred to as the "Head Goose" project – whereby successful business or political leaders return to their hometowns/villages in leadership roles to support its transformation. For an example see: https://news.cgtn.com/news/2019-09- 17/From-the-soil-How-one-village-cut-poverty-through-flowers--K3huhiLEfS/index.html

People-To-People Exchange Initiative	Establish research institutes, conduct cultural and sports projects, strengthen cultural exchanges, deepen media cooperation, advance Chinese teaching, increase people-to-people exchanges.
Peace and Security Initiative	Establishment of a China-Africa peace and security forum., Capacity enhancement in peacekeeping, more input in peace and security.

In 2021, the Dakar Action Plan (2022-2024) officially set out the Nine Programmes that China and Africa will work on to further upgrade and improve the quality of cooperation. These nine programmes can be seen in Table 2.[31]

Table 2: The Main Themes under Nine Programmes

Medical & Health	**Poverty Reduction & Agricultural Development**	**Trade Promotion**
Investment Promotion	Digital Innovation	Peace & Security
Green Development	Capacity Building	People-to-people Exchange

[31] Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Dakar Action Plan (2022-2024), 2021. Available from: http://www.focac.org/eng/zywx_1/zywj/202201/t20220124_10632444.htm

4. What are the key achievements and announcements so far?

Under the FOCAC framework and cooperation areas, there are major achievements and announcements in the following areas:

Financial commitments (both loans and grants) and debt relief. Over the years, China's financing commitments (both loans and grants) increased from US$5 billion in 2006 to US$11 billion in 2009, US$20 billion in 2012, US$35 billion in 2015, to US$45 billion in 2018.[32]

Specifically, China's overall financial pledges to African countries reached a peak in 2018, with US$60 billion in total, including US$15 billion in grants, interest-free loans and concessional loans, US$20 billion of credit lines, US$10 billion special fund for development finance, US$5 billion special fund for financing imports from Africa, US$10 billion investment in the next three years and cancellation of interest-free loans to LDCs due by 2018.

In 2021, though many reports indicated an overall financial pledges reduction to US$40 billion (including US$10 billion credit lines to African financial institutions, with priority to SMEs, US$10 billion Special Drawing Rights to Africa, US$10 billion trade financing for African imports and at least US$10 billion investment in the next three years), they have not factored in the announcement of finance for 10 regional connectivity/agriculture/health projects and the donation of US$1 billion doses of Covid-19 vaccine to Africa. These can add up to the US$40 billion pledges, thus not signifying a clear fall of China's financial commitment.[33]



Human resources development. In 2000, an African Human Resources Development Fund was announced during FOCAC to support communications between African and Chinese universities and training of African personnel. China's commitment to the training of African

[32] Development Reimagined, Report: Reimagining FOCAC Going Forwards. Available from: https://developmentreimagined.com/reimagining-focac-going-forwards/
[33] African Business, What did FOCAC 2021 deliver for Africa?. Available from: https://african.business/2021/11/trade-investment/what-can-africa-expect-from-focac-2021

personnel increased from 10,000 in 2013 to 50,000 in 2018. Chinese scholarships for African students also increased from 2,000 per year in 2006 to 50,000 by 2021.[34]

In 2009, A China-Africa science and technology partnership was launched to carry out 100 joint scientific and technological research demonstration projects and accept 100 African postdoctoral fellows to conduct scientific research in China.[35] The Chinese Ministry of Education launched the "China-Africa Universities 20+20 Cooperation Plan" in 2010.[36]

In 2015, China committed more to vocational and technical trainings, providing trainings to 200,000 local African vocational and technical personnel. This aspect was brought up again in the 2021 Dakar Action Plan by the "Future of Africa" China-Africa Vocational Education Cooperation Plan with China-Africa Education Ministers' Forum.[37]

Trade facilitation. Since the first FOCAC in 2000, initiatives were made to promote bilateral trade and facilitate access for African products to the Chinese market with the establishment of China-Africa Joint Business Council and China- Africa Products Exhibition Centre.

