

AFRICAN UNION

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UNIÃO AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA P. O. Box 3243 Telephone: +251 11 551 7700 Fax: +251 115 517844

Website: www.au.int

KEY NOTE STATEMENT

BY

H.E. Prof. Sarah Anyang Agbor

Commissioner for Human Resources, Science & Technology

African Union Commission

ON THE OCCASION OF

**INAUGURATION OF CHINA-AFRICA INSTITUTE AND THE
INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON AFRICA-CHINA COOPERATION
AND PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE EXCHANGE**

09-10 April, 2019.

Beijing, China

The President of CASS Pr. Xie Fuzhan

Your Excellency former president of Mozambique Mr. Joaquim Alberto Chissano

Excellences Members of the Diplomatic corps

The Vice President of CASS

Vice Chancellors here present

CEOs, Executive Directors and directors in your different portfolios here present

Distinguished delegates,

Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen;

I am honoured to have been invited to the official inauguration of the China-Africa Institute. Allow me to at the onset express my appreciation and high commendation to the organizers of this forum. On my own behalf and on behalf of the African Union Commission, I am honored to express appreciation to the people and government of China for your most cordial welcome, and the excellent arrangements you made for myself and my team to be here. Please accept greetings of peace, solidarity and good will from the Chairperson of the African Union Commission H.E Dr. Moussa Faki Mahamat to the people of China, excellences and colleagues who are present here.

Thank you for inviting the African Union Commission to make a key note speech in this symposium, and jointly inaugurate the establishment of China-Africa Institute. The African Union Commission greatly values the partnership with China, and glad to make an

effective consultation around mutual learning between civilizations, and enhancing closer China –Africa Community linkages. We want to extend gratitude to the people and government of China for the various assistance we have been receiving as a continent over the years.

The value of our partnership is articulated in the framework of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) Beijing Action Plan (2019-2021), a mutual commitment of Africa and China to strengthen partnership through exchanging views and perspectives on issues of political, economic and social security value, and on Education, Scientific Research, Training and Skills development. These are important fields towards realizing the African Union vision of an integrated, peaceful and prosperous Africa.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

The vision of the African Union, articulated in the Agenda 2063, is a people centred vision, and its realisation must be people driven. It is the vision of an integrated, prosperous Africa, driven by its own competent and skilled citizens able to play in the world arena. . Agenda 2063 aspirations therein reflect Africa’s “desire for shared prosperity and well-being, for unity and integration, for a continent of free citizens and expanded horizons, where the full potential of women and youth are realized, and with freedom from fear, disease and want.”

Aspiration 6 of Agenda 2063 specifically talks of an Africa where Development is People-Driven, Unleashing the Potential of its Women and Youth.

It is the people of our continent who must imbue values of responsible citizenship, knowledge and skills for personal empowerment and for contributing to social economic development. It is the people who must acquire and develop the capacity to establish mutually beneficial partnerships with other civilisations around the world. It is indeed the people who must develop knowledge and skills required for identification and harnessing of our God-given resources towards building shared prosperity. The people must be developed as the key agency for promoting innovation and entrepreneurial capacities for value addition and wealth creation. It is the people who must endeavour to leave a positive

legacy for generations to come, by making responsible choices that ensure peace, conflict resolution and sustainable development.

For this reason, the African Union values people-to-people engagement with other civilisations such as the CHINA-AFRICA COOPERATION AND PEOPLE TO PEOPLE EXCHANGE

Ladies and gentlemen

Africa's vision of Agenda 2063 lists seven aspirations of the African peoples, none of which is achievable without quality, inclusive, transformative education and training. The aspirations call for a people-driven development, relying on the potential of its all, especially the youth, and including women; it emphasizes the need to catalyze an Education and Skills revolution anchored in science, technology, research and innovation, for building transformative knowledge, with African values for responsible citizenship and sustainable development. Africa's Agenda 2063 can be considered as the continent's domestication of the global Sustainable Development Goals.

Our greatest asset in Africa is our youthful population, with over 60% of our population being below 35 years of age. "Harnessing the demographic dividend through investing in the youth" is essential for realising our vision, and ensuring that Africa contributes to global knowledge and wealth. We believe that the youth must be appropriately empowered into the intellectual capital with relevant skills, values and attitudes to take charge of Africa's social economic development, and reverse marginalization in the world economy.

