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Beyond Extraction: China–Africa Resource Cooperation at FOCAC 2024

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Introduction

The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) is a multilateral summit and an institutional framework that brings together leaders from China and African countries to discuss and enhance diplomatic, economic, and social relations. Established in 2000, FOCAC meets every three years, with summit locations alternating between China and an African country. It aims to strengthen partnership and cooperation, primarily in areas such as trade, investment, infrastructure, technology, health, security, and cultural exchanges.

Over the past 25 years, the forum has provided a platform for China and Africa to deliberate and exchange notes on issues of common interest. The mechanism performs the vital functions of collaborative agenda setting and solidarity reinforcement, providing a strong foundation for the Sino-African alliance. This paper takes stock of the 2024 FOCAC Summit which was hosted in Beijing, China, with a view to identifying the commitments that were made in four areas (mining, energy, oil and gas, and agriculture) and tracing the follow-up actions that have been taken thus far.

China is entrenching itself in Africa's mining sector in general, and in the critical minerals sector in particular, as it seeks to consolidate its position as the dominant actor in global critical minerals supply chains. This is important in the context of the ongoing US-China trade war. The Asian giant is responding to popular demands for local beneficiation of minerals in Africa by establishing several processing plants in countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mali, Zimbabwe, and Guinea-Konakry to beneficiate cobalt, copper, lithium, and bauxite, which are all classified as critical minerals. Chinese entities are also investing in Africa's oil and gas sectors building a refinery in Angola, a gas processing plant in Congo-Brazzaville, and an oil pipeline in Uganda and Tanzania.

In the renewable energy sector, China has almost monopolised the supply of clean energy technology to Africa, with almost every renewable energy project in solar, wind, green hydrogen, and geothermal power depending on Chinese technology and technical expertise. While China's willingness to build clean energy power plants will certainly increase access to electricity, there is a risk of Africa being locked into a dependency relationship with China as only Chinese enterprises can maintain and replace the technologies being used to build renewable energy power plants across the continent.

In the agricultural sector, China is stepping up its involvement in agro-processing, boosting food security, and enhancing Africa's agricultural production capacity. These interventions have the potential to help alleviate poverty in a continent whose economy is predominantly based on agriculture.

The 2024 FOCAC Summit Context

The ninth triennial FOCAC summit was held in Beijing between 4 and 6 September 2024. It was held under the theme: *"Joining Hands to Advance Modernization and Build a High-Level China-Africa Community with a Shared Future*". The theme captured the determination to modernise societies, as reiterated in the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063 and in the 2024 'Two Sessions' policy resolutions in China which emphasised the need to nurture and develop new quality productive forces to drive the modernisation agenda.

The summit was attended by 53 African countries who sent high-powered delegations, with 36 of the delegations being led by heads of state, demonstrating the popularity of the summit among African leaders. The African Union Commission (AUC) was represented by its former chairperson, Moussa Faki Mahamat.

In his keynote speech at the summit, Chinese President Xi Jinping described China and Africa's relationship as being at its "best in history" and pledged to elevate the relationship to an "all-weather China-Africa community with a shared future for the new era". The president called on Africa and China to pursue modernisation according to their national conditions and circumstances, underpinned by values of people-centredness, promotion of inclusiveness and diversity, eco-friendliness, peace and security.

To the surprise of those who had predicted a decrease in China's financial commitments to Africa, Xi Jinping announced a staggering US$51 billion in funding for Africa over the next three years. The funding will be divided into US$30 billion in the form of loans for development projects, US$10 billion in investment by Chinese companies, and US$11 billion to be channelled through economic and humanitarian assistance projects. This commitment, which was a significant increase from the US$40 billion that was promised in 2021, was a serious statement by China of its willingness to stay the course as Africa's biggest development partner. The funding will provide a major boost to African economies which have been battered by external shocks and a credit crunch.

It is important to note that for the first time in FOCAC's history, the commitments were denominated in Chinese currency (the Renminbi or RMB). This represents efforts to de-dollarise China-Africa economic cooperation. The use of the RMB will protect African countries from US$-induced currency fluctuations while reducing transaction costs and thus making trade more efficient.

The 2024 summit also reiterated the need to promote industrialisation in Africa. This is connected to efforts to make the bilateral trade between Africa and China more equitable, developmental and balanced. To that end, China has pledged to support Africa's movement up the mineral value chain through investing in the continent's refining and processing capacities.

During the summit, the participants committed themselves to pursuing action partnerships in ten areas: mutual learning among civilisations, trade prosperity, industrial chain co-operation, infrastructure connectivity, development, health, agricultural development, people-to-people exchanges, green development, and security. Some of the major projects lined up for implementation between 2024 and 2027 include the establishment of 25 China-Africa research centres, granting zero-tariff treatment to 33 African countries, and the expansion of market access for Africa's agricultural products. This is in line with efforts to increase the value of Africa's agricultural exports to China to US$20 billion by 2030.