In 2003, free tariff access for some commodities from African LDCs was granted, and the number of export items was increased from 190 to over 440 in 2006. In 2009, zero-tariff treatment was given to 95% of products from African LDCs.[38] In 2015, 50 projects were designed in standardization, certification and accreditation, and e-commerce.[39]



Recognising the persistent imbalance of trade between China and African countries, the 2018 FOCAC Beijing Summit emphasised the increase of non-resource product imports from Africa,

[34] FOCAC Official Website. Available from: http://www.focac.org/eng/
[35] FOCAC Twelve Years Later: Achievements, Challenges and the Way Forward, 2012. Available from: https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/151831/FULLTEXT01-4.pdf
[36] Xiangtan University, China-Africa Universities 20+20 Cooperation Plan. Available from: https://en.xtu.edu.cn/International/China_Africa_Universities_20_20_Cooperation_Plan.htm
[37] Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Dakar Action Plan (2022-2024), 2021. Available from: http://www.focac.org/eng/zywx_1/zywj/202201/t20220124_10632444.htm
[38] FOCAC Twelve Years Later: Achievements, Challenges and the Way Forward, 2012.Available from: https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/151831/FULLTEXT01-4.pdf
[39] Origin, Achievements, and Prospects of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation. Available from: http://www.focac.org/eng/lhyj_1/yjcg/201810/P020210830627854979477.pdf

with a focus on value added agricultural produce and industrial products. With the most recent FOCAC (2021), both parts continued to promote the competitiveness of African agricultural products, with the facilitation of encouraging small-scale agricultural producers to entry formal processing, marketing and distribution networks. China also made a bid to reach US$300 billion in total imports from Africa in the next three years.

In tandem, the first China-Africa Economic and Trade Expo (CAETE) was held in Changsha in 2019 as a follow-up action of the 2018 Beijing Summit. Subsequent expos were held in 2021 and 2023. The first-ever CAETE outside of China is being held in Kenya earlier this year.[40]

Health cooperation. Medical care is one of the areas that received great joint attention from the beginning. In 2000, China pledged to send extra medical teams to African countries. In 2006, announcements were made that China would build 30 hospitals. Specifically, there was great effort in combating malaria with the promise of establishing 30 malaria prevention and treatment centres in Africa and providing anti-malaria drug to the value of RMB 300 million made in 2006, providing anti-malaria equipment worth RMB 500 million and training 3,000 doctors and nurses for Africa in 2009. In 2018, China aimed to carry out anti-malaria projects with African countries in support of the Catalytic Framework to end AIDS, TB and Eliminate Malaria in Africa by 2030.[41]



[40] Kenya hosts China-Africa economic trade expo amid growing Sino-African ties, 2024. Available from: http://www.focac.org/eng/zfzs_1/202405/t20240513_11303474.htm
[41] Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Beijing Action Plan (2019-2021), 2018.Available from: http://www.focac.org/eng/zywx_1/zywj/201809/t20180912_7933578.htm

In 2015, China supported the building of an African Union Disease Control Centre and regional medical research centres. In 2018, China has expressed its commitment to support the building of a facility for the African Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), a Continent-wide Public Health Agency in Ethiopia and upgrade 50 medical and health aid programs for Africa, particularly flagship projects such as the headquarters of the African CDC and China-Africa Friendship Hospitals.[42] In 2021, China committed to provide another one billion doses of vaccines to Africa, including 600 million doses as donation and 400 million doses to be provided through such means as joint production by Chinese companies and relevant African countries. In the Dakar Action Plan (2022-2024), collaboration on pharmaceutical production has caught greater attention.[43]

Global governance. There are several initiatives and multilateral mechanisms that affect and contribute to China-Africa cooperation in global governance, including the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the Global Development Initiative (GDI), UN Security Council, BRICS and G21.

