

WAYS TO PROMOTE CHINA-AFRICA GOVERNANCE EXPERIENCE EXCHANGES IN THE NEW ERA

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The exchange of governance experience is a critical thrust of current China-Africa cooperation and an important approach to concretely advancing the building of a China-Africa community with a shared future. Following the principle of sincerity, real results, amity and good faith and pursuing greater good and shared interests, China has joined hands with African countries to enhance mutual learning. They aim to promote common development through experience sharing and enhance political mutual trust and value consensus through people-to-people communication and knowledge sharing. In the face of the combined impacts of once-in-a-century changes and pandemic, identifying the right objectives and principles and innovating the approaches and means of governance experience exchanges in the new era are of great relevance to jointly promoting development and governance of China and Africa.

IDENTIFYING THE OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES OF GOVERNANCE EXPERIENCE EXCHANGES BETWEEN CHINA AND AFRICA IN THE NEW ERA

China and Africa should identify clear objectives and principles of governance experience exchanges in the new era. Guided by the Global Development Initiative, the experience sharing should aim at building a closer community with a shared future for China and Africa, pursue sincerity, real results, amity, and good faith, as well as the greater good and shared interests, and up-

hold the fundamental principles of seeking common ground while shelving differences, mutual respect and mutual learning.

First, the implementation of the Global Development Initiative serves as the guidance for experience sharing. In an effort to revitalize the world economy and that of developing countries in particular after the pandemic, Chinese President Xi Jinping solemnly proposed the Global Development Initiative and called on countries around the world to build a global development community and accelerate the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Africa is the continent with the most developing countries, especially the least developed countries, and thus is also the region facing the most urgent and arduous tasks in achieving peace and development. Therefore, China regards Africa as an important region where it fulfills the responsibilities as a major country and regards the development of Africa as the key to tackling challenges in global development and governance. The two sides exchange governance experience in an effort to support Africa in independently exploring a path for development suitable to local conditions through mutual learning and assistance, enhance the governance capacity of African countries through human resources development and boost Africa's cultural confidence through people-to-people exchanges and cultural cooperation, which has become a real highlight in the leap-frog growth of China-Africa relations in the new era. In the jointly-formulated China-Africa Cooperation Vision 2035 and the nine projects

of China-Africa cooperation announced at the Eighth Ministerial Conference of the FOCAC, governance experience sharing and governance capacity building are identified as crucial aspects of cooperation.

Second, building a closer community with a shared future for China and Africa is the objective. China-Africa solidarity and cooperation is a solid cornerstone of China's foreign policy and a fine example of a new type of international relations. To build a closer community with a shared future for China and Africa, the two sides need to develop political mutual trust, offer economic assistance to each other, share responsibilities as well as carry out exchanges in culture, experience and concepts. Such exchanges in experience, covering the aspects of economic development, state governance and institutional building among others, is a kind of in-depth communication of concepts and systems that facilitates mutual understanding and recognition and satisfies the need for joint pursuit of development and rejuvenation. Such governance experience sharing is important in that by uplifting China-Africa cooperation from general trade and diplomatic support to communication of ideas and mutual knowledge, it contributes to expanding the essence and enriching the content of South-South cooperation in the new era. Such sharing is relevant in that both sides push forward development and rejuvenation through mutual learning of governance experiences, develop strategic mutual trust and recognition as well as tighten the bond of generations of friendship. Globally, such sharing boosts their confidence in culture and development path, contributes to more balanced development of a diversity of human civilizations and promotes the reform and improvement of the international system.

Third, sincerity, real results, amity, and good faith as well as the pursuit of the greater good and shared interests, which were proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping, are the moral orientation. As expounded by President Xi, China-Africa cooperation should follow a principled approach that values credibility, friendship, justice and high moral standards. The greatest good of China-Africa cooperation is to synergize China's development with Africa's independent and sustainable development and connect the Chinese Dream with the African Dream. Through development assistance and cultural exchanges, China and African countries can share experiences in poverty reduction and development, strengthen scientific and technological cooperation and knowledge

sharing, and create inner driving force of economic development in Africa. While some western countries are still obsessed with the zero sum mentality believing in one side's winning at the cost of others and "winner takes all" and continue to consolidate the obsolete center vs. periphery international development landscape, China and Africa are joining hands towards win-win cooperation and common development. By doing so, they inject new impetus into world development, contribute new ethical norms to international relations and exhibit to the world China's upholding of international justice.