Other projects that were announced at the summit include the implementation of 20 digital demonstration projects, 30 infrastructure connectivity projects, 30 clean energy projects, and 500 public welfare projects across Africa in the next three years. Several countries also entered into various agreements with China on the sidelines of the summit. The Senegalese President Bassirou Diomaye Faye met with Xi Jinping and they signed bilateral cooperation agreements on the implementation of the Global Development Initiative (GDI), investment and economic cooperation, green development and information and communication technology. South Africa's Cyril Ramaphosa also met with the Chinese president and entered into various bilateral agreements on the application of the Beidou navigation system, prevention and control of foot-and-mouth disease, sustainable housing and human settlements, and deepening bilateral trade cooperation. Emmerson Mnangagwa of Zimbabwe and William Ruto of Kenya were among other African leaders who met with the Chinese leader on the sidelines of the summit and signed wide-ranging cooperation agreements.

Table 1: Promises made at the FOCAC 2024 Summit regarding the agriculture, energy, and minerals sectors

Agriculture
Conduct joint research on agricultural technologies adapted to local African conditions.
China will support its enterprises to participate in localised production of fertilisers, pesticides and small agricultural machinery and tools in Africa.
Encourage enterprises to support the development of eco-friendly agriculture, animal husbandry and tourism industries, build and run a number of agro-eco-tourism parks, and extend industrial chains.
China will build satellite remote sensing centres, earth science laboratories and meteorological stations in Africa, and strengthen scientific and technological cooperation with Africa.
Jointly promote trade in agricultural products, promote entrepreneurship and employment in the agricultural sector, and expand the market for African cash crop products through information and digital cooperation.

Agriculture
Cooperate on inspection and quarantine mechanisms for African agricultural exports to China, enrich and improve the 'green channel', and explore agricultural trade cooperation through interactions between China's tariff-free zones and free trade zones in Africa.
Commence the construction of a China-Africa cross-border agricultural products storage logistics project.
Step up support for the mechanisation of agriculture in Africa by means of aid, lease, cooperative management and joint venture assembly to raise Africa's agricultural production efficiency.
Build the China-Africa centre for tropical agricultural science and technology (joint laboratory) with African countries.
Support the implementation of organic and ecological agriculture in Africa through various sustainable initiatives.
Encourage enterprises to increase agriculture-related investment in Africa.
Organise China-Africa agricultural priority industries technology exchanges and investment and trade promotion activities.
Establish China-Africa agricultural cooperation mechanisms, and hold agricultural science and technology forums and agricultural entrepreneurs dialogues.
Encourage more African countries to negotiate and sign agricultural cooperation documents, set up mechanisms for policy information communication, and assist African countries in making country-specific, science-based and sustainable agricultural development plans.
Reach US$20 billion in exports of African agricultural products to China by 2030.
Support the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences and the African Academy of Sciences in setting up a China-Africa Agricultural Science and Innovation Union.
Support Chinese and African scientific research institutions in setting up joint laboratories and joint research centres in the field of modernised agriculture.
Work for the establishment of China-Africa seed technology research and innovation platforms and a joint research centre for digital agriculture.
Cooperate on fishery, and carry out projects to improve the sustainable development capacity in fishery and a blue economy.
Jointly combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

Energy
Encourage investments in a range of renewable energy projects across Africa, including solar, wind, green hydrogen, hydroelectric, and geothermal power initiatives.
Promote exchanges of expertise, best practices, and innovative solutions in renewable energy, and implement comprehensive capacity-building programmes to empower African professionals.
Build stronger synergy among various energy development strategies, and conduct joint researches tailored to local conditions to improve energy accessibility and affordability in Africa.
Support the Continental Power Systems Master Plan
Encourage Chinese enterprises to participate in the upgrading of energy facilities in Africa.
Actively support African countries to improve their energy policies, and to upgrade and improve the power generation and transmission network across the continent.
Conduct professional training for relevant African governments and major enterprises.
Support the development capabilities of Africa's green and low-carbon transition industries.
Expand investment in Africa in energy-saving technologies, high- and new-technology industries and green and low-carbon industries, and work with Africa to build photovoltaic demonstration projects.
Implement a special project of clean energy power supply, assist African countries with distributed photovoltaic energy storage systems, and support enterprises in building large clean energy power generation projects in Africa.
Hold the 2nd Project Promotion Conference of Energy Cooperation under the AU-China Energy Partnership.