In 2023, China hosted the third Belt and Road Forum (BRF) in Beijing after a decade since BRI's inception. At present, 53 out of 54 nations in Africa are part of the BRI. During last decade, China's commerce with BRI members reached US$19.1 trillion, growing at an average annual rate of 6.4%.[44] In the realm of the GDI proposed by China in 2021, a First-batch Projects of GDI Project Pool was announced in September 2022, among which, 15 of 50 practical projects are on the African continent. China is currently emphasising the need for creative approaches to international lending through the Green BRI and "small and beautiful". It refers to projects with loans under US$50 million or large syndicated loans, where multiple lenders each contribute a sizeable share of the loan, that possess significant financial viability, favourable social and environmental outcomes.[45]

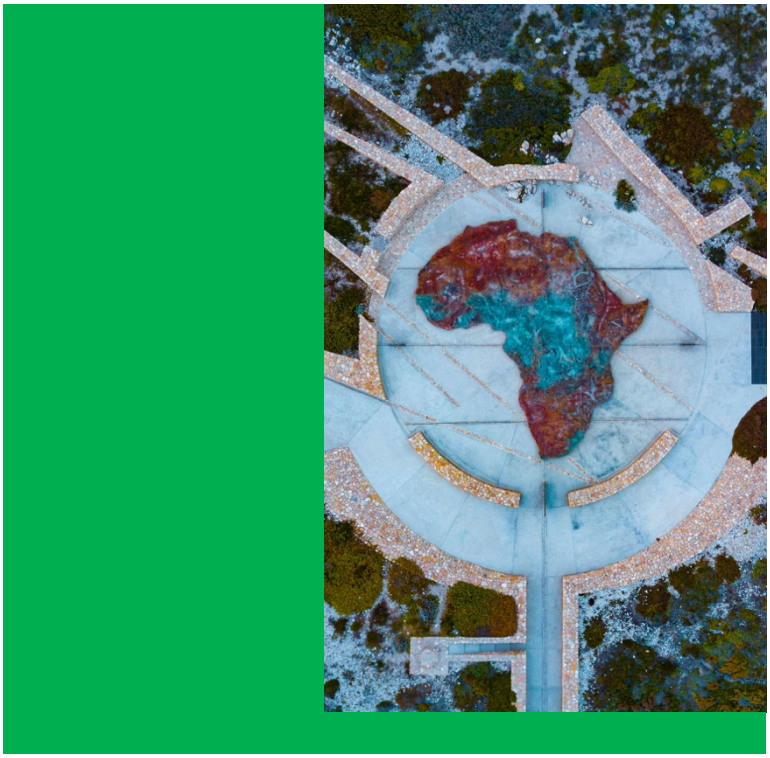
Under the UN framework, the most direct cooperation between China and Africa is reflected in regional security and peacekeeping operations. Peace and security were incorporated into FOCAC in 2012. By 2020, China was contributing more troops to UN missions than other members on the UN Security Council. In the sphere of BRICS, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have confirmed that they are joining the BRICS bloc at the beginning of 2024. The addition of new African countries to BRICS will help enhance the representation of African

[42] Ibid.
[43] Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Dakar Action Plan (2022-2024), 2024. Available from: http://www.focac.org/eng/zywx_1/zywj/202201/t20220124_10632444.htm
[44] The Belt and Road Initiative: A Key Pillar of the Global Community of Shared Future, 2023. Available from: http://www.beltandroadforum.org/english/n101/2023/1010/c124-895.html
[45] Available from: https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/reading-10-years-of-bri-from-an-african-perspective

countries in BRICS. For G20, AU was granted full member status in 2023. China was one of the early countries to promote the AU's accession to the G20 mechanism. It is expected that debt, trade, and improving the G21 framework based on the AU's position will become AU's next priorities in the G21.[46]

In addition to the five areas above, other important achievements and announcements of FOCAC include the setup of CADFund in 2006, with the aim of boosting Africa's industrialisation process and enhancing Africa sustainable development capacity through investment. The CADFund was officially launched in June 2007 and undertaken by China Development Bank (CDB). It is headquartered in Beijing and has five representative offices in South Africa, Ethiopia, Zambia, Ghana and Kenya.[47]

In 2009, a China-Africa partnership was established to respond to climate change, with building 100 clean energy project in Africa. Since then, climate change and green transformation have assumed a prominent position in FOCAC documents, culminating in the release of the Declaration on China-Africa Cooperation on Combating Climate Change in FOCAC 2021. In addition, the China-Africa Cooperation Vision 2035 was announced in the same year.