Fourth, seeking common ground while shelving differences, mutual respect and mutual learning are the fundamental principles. At the 2018 Beijing Summit of the FOCAC, President Xi Jinping clearly expounded the five-no approach that China pursues in its cooperation with Africa, including no interference in African countries' pursuit of development paths that fit their national conditions; no interference in African countries' internal affairs; no imposition of will on African countries; no attachment of political strings to assistance to Africa; and no seeking of selfish political gains in investment and financing cooperation with Africa. As China has pledged, when sharing governance experience with African countries, China remains committed to prospering respectively and together. China not only acts on its belief that one does not do to others what he doesn't want others to do to him, but also pursues higher moral standard of "while establishing itself and pursuing success, also working to establish others and enable them to succeed as well". Showing deep respect for African countries' independent choice of development path and their experience, China has established partnerships with African countries to carry out exchanges in culture, ideas, concepts and systems. Such experience sharing is a mutual learning process to draw on each other's merits and make up for deficiencies as equals. The time-honored history, splendid culture and rich local knowledge of African countries also offer reference and inspirations for China. Such experience sharing requires both sides to fully understand their similarities and differences in culture, systems and concepts and respect each other's uniqueness and differences in state governance theories and practices. On this basis, the two sides should explore the greatest common denominator and identify their common concerns and converging interests. Specifically, in terms of modernization, they can share the experience of economic and social develop-

ment; in terms of state building, they can discuss about the choice of systems and capacity building; and in terms of building a China-Africa community with a shared future, they can work to build a shared cultural foundation, conceptual consensus and bond of values.

COMPREHENSIVELY ENRICH AND EXPAND GOVERNANCE EXPERIENCE SHARING BETWEEN CHINA AND AFRICA

China-Africa exchanges of governance experience initially focused on professional skills and development experience, including China's invaluable experience in leading the Chinese people in revolution, construction and reform, which largely exhibit itself in the form of systematic review and international communication of the Chinese experience. China and Africa, as their cooperation is fully elevated, constantly enrich and expand their exchanges of governance experience.

The first is to jointly build a new pattern of all-round and multi-level exchanges of governance experience, evolving from exchanges of professional skills and development experience to systems, concepts and ideas. During the First Ministerial Meeting of FOCAC in 2000, an African Human Resources Development Fund was set up to support China-Africa cooperation in skills training, science, technology and education and facilitate exchange of experiences in economic and social development. China released its first Africa Policy Paper in 2006, proposing to boost governance experience sharing. Ever since, the two sides have attached importance to state system and political party building at the macro level, which have become an essential aspect of experience sharing between China and Africa. Today, the exchanges of governance experience are not limited to general skills training and knowledge sharing, but have expanded to extensive mutual learning in culture, systems, concepts and ideologies. In essence, such exchanges are a kind of international development cooperation, in which the two sides share experiences in poverty reduction and development and help each other strengthen development capability through skills training, experience sharing, technology transfer and capacity building. Such exchanges are also a kind of cultural communication, in which the two sides draw on each other's systems and ideas to jointly explore development models and paths that fit their conditions. Through the in-depth exchanges

of culture and ideas, the two sides cement political mutual trust and foster a stronger bond.

The second is to build a new model of governance experience sharing, featuring the two-way interaction of Chinese experience and African local knowledge. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, especially since the reform and opening up, China has created the two miracles of rapid economic development and long-term social stability. African countries have been looking to the east, expecting to explore and learn from the secret recipe of China's rapid development. China's poverty reduction, development experience, exploration of development path, and the governance of the CPC and the Chinese government have become topics that African political elites and public are interested in. Therefore, the exchange of governance experience between China and Africa largely exhibits itself in the form of systematic review and international communication of China's experience. But the exchange also remains a two-way interaction. Especially as regional and country studies attract extensive interests in recent years, the Chinese academic community pays close attention to the African continent, African countries, local people and societies and conduct more systematical and profound studies on African languages, culture, history, politics, economy and social development. Africans' reflections on their own countries and societies, interpersonal relations and bond between man and nature offer insight and inspiration to the Chinese. The detours African countries have taken also offer a lesson for the Chinese to study thoroughly and inspire them to ponder on and address the challenges that lie ahead.