In line with this, the AUC Chairperson H.E. Dr Moussa Faki has announced a new strategy for reaching at least 1 million youth by 2021, with meaningful impact. The strategy is developed around four E's: Education, Entrepreneurship, Employment and Engagement. We therefore expect to work with African and international partners to enhance access to education and training including areas of Teacher development, Technical and Vocational

Education and Training, and scientific research. Furthermore, business enterprises in Africa are called upon to contribute to education financing and strengthening the links between training institutions and industry so as to enhance entrepreneurship skills. Links with industry will also help education and training institutions to build employable skills for youth, especially in the fields of agriculture, mining, and ICT. To ensure that young people's voices are included in policy development and implementation, we are working to strengthen platforms for engaging young people among themselves, and in inter-generational dialogues.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

Strategic partnership with China forms a very important part of the African Union's framework for achieving its vision, because we recognize that we can learn from one another and strengthen mutually beneficial collaboration. We can utilize existing knowledge and technologies towards addressing common global challenges, even while we build up our own knowledge and technological base, so that Africa will become an even better partner in scientific research and development. **In Africa we know that one can move very quickly when alone, but can go much further through partnerships.** Your experience and best practices can help us achieve the aspirations of Agenda 2063. As we work towards growth, creating platforms for our people to interact with the rest of the world is therefore not only imperative but also shall define the future of our world. People to People Exchange opportunities such as this is one of the key modalities to promote civic engagement and provide an entry point participation in development and self-actualisation.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

To implement Agenda 2063, the African Union therefore has a range of strategic frameworks in different sectors, such as agricultural development; infrastructure development; peace and security; trade and industry including the establishment of a continental free trade area; disease control and eradication; youth and women

empowerment; as well as in education, technical skills development, and in science, technology and innovation.

The Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA 2024) identifies six Priority areas of focus for scientific research and innovation. These include addressing hunger and food insecurity through enhanced agriculture and biotechnology. Health management and disease control is another key area, which has led to the establishment of the AU Centre for Disease Control. We have adopted a continental Space Policy and Strategy to build Africa's capabilities in Earth Observation and Satellite Communication among others, which are strategic in resources management, environmental management, and early warning systems. Space technologies provide unique opportunities to collectively address socio-economic development issues. The Pan African University Institute for Space Sciences hosted by South Africa is part of the mechanism for strengthening space science and policy.

The Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016 to 2025 (CESA 16-25) covers the full spectrum of education and training from early childhood to university, with twelve strategic objectives to ensure that education meaningfully contributes towards achieving the AU Vision. Objectives address the issues of Teacher Development to increase the numbers of teachers especially in STEM subjects, and to enhance the quality and status of the teaching profession. The strategy also calls for ensuring gender equality, strengthening the place of ICT in Education, promoting indigenous knowledge systems and African values; and revitalizing and expanding tertiary education, research and innovation to address continental challenges and promote global competitiveness. TVET is also addressed, calling for a change of perception and developing TVET to enhance employability, entrepreneurship and innovation.

The African Union established the Pan African University with thematic institutes in the five regions of the continent, addressing key areas of importance to Africa's social economic development. The Pan African University is designed to develop, nurture and

exemplify what we consider as best practices in higher education and research, including promoting innovation and inventiveness, use of the African Quality Rating Mechanism, multi-linguicism, and enhanced appreciation of African history.

The AU promotes science through Scientific Research Grants and Awards to encourage and celebrate African scientists including women and youth; scholarships for promoting intra-African academic collaboration, as well as collaboration with countries outside Africa. We are therefore interested in enhancing collaborative research with institutions in China for mutual benefit.

The African Union is also promoting industrialization through the Action Plan for the Accelerated Industrial Development of Africa.

AU Member States are working to ensure universal primary and secondary education. School feeding is one of our key levers for enhancing access, retention, and success especially from early childhood to secondary level completion.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We look forward to strengthened South-South Cooperation, and hope this Development Institute will provide a platform for engagement between Chinese and African scholars, and contribute to capacity building through training.

This is because our continued progress, growth and development is anchored on human capital development. A talented workforce, equipped with necessary hard and soft skills will enable both our people to keep up with the speed of changes in technology, value chains as well as culture.

I look forward to the deliberations at this dialogue series and to hear views on how we advance the discourse towards further cooperation between African and Chinese people. The African Union Commission is in this journey and I do hope to take the discussions and recommendations emanating from this dialogue forward.

It is our expectation that this event will provide opportunities for nurturing co-operation through this institute. We anticipate to jointly enhance information sharing and capacity-building mechanisms, and enhance people-to-people cooperation and exchanges.

We believe that both Africa and China should increase the value that academia, and social organizations can generate from the joint efforts of actively implementing the China-Africa cultural and people-to-people cooperation. The China –Africa Institute is our unique belief that in unity there is strength. It is our conviction that our success relies on a teamwork ethic where we both can work together towards a common goal. After all, as Africans we believe in collective will and collective responsibility. **Henry ford once said “Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success”.**

We look forward to the outcomes of these discussions, and to new partnerships and fresh mutual understanding for enhanced Africa-China collaboration

Thank you for your kind attention.