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## INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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### **Annual Retreat of the Group of African Ambassadors in China on Leveraging China's 100% Tariff-Free Offer to Advance Africa's Development and Prosperity**

Under the auspices of H.E. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission, the AU Permanent Mission to China, led by H.E. Amb. Alhaji Sarjoh Bah, AU Permanent Representative to the People's Republic of China, is convening the Annual Retreat of the Group of African Ambassadors in China on the theme "Leveraging China's 100% Tariff-Free Offer to Foster Development and Prosperity in Africa". The retreat's primary objectives are to strengthen Africa's coordinated capacity to operationalise China's 100% tariff-free offer, enhance market access, and accelerate the implementation of Agenda 2063 and FOCAC outcomes. It will also align the implementation of China's 100% tariff-free offer with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) priorities and Agenda 2063 flagship programmes, ensuring coherence between external partnerships and continental integration objectives.

The discussions will cover financing options and productivity-enhancing tools, share lessons from African states that have benefited from early-stage Sino-African trade, and strengthen Africa-China knowledge systems through systematic research and policy development on the supply and demand of African goods. It will serve as a high-level platform to discuss opportunities and mechanisms for leveraging the 100% tariff-free policy to bolster Sino-African trade and enhance modernisation, industrialisation, agro-processing, manufacturing, the establishment of special economic zones, and regional value chains.

The two-day retreat, to be held in Beijing, China, from 23 to 24 April 2026, will feature a keynote address by H.E. Dr. Nardos Bekele-Thomas, CEO of AUDA-NEPAD, and will be attended by high-level delegates, including African Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives in China; representatives from the AU Commission's Economic Development, Trade, Tourism, Industry, and Minerals (ETTİM) Department; the AU Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD); and the AfCFTA Secretariat; as well as officials from China's Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Commerce and from its Development Agency (CIDCA).

The retreat, which affirms the principle that Africa's partnership with China must be anchored in unity, coordination and strategic foresight, will precede the entry into force on 1 May 2026 of China's 100% tariff-free offer to eligible African countries. It marks a decisive step towards strengthening Africa's capacity to seize a critical opportunity to enhance trade, investment and development on the continent. It does so by reinforcing continental coherence and coordination, establishing regional value chains, developing financing instruments and information-sharing platforms on market dynamics, scaling up production capacity, and harmonising standards and quality infrastructure, thereby better positioning Africa to realise the goals of Agenda 2063 and the FOCAC commitments.

This annual retreat builds on the strong, consistent messages from AU member states and the conclusions of the "Strategic Reflection on the Implementation of the FOCAC Action Plan

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through an Enhanced Synergy and Alignment between Agenda 2063 and FOCAC Commitments”, organised by the AU Permanent Mission to China on 2 and 3 December 2025 in Beijing, China. It is a strong demonstration of AU member states’ commitment to harnessing FOCAC dividends to shape cooperation across infrastructure, trade, finance, industrialisation, technology, peace and security, and global governance. It directly responds to the imperative to move from policy pronouncements to implementation.

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