The third is to build a new system of Chinese discourse that integrates China's experience of century-old struggles and new concepts and theories of state governance in the new era. To introduce China's governance experience, it is imperative to tell the stories of China and the CPC well, so that the African public understand the capability of the CPC, the adaptability of Marxism and the strengths of socialism with Chinese Characteristics. To tell the stories of the CPC to the African audience, China should elaborate the achievements and experience of the CPC over the past century in a way that they can understand; but also focus on the present to highlight China's new achievements and experience of development and governance. An emphasis should be placed on the major breakthroughs in the theories and practices of

the Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, China's reflections on the world order and its contribution to the world.

The fourth is to keep pace with the times and address the new problems and challenges facing China and African countries. Under the combined impacts of changes unseen in a century and the COVID-19 pandemic, African countries are generally faced with a series of challenges in pandemic response, economic recovery and people's wellbeing, adding a growing number of uncertainties and instabilities to economic and social development. China and Africa need to focus on the following three fields when they share governance experience. The first is medical and health cooperation. China is well positioned to share its experience in pandemic control and scientific and technological outcomes of vaccine research, development and production to improve African countries' pandemic response capacity. The second is to boost economic recovery and guarantee people's livelihood. A multi-pronged approach should be adopted to deliver development assistance, trade promotion and investment. BRI cooperation should further adapt to Africa's sustainable development and help African countries meet poverty reduction and development goals. The third is cooperation in the digital economy. Being physically isolated by the global pandemic, China and Africa stand ready to carry out cooperation in the digital economy. They will jointly speed up the construction of digital projects in Africa, realize digital evolution in Africa as well as explore new sectors and forge new formats of economic and trade cooperation between China and Africa.

INNOVATE THE APPROACHES AND MEANS OF GOVERNANCE EXPERIENCE SHARING BETWEEN CHINA AND AFRICA

To elevate China-Africa exchanges of governance experience in the new era, the two sides should leverage on the existing cooperation mechanisms and further adopt new approaches and means to score more notable achievements.

First, party-to-party exchanges offer political guidance. Most African countries have established modern political party systems. Political parties represent critical political forces that organize state power or participate in political life, whose political platforms and views have an important bearing on state governance. Political parties, with

natural bond with the people, also represent people's interests and thus play a vital role in shaping and influencing public opinions. While state-to-state communication and cooperation remains the mainstay of China-Africa governance experience sharing, political party exchanges have a role to play in offering political guidance. The CPC has established party-to-party relations with over 110 political parties and organizations in more than 50 African countries. They have set up various dialogue mechanisms within such framework as FOCAC and the CPC in Dialogue with Political Parties High-Level Meeting, expanding exchanges of visits of high-level political party leaders, theoretical discussions and skills trainings. The two sides engage in dialogues on state governance, institutional development and party building. Sharing experiences in economic and social development is conducive to improving state and party governance theories and the capacity to govern and participate in politics, thus better equipping all parties to explore the paths and models that fit their own development. By conducting candid exchanges on major regional and international issues of interest to each other and exchanging views on global governance, the CPC and African political parties can enhance mutual trust and consensus, and thus jointly increase their influence and voice in global affairs.

Second, public diplomacy and non-governmental diplomacy play a fundamental role. China's grand diplomacy is now showing a new feature of overall diplomacy, with public diplomacy and non-governmental diplomacy as important aspects, representing an intrinsic requirement of major country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics and a fundamental project for China's building of soft power. If official exchange is the main channel, public diplomacy and non-governmental diplomacy are new platforms. In recent years, taking up the opportunities created by China-Africa BRI cooperation, China has actively coordinated political parties, the central government, the National People's Congress, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, sub-national governments and civil societies and has involved media, enterprises, trade unions, think tanks, scholars, NGOs and other resources in this effort. By going out and inviting in, China has reached out to the African people to tell the stories of China and the CPC, and through people-to-people exchanges Chinese and African people have established strong emotional bonds and shared mutual knowledge. Public diplomacy and non-governmental

diplomacy toward Africa have become a highlight and feature as China-Africa exchanges of governance experience go deeper and become more concrete.