Minerals
China will support Africa's mineral value chain upgrading through direct investment in refining and processing.
Maintain the stability of the mineral supply chain, promote mineral value addition in Africa by developing smelting technology, support the expansion of smelting, processing and other upstream and downstream sectors of mining industry as well as infrastructure construction, and explore mining deep processing projects in Africa, with a view to transforming Africa's resource endowments into advantages of economic development.
Ensure practical cooperation in geo-science research, mineral development, geohazards management, and talent cultivation.

Minerals Sector

The 2024 FOCAC Action Plan provides the policy framework indicating China's approach to Africa's mining sector. Clause 5.2.9 of the 2024 Action Plan states that China and Africa

> **"will work together to maintain the stability of the mineral supply chain, promote mineral value addition in Africa by developing smelting technology, support the expansion of smelting, processing and other upstream and downstream sectors of mining industry as well as infrastructure construction, and explore mining deep processing projects in Africa."**
> **(Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024)**

Table 2: Selected Chinese Mining Investments in Africa

Country	Company	Key Projects / Assets	Commodity Focus	Estimated Capital Investment	Notes
DRC	CMOC Group	Tenke Fungurume, Kisanfu	Copper, Cobalt	~$3.7B+	Largest cobalt producer globally
DRC	Sicomines (Sinohydro + China Railway)	Sicomines project	Copper, Cobalt	~$3B mining + up to $7B infrastructure	Resource-for-infrastructure model
DRC	Zijin Mining	Kolwezi, Manono (stake)	Copper, Lithium, Gold	~$500M–$1B+	Battery minerals expansion
DRC	Wanbao Mining	Etoile, Mutoshi	Copper, Cobalt	~$1.4B	Norinco-linked
Zambia	JCHX Mining	Lubambe Copper Mine	Copper	~$300M	Acquisition + expansion (Reuters)
Zambia	China Nonferrous Mining Corp	Chambishi operations	Copper, Cobalt	~$1B+ (est.)	Long-term Copperbelt presence
Zimbabwe	Sinomine Resource Group	Bikita Lithium Mine	Lithium	~$500M	Processing plant investment
Zimbabwe	Huayou Cobalt	Arcadia Lithium Project	Lithium	~$700M+	Mine + concentrator
Zimbabwe	Various Chinese investors	Lithium sector	Lithium	>$1B total since 2021	Rapid expansion (Reuters)
Guinea	Chinese consortium (incl. Chinalco, Baowu, etc.)	Simandou Iron Ore Project	Iron Ore	$6B+ (Chinese share of ~$20B project)	Largest iron ore project globally (ft.com)
Nigeria	Multiple Chinese firms	Lithium & solid minerals projects	Lithium, Gold	~$1.3B	Recent surge in investment (Naturenews.africa)
Nigeria	Chinese investors	Lithium processing plants	Lithium	~$1.3B	Processing-focused (africa.sis.gov.eg)
Malawi	Hunan Sunwalk	Salima mining project	Titanium, Rare Earths	~$7B (mining) + $5B SEZ	Large-scale industrial package (Engineering News)
Ghana	Various Chinese firms	Small & large-scale gold mining	Gold	~$1B–$3B (est.)	Mix of formal & informal sector
Tanzania	Zijin Mining / Chinese firms	Gold projects	Gold	Hundreds of millions	Expanding gold footprint
Sudan	CNPC-linked entities	Gold mining operations	Gold	~$500M+ (est.)	Linked to energy + mining
South Africa	Jinchuan Group	Platinum & base metals	Platinum, Nickel	~$300M–$500M	Strategic metals exposure
Namibia	China General Nuclear (CGN)	Husab Uranium Mine	Uranium	~$2.5B	One of world's largest uranium mines
Guinea / West Africa	Multiple Chinese firms	Bauxite mining	Bauxite	$5B+ (cumulative est.)	Dominates Guinea bauxite exports
Republic of Congo	Chinese SOEs	Iron ore projects	Iron Ore	~$500M–$1B	Emerging investments

Mining operations in the DRC

By far the most important country in the context of Chinese activities in Africa's mining sector is the DRC, which enjoys particular importance in the bitter geopolitical rivalry between the US and China because of its enormous reserves of some of the most sought-after critical minerals. The central African country boasts 50 per cent of global cobalt reserves and produces 70 per cent of cobalt in the global market. Cobalt is used in making lithium-ion batteries that power electric vehicles and other electronics. Cobalt is also important in the production of high-tech military equipment because of its ability to withstand high-temperature environments (Deberdt and DiCarlo, 2024). As such, the mineral is almost indispensable in China's quest for global technical superiority. China has a significant presence within the DRC mining sector facilitated by the controversial resources-for-infrastructure deal (known as the Sicomines deal) signed between Chinese enterprises and the DRC government in 2008. The deal granted Chinese companies control of 15 of DRC's 19 cobalt mines thus handing China effective control of over 60 per cent of the world's cobalt production in return for financing infrastructure development in the country.

