



Remarks Made by Justus Thuthi (Executive Director – Corporate Center – Africa Center) at the Seminar on Chinese Modernization and African Development (Anhui) "

TITLE: "Harmony in Development: China's Path to Modernization and Its Transformative Impact on the African Renaissance"

October 31, 2024.

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests and Scholars,

Friends,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning,

I want to thank the organizers and Anhui Academy of Governance the host of this timely seminar on Chinese Modernization and African Development for inviting me to address and participate in this noble discourse of promoting exchanges and cooperation between China and Africa. On behalf of all the participants from Africa, we are grateful.

Distinguished Guests

Currently, the global community finds itself at a critical juncture where divergent perspectives on modernization, development, and anti-globalization trends intersect. This intersection represents a pivotal moment characterized by multifaceted debates and discord surrounding the trajectory of global socio-economic growth. Contemporary discourse underscores the tension between proponents advocating for intensified global modernization and development strategies to foster economic growth and development, and critics advocating anti-globalization sentiments such as politics of protectionism, isolationism, and hegemony. Africa and China are also at a crossroad challenging the perceived negative externalities of globalization.

For China, its independent path to modernization gathered a new momentum after the 1978 reform and opening-up policies that introduced foreign capital and technology while maintaining its commitment to socialism with Chinese characteristics. This transformed China from a poor and underdeveloped economy into an economic powerhouse. Further, in embracing the

philosophy of building a community with a shared future for mankind, China's development strategy did not stop at its borders. In the 21st century, Chinese modernization has become integral to Africa's rising narrative, inspiring the continent's pursuit of its independent path to modernization.

The "Going Global" strategy, especially in developing countries, has resulted in China's cumulative investment in Africa to exceed over USD 200 billion. Chinese companies have built railways, highways, ports, airports, special economic zones, industrial parks, and other forms of mega-infrastructure projects in Africa, while still investing in small but beautiful projects such as the drilling of water boreholes that affect the livelihoods of the common man in the villages. This has greatly improved the economic development of the continent, attracting foreign investment, promoting local employment, freeing people from poverty, and gradually moving populations towards a prosperous and well-off life.

Distinguished friends

President Xi Jinping in his speech during the 2024 FOCAC Summit noted that "the friendship between China and Africa transcends time and space, surmounts mountains and Oceans, and passes down through generations."

The debate on China-Africa cooperation forms part of the 'solidarity thesis' that enchants the enduring relationship between the two civilizations whose friendship is deeply rooted in ancient times and hardened in the trenches of mutual struggles against imperialism and shared aspirations for freedom and development. This relationship stretches back centuries to a time when African traders, travellers, and scholars engaged with China, and Chinese sailors undertook numerous voyages to the continent of Africa. Therefore, this collaboration mirrors contemporary China's commitment to humanism and harmony, advocating for the belief that every individual deserves dignity, and respect, and the promotion of values that uphold freedom and independence.

This is witnessed in the high-level visits from both Chinese and African leaders over the years that resulted in transformative policies that have become integral to Africa's rising story.

Looking back in the 1980s, dubbed the "lost decade" for Africa, the externally borrowed model of modernization plunged the continent into a complex socio-economic crisis. One-party tyrannies, military coups, and dictatorships undermined Africa's efforts to chart an alternative path to modernization and economic recovery. Africa's traditional partners in the West, through the Bretton Woods system, responded by imposing the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), which destroyed the continent's economies rather than saving them. Modelled to adopt the colonial way of governance, most African countries were caught between the birth of modern nationalism and the quest for nationhood, as indicated by Professor Ali Mazrui.

Diseases, instability, and poverty became the trinity of discord in Africa. Africa's quest for modernization at the time was halted.

However, at the turn of the 21st century, success in Chinese modernization began to inspire a spirit of African renaissance and the continent's independent path to modernization. The continent adopted a "Look East Policy" and forged a new partnership with China, defined by the trinity of 'equal partnership', 'mutual cooperation', and 'solidarity' in pursuit of a common future and shared prosperity. China tapped into the spirit of Pan-Africanism as the ideology driving African modernization. To effectively concretize the cooperation between the two civilizations, China's offer of public goods has revolutionized Sino-Africa relations.

Distinguished Scholars

The FOCAC Summit 2024 in Beijing Themed "Joining Hands to Advance Modernization and Build a High-Level China Africa Community with a Shared Future" was attended by 53 African Countries' heads of state and the chairperson of the African Union. The summit adopted by consensus the Beijing Declaration on Jointly building an all-weather China-Africa community with a shared future for the new era.

The offer of global public goods by China (namely – the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Global Development Initiative (GDI), Global Security Initiative (GSI), Outlook on Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa (HoA), and Global Civilization Initiative (GCI) have played a huge role in revolutionizing Africa's agenda 2063 and the global sustainable development. China has engaged each of the African Union's 54 member states out of 55 bilaterally, and further upstaging it to the continental level.

For China, its transformative path of modernization and now the adoption of high-quality productive forces advocating for innovation-driven development will become a catalyst for growth and development for countries in the Global South. Through its peaceful rise, China has managed to achieve its industrialization goals and becoming the first country to achieve the 2030 United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development by lifting over 850 million people out of absolute poverty, the largest in human history. This has enabled China to become the world's second-largest economy, top trader in goods, biggest holder of foreign exchange reserves, and the largest manufacturer taking the title as 'world's factory'. Currently, over 400 million Chinese have joined the middle class—the world's largest middle class in a single country, while at the same time put over 1.4 billion people on course toward true modernization.

This achievement has enabled China to remain Africa's largest trading partner for 15 consecutive years, with bilateral trade reaching a record USD 282.1 billion in 2023, year-on-year increase of 1.5 percent.

In conclusion, the collaboration between China and African countries holds significant benefits for both parties, fostering mutual support for development. These ties with Africa stand as one of the pillars and dependable facet of China's foreign relations with developing nations. Also, through the provision of diverse "global public goods," China is bolstering connectivity, promoting infrastructure development, promoting ecological civilization, and facilitating industrialization in Africa. China's remarkable success in its modernization process has not only served as inspiration

but has also empowered Africa in its quest for an independent path to modernization through supporting the African Union, Agenda 2063, and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), among other continental initiatives.

Indeed, the convergence of Chinese modernization and the 'African Renaissance dream' has transformed the continent's image from that of a "hopeless continent" as perceived by some Western-led media houses in 2000 to a "hopeful continent" and a new frontier for global trade and foreign investments more than two decades later. Certainly, through harmony in development, the future cooperation between China and Africa is characterized by optimism and promise. By quoting President Xi, Modernization should be open and win-win, put the people first, feature diversity and inclusiveness, be Just and Equitable, and be underpinned by peace and Security.

Thank You!!