Third, the FOCAC mechanism plays a stronger leading role. The FOCAC is a mechanism jointly established by China and Africa for collective consultation and multilateral dialogue. It has played an essential leading role in identifying the characterization of China-Africa relations, steering the direction of China-Africa cooperation, formulating the road map for China-Africa cooperation and proposing new policies and measures. Ever since the First Ministerial Meeting of FOCAC, China and Africa have successively established or launched such initiatives as the African Human Resources Development Fund (2000), the African Talents Program (2012), the China-Africa People-to-People Cooperation Program (2015), the African Capacity Building Action (2018), and the African Capacity Building Project (2021). These initiatives aim to boost the capacity building of African countries through skills training, project cooperation, visits to China and seminar discussions. Within the framework of FOCAC, China and Africa have further set up sub-fora, such as China-Africa People's Forum, China-Africa Think Tanks Forum, China-Africa Young Leaders Forum, China-Africa Media Cooperation Forum and China-Africa Poverty Reduction and Development Conference. The two sides have also launched and implemented the China-Africa Joint Research and Exchange Plan, the China-Africa University 20+20 Cooperation Plan and the China-Africa Think Tank 10+10 Partnership Plan to build a multi-level and multi-field community of knowledge among Chinese and African intellectual and academic circles. Therefore, people-to-people and cultural exchanges between China and Africa grow at all fronts and the exchanges of governance experience keep deepening and expanding.

Fourth, attempts and explorations should be made to promote multilateral exchanges of governance experience. China-Africa governance experience sharing is conducted through bilateral cooperation between China and individual African countries as well as collective dialogues among China, African Union (AU) and African regional organizations. Capacity building has been included in the China-AU strategic dialogue mechanism. China firmly supports the AU in playing a bigger role in peace and development in Africa. On the basis of the Africa-proposed, Africa-agreed and Africa-led principles and with an open attitude, China is also ready to work with

Africa's non-regional partners to boost Africa's capacity building through tripartite and multilateral cooperation. For example, the China-EU strategic dialogue regularly discusses African issues. With multi-level channels for regular communication on African issues, China and the EU have reached a preliminary consensus on promoting tripartite cooperation among China, the EU and Africa. Such tripartite and multilateral cooperation aims to reduce differences, enhance coordination and beef up all parties' strenuous and effective efforts to boost African capacity building. All parties can take a step-by-step approach, starting from cooperation in such low politics areas as poverty reduction, agriculture, public health, natural disasters, climate change and anti-piracy and gradually expanding to such high-politics areas as peace and security as they build stronger trust and consensus.

Fifth, new concepts, paradigms and discourses that can be easily understood by both Chinese and people from other parts of the world should be created. When engaging in governance experience sharing with African countries, it is imperative to show the characteristics of the Chinese path and system as well as to build maximum consensus in development. From the perspective of development, China's experience is essentially a successful exploration of developing countries to pursue modernization and an important practice of human society to address problems in development and governance. Fully taking into account of the features of Chinese history and culture and national conditions, the CPC has kept up with the times to adapt Marxism to the Chinese context, independently explored the development path that fits its conditions and realized economic and social development and the rejuvenation of Chinese civilization. It is fair to say that China's development experience has offered other developing countries more options of the paths towards modernization and that socialism with Chinese characteristics has created a new format of human civilization. In the meantime, it is imperative to create Chinese discourses and narratives that adopt international expressions, so that the international community can understand the essence and global significance of the Chinese experience. Creating new concepts, paradigms and expressions that cater to both Chinese and people from other parts of the world is an inevitable requirement for sharing the CPC's governance experience and an important task for communicating with African countries. ■