[46] Development Reimagined, Policy Brief: African Priorities for the G21 in 2024, available online: https://developmentreimagined.com/african-priorities-for-the-g21-in-2024/

[47] China Africa Development Fund. Available from: http://en.cadfund.com/Column/25/0.htm

5. Do African countries have other FOCAC-like mechanisms and why is FOCAC unique?

Table 2 below sets out a number of plurilateral or "Africa Plus One" Summits (as they have come to be known), where Heads of State or other representatives of African countries and other individual countries/entities meet regularly. They are also set out in order of commencement. Note that "Summits" where no Head of State from an African country and/or the partnership country have ever been present are excluded from this list.

Table 3: Africa's Plurilateral Platforms

Africa's Partnerships	Year of Creation & Meeting Frequency	Highest No. of African States Participating	Major Announcements at the Most Recent Event
France-Africa Summit	1973 No fixed frequency	29 heads of state (May 2021)	Key announcement was a request to (international community to) re-allocate at least US$100 billion of SDR to African countries.
Africa-Arab Summit	1977 Triennial since 2010 (affected by COVID and regional crisis)[48]	43 heads of state from both Arab and African countries (2020)[49]	Pledged $1 billion (740 million euros) in low-interest loans and the same amount in investments to African states in cooperation with the World Bank (2020).
Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD)	1993 Every 5 years	48 African countries including 20 heads of state and government (2022)[50]	Japan is going to invest US$30 billion as the sum of public and private financial contribution (TICAD 2022).
African Union- EU Summit	2000 Triennial	Between 32 and 55 heads of state – all	An Africa-Europe Investment Package of EUR 150 billion that will support a common ambition for

[48] Foreign Ministry Postpones Fifth Arab-African Summit Due to Gaza Situation, 2024. Available from: https://www.spa.gov.sa/en/N1993340

[49] Africa-Arab summit in Kuwait, 2013. Available from: https://www.dw.com/en/africa-arab-summit-urges-economic-ties-and-counter-terrorism-cooperation/a-17242159

[50] The Eighth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 8), 2022. Available from: https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/100419611.pdf

		55 countries +AU represented (2017)	2030 and AU Agenda 2063 (2022).[51]
Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)	2000 Triennial	46 Heads of State + AU representative (2018)	US$ 40 billion package of grant lines, investment and loans; finance for 10 major projects (FOCAC 2021).
Korea-Africa Forum (KAF); Korea-Africa Forum on Economic Cooperation; Korea Africa Summit	KAF: 2006, triennial; KOAFEC: 2006, biennial; Korea Africa Summit: 2024	25 African heads of state and government, as well as the president of the African Development Bank Group Dr Akinwumi Adesina (2024)[52]	Korea will expand Official Development Assistance (ODA) up to 10 billion US dollars by 2030; approximately 14 billion US dollars in export financing will be provided to Korean companies by 2030 (2024)[53]
India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS)	2008, 2011, 2015, scheduled for 2024[54]	41 heads of state & government (2015)	US$ 10 billion concessional credit over the next five years; US$ 600 million grant assistance including US$ 100 million India-Africa Development Fund and US$ 100 million India-Africa Health Fund; 50,000 scholarships over the next five years
Africa-Turkey Cooperation Summit	2008, 2014, 2021	7 Heads of State (2014)	Establish ties, dialogue and coordination between the African Business Council and the Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEİK), the exclusive business partner of

[51] European Union - African Union summit, 17-18 February 2022, 2022. Available from: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2022/02/17-18/

[52] Korea Pledges Billions of Dollars at Inaugural Leaders' Summit with Africa, 2024. Available from: https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/press-releases/korea-pledges-billions-dollars-inaugural-leaders-summit-africa-71536

[53] 2024 Korea-Africa Summit Joint Declaration, 2024. Available from: https://2024rokasummit.kr/?menuno=16&ztag=rO0ABXQAUTxjYWxsIHR5cGU9ImJvYXJkIiBubz0iNyIgc2tpbj0icGhvdG90aHVtYl9zdWJtaXQyIiBiYnNubz0iMTgiIHNpdGVubz0iMiI-PC9jYWxsPg%3D%3D&act=view

[54] Africa-India Cooperation Sets Benchmark for Partnership, 2023. Available from: https://africacenter.org/spotlight/africa-india-cooperation-benchmark-partnership/

			the AU in Türkiye under a MoU signed in 2018 (Joint Implementation Plan 2022 – 2026)[55]
US-Africa Leaders' Summit	2014, 2022	50 heads of state & government (2014)[56]	The U.S. intends to invest $55 billion in Africa over the next three years. In addition, U.S. and African businesses, governments, and investors showcased investments and partnerships, now valued at $16.2 billion, orchestrated through the U.S.-Africa Business Forum.[57]
German-African Business Summit	2015 Biennial	-	Germany aims to set up climate and energy partnerships worldwide, including in Africa, to support its decarbonisation plans, e.g., the large-scale importation of green hydrogen.[58]
Asia Africa ICT and Development Summit[59]	2018 Annual (last held 2019)	Focus was on companies and individuals in the ICT sector, not on national level (2018)	Cooperation between Indian and African companies and innovators in the ICT sector.
EU-Africa Business Summit	2018 Annual	-	Cooperation areas: policy, business, academia

[55] AFRICA – TÜRKİYE JOINT ACTION PLAN. Available from: https://www.itkib.org.tr/files/downloads/Belgeler/2023/Afrika-T%C3%BCrkiye%20Eylem%20Plan%C4%B1.pdf
[56] The White House. Available from: https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/us-africa-leaders-summit
[57] 2022 U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit Overview. Available from: https://www.state.gov/2022-u-s-africa-leaders-summit-overview/
[58] LexAfrica. Available from: https://lexafrica.com/2023/01/german-africa-business-summit-2022-underlined-germany-and-africas-commitment-to-greener-energy
[59] THE 2018 ASIA AFRICA ICT AND DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT, EXPO & AWARD, 2019. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y0PxKapJ52w

Indonesia-Africa Forum	2018	-	US$587 million worth of business deals in sectors of strategic industries, infrastructure, financing, mining, textile, aircraft maintenance and trade in commodities.
Trade with Africa Business Summit	2018 Annual	Attended by government and private sector trade professionals (AU, Afreximbank, UNECA, World Bank)	Focus on doing business across borders with Africa; caters to small businesses as well as governments. U.S. government highlighted available resources, projects and resources to boost U.S.-Africa trade.
Russia-Africa Summit	2019, 2023	43 African Heads of State (2019); 17 African Heads of State (2023)[60]	Moscow to send 25 000 to 50 000 tonnes of cost-free grain to Burkina Faso, Zimbabwe, Mali, Somalia, Central African Republic and Eritrea within 3~4 months (2023).[61]
UK-Africa Investment Summit	2020, virtual conferences (2021, 2022). 2024 Summit is postponed[62]	15 African Heads of State and leadership	UK pledged $1.9 billion worth of projects, and signed infrastructure deals with Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya and Uganda and the AfDB. UK promised to review immigration rules for Africans seeking visas.
Brazil Africa Forum	2020 Annual	Brazil, African and international organisation leadership representatives	The 2023 Forum focused on trade, investment and development, with the objective of increasing commercial contacts, discovering new business opportunities and

[60] ISS, Russia-Africa summit: what was in it for Africa?, 2023. Available from: https://issafrica.org/pscreport/psc-insights/russia-africa-summit-what-was-in-it-for-africa
[61] Available from: https://issafrica.org/pscreport/psc-insights/russia-africa-summit-what-was-in-it-for-africa
[62] UK-African Investment Summit, 2024. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/uk-african-investment-summit

			partners between Brazil, Africa with focus on sustainable development.[63]
Global Business Forum Africa	2021	Representatives from 55+ countries (October 2021)	Bilateral trade between UAE and African countries; focus on AfCFTA.
U.S.-Africa Business Summit	1997 2024(16th) Summit (May 6-9) in Dallas, Texas[64]	6 Heads of State and Government	The 15th USABS theme: "Enhancing Africa's Value in Global Value Chains". U.S. announced more than $55 billion to support African trade, investment and development with more than $15 billion in new deals made by private sector attendees.[65]
France-Africa Youth Summit	2021	Youth Representatives from 12 countries	No major announcements made.

5.2 The uniqueness of FOCAC

Analysis of this list of plurilateral arrangements reveals that FOCAC is similar to other "Africa Plus One" arrangements in several ways, and unique in others.

First, FOCAC covers a variety of aspects of engagement with African countries such as grant lines, investment, and loans for infrastructure, manufacturing, and SMEs while some other summits focus more on specific themes.

Second, FOCAC has generated some of the largest ever financial (and other) commitments to African countries on the part of a single country, but other financial (and other) commitments have been made to African countries in these forums.

[63]Brazil-Africa Forum. Available from: https://forumbrazilafrica.com/home-en/
[64] U.S.-Africa Business Summit. Available from: https://www.corporatecouncilonafrica.com/programs/u-s--africa-business-summit
[65]United Nations, U.S.-Africa Business Summit. Available from: https://devbusiness.un.org/events/us-africa-business-summit-0

Third, FOCAC's non-African participants are limited as the UN has been invited to observe only since 2006. In contrast, Japan's TICAD has had UN inputs from the very beginning. These different approaches have pros and cons particularly in setting African priorities.

Fourth, FOCAC is highly government-driven, while other forums are designed to focus on particular non-governmental stakeholders, for example business leaders or youth leaders. As with non-African participants, there are pros and cons to different approaches – for instance, the role of civil society in the AU-EU Summit has been contested.[66]

Fifth, and last but not least, FOCAC has a specific monitoring and preparation mechanism, which many other forums do not appear to have, except perhaps the AU-EU and TICAD forums. It currently consists of three key parts: an internal Chinese Follow-up Committee:[67] a Coordinators' Meeting and Follow-up Meetings (since 2016). Coordinators' Meetings are held one year after the Ministerial Conference, where ministerial level officials of the China-Africa competent departments gather to discuss what has been done and what still needs action. Then, every two years, a meeting between the Chinese Follow-up Committee and African Diplomatic Corps in China is convened to evaluate the action plan progress.

Table 4: FOCAC Coordination Mechanism

	China	Africa	When
Coordinators' Meeting	Ministerial level officials	Ministerial level officials	One year after the summit
Follow-up Meeting	Chinese follow-up Committee	African Diplomatic Corps in China	Every two years

Overall, these five factors make FOCAC a very important means for Africa to drive forward the partnership with China, although it can continue to be improved, drawing the best of experience from other partnerships as well.

[66] CONCORD, Civil Society barred from speaking at the Africa-Europe Summit, 2017. Available from: https://concordeurope.org/2017/11/30/civil-society-africa-europe-summit/

[67] Chinese Embassy to South Africa. Available from: http://za.china-embassy.org/chn/znjl/t1439365.htm

6. Highlights of FOCAC 8

The 8th Ministerial Conference of FOCAC was held in November 2021 in Dakar, Senegal. The theme of the Conference was to “Deepen China-Africa partnership and Promote Sustainable Development to build a China-Africa Community with a shared future in the New Era”.

FOCAC 8 delivered major announcements and resolutions including the Dakar Action Plan, the China-Africa Cooperation Vision 2035, the Sino-African Declaration on Climate Change and the Dakar Declaration of the 8th Ministerial Conference of FOCAC. In addition, President Xi announced nine focus areas for the first three years of the China-Africa Cooperation Vision 2035 including health, poverty reduction and agriculture, trade, investment, digital innovation, green development, capacity building, people to people exchanges and peace and security—the latter being a new addition to the FOCAC agenda. FOCAC 8 demonstrated the growing scope of China-Africa cooperation with the meeting agenda including staple items such as trade as well as emerging areas such as peace and security.

The Dakar Action Plan was formulated and adopted at FOCAC 8 to guide the implementation of the outcomes of the Conference between 2022 and 2024 when the next meeting is expected to take place. The Action Plan outlines specific actions, initiatives and commitments to be undertaken by China in accordance with the nine programs announced by President Xi Jinping in order to deliver on the outcomes from the Summit in furtherance of China-African cooperation.



7. Emerging topics and what to expect in FOCAC 9

Following FOCAC 8, there has been increased proactivity on both the Chinese and African sides to fast-track the implementation of the FOCAC commitments. Notably, there has been significant progress on the African side with the AU increasing its footprint in China through increase engagement. Yet, this progress still needs to translate into tangible results, especially for regional projects, with increasing collaboration with more African continental institutions such as the African Development Bank (AfDB).

There are several topics that FOCAC 9 should and might focus on:

Trade – especially value addition and not just volume – and Industrialization.[68] More scaled up and balanced trade and investment is still needed. Despite progress, Africa's exports to China still need significant diversification in terms of both countries and products, with a key approach to expand industrial and manufacturing sectors including by offshoring of Chinese factories. This will also drive up and improve the quality of China's FDI to Africa, as well as support the sustainability of other intervention. Indeed, FOCAC 8 acknowledged the need to leverage economic and trade cooperation zones to advance cooperation across the whole industrial chain of agro-products so as to enhance Africa's capacity for localized processing. More concerted effort and collaboration is needed from both Chinese and African banks to support these shifts, especially in the four AfCFTA priorities (pharmaceuticals, automotive, agroprocessing, textiles).



Finance and Infrastructure – strive for potential to scale up concessional finance for regional projects. Bilateral cooperation continues to outweigh regional cooperation with China and concessional loans have significantly more potential for scale up while more regional projects

[68] SCMP, Africa keen for more Chinese development finance, despite economically bumpy road towards FOCAC summit, 2024. Available from: https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3262169/africa-keen-more-chinese-development-finance-despite-economically-bumpy-road-towards-focac-summit

have to be done. The majority of China's infrastructure projects with Africa since FOCAC 8 have been in the form of contracted construction, meaning the finance of these projects comes from African governments or other cooperation partners. To address this challenge, African countries should actively explore and develop innovative ideas and mechanisms for sovereign lending – such as pooled financing structures or borrowers' clubs, including with China Exim Bank, AfDB, AIIB, NDB, etc.

Agriculture – technology transfer, industrial value chain and infrastructure development. In African countries, agricultural production suffers from weak performance due to insufficient mechanisation, underdeveloped value chains, and heavy reliance on unpredictable rainfall. Africa's share of global agricultural products is declining while imports surge, exacerbating trade imbalances. China-Africa cooperation in agriculture has been widening, from initial technology transfer to greater emphasis on agricultural infrastructure development and agro-products value addition in the past few years. With the realization of the second Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in Agriculture (2023) and the first meeting of the China-AU Joint committee on Agricultural Cooperation plus President Xi emphasising agriculture as one of the three new priorities of China-Africa cooperation, FOCAC 9 will surely see more discussions and collaboration on agricultural development.



People-to-people relations – talent development and tourism. The Plan for China-Africa Cooperation on Talent Development was announced in the China-Africa leaders dialogue in 2023, based on which, China will train 500 principals and teachers of vocational colleges annually, and 10,000 technical personnel with both Chinese language and vocational skills for Africa. China-Africa Universities 100 Cooperation Plan and 10 pilot exchange programs of China-Africa partner institutes are also in operation. With recovery from pandemic era, tourism is also likely to be an area demanding greater attention. The China-Africa Cultural and Tourism Cooperation Forum and the Hunan-Africa Product and Tourism Matchmaking Session were held as part of the third China-Africa Economic and Trade Expo held in 2023.

Global governance reform. Cooperation between China and African countries in international affairs in 2023 focused on global governance reform. The AU was officially admitted to the G20 in 2023, now G21, as a permanent member.[69] In August 2023, President Xi attended side meetings on BRICS-Africa Outreach and BRICS Plus Dialogue during the BRICS leaders' summit in South Africa. It is likely to see more discussions on China-Africa cooperation in multilateral institutions in FOCAC 9. Besides, the African continent now has one more seat in the executive board of IMF since the last General Assembly in Marrakesh. However, actual reformation has yet been made to enhance transparency, maximise agency impact, and establish a new multilateral legal framework for sovereign debt. There is potential for Africa to achieve alignment with China under such topic as China is also keen on seeing reforms within the Ezulwini Consensus.

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[69] China Daily, G20 agrees to grant permanent membership to African Union, 2023. Available from: https://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202309/09/WS64fc0657a310d2dce4bb4d86.html