However, the DRC government auditor claimed in 2023 that the mines had been undervalued, and infrastructure spending had totalled only US$822 million since 2008, far less than the expected US$3 billion. In 2024, President Felix Tshisekedi's administration renegotiated the deal with a consortium of Chinese companies including Sinohydro and China Railway Engineering Corporation to increase infrastructure funding commitments to US$7 billion over a 20-year period (Gregory and Milas, 2024). These commitments are valid if the copper prices do not decline below US$8 000 per tonne. The payment mechanism has been criticised for its fixed payment structure which will see the DRC government receive the same amount regardless of the volume of minerals exported by Chinese companies or any increase in copper prices (RFI, 2025). Moreover, the companies are operating under a tax-exemption status, which is a revenue loss for the DRC government. This deal could be renegotiated should the DRC government give in to the pressure from civil society organisations.

In the DRC's South Kivu province, which has been gripped by deadly conflict between the government and the rebels since 2021, it is reported that there are 450 illegal mining companies controlled mostly by Chinese nationals, causing serious strain on the environment while exporting the country's minerals without paying any taxes or engaging in corporate social responsibility initiatives. In December 2024, 17 Chinese nationals were arrested in South Kivu province for engaging in illegal mining operations, only to be released after the intervention of the central government in Kinshasa (Tom, 2025).

JCHX Mining, a Chinese company with operations in the DRC, announced in January 2025 that it will spend US$751 million in the Lonshe Copper Mine. About 75 per cent of the investments will be financed by Chinese state banks in line with China's desire to increase its imports of copper which is one of the critical raw materials used in its thriving electric vehicle manufacturing sector and electrification. The new developments will include the building of a processing plant as part of the plans to promote the beneficiation of the minerals mined in the country (Kadiev, 2025). In another major Chinese investment in the DRC's mining sector, a Chinese manufacturer of electric vehicle batteries, Tengyuan Cobalt Industry New Materials, expressed its intention to invest US$134 million in building a new mineral processing plant which is expected to produce 30 000 tons of refined copper and 2 000 tons of cobalt salts annually. This will be done through a joint venture with a local partner – SAWA Congo Mining – which will own 40 per cent of the plant while Tengyuan retains the majority stake of 55 per cent. The remaining 5 per cent will be held by the employees of the company.

Tengyuan already built a mineral processing plant in the DRC in 2024, which has a production capacity of 60 000 tons of refined copper and 10 000 tons of cobalt salts (Shihua, 2025). However, a fellow Chinese entity, MML in which the state-owned China Minmetals Group owns a 67 per cent stake, suspended operations at its cobalt processing plant in Knisevere mine following a slump in cobalt prices, partly induced by overproduction attributed to China Molybdenum Company Limited (CMOC Group) which operates some of the largest cobalt mines in the DRC (Bloomberg News, 2025). The DRC government responded to the decline in prices by imposing a four-month ban on cobalt exports, arguing that cobalt supply had to be aligned with global demand. The oversupply of cobalt hydroxide – the main form of cobalt exported from the DRC – had driven prices to an all-time low of US$5.60/ pound. Three months into the ban, the prices of the metal rose by over 100 per cent, reaching US$11.80/ pound by the end of May (Choo, Chen, and Ngoma, 2025). The CMOC Group called on the DRC government to lift the ban and allow free cobalt exports in order to reduce uncertainty among stakeholders whose cobalt stockpiles were rapidly declining. CMOC argued that should the ban continue, electric vehicle (EV) manufacturers may end up switching to lithium iron phosphate batteries which do not require cobalt (Mining Technology, 2025). President Tshisekedi's government is reportedly leaning towards introducing an export quota system when the four-month ban period expires on June 22. This move will maintain market stability while granting the country significant leverage in the global cobalt market (Energy News, 2025).

China is also making moves to consolidate its control of the lithium supply chain in Zimbabwe and Mali. Lithium, used for making lithium-ion batteries for electronics devices and electric vehicles, is another critical mineral at the centre of global competition. A Chinese consortium consisting of Zhejiang Huayou Cobalt Co. and Tsingshan Holding Group entered into an agreement with Zimbabwe's state-owned mining company, Kuvimba Mining House, to develop lithium deposits in Mberengwa District (southern Zimbabwe), at a cost of about US$300 million. It is believed that the mines will produce half a million tonnes of lithium concentrate annually. Huayou has already spent close to US$700 million developing lithium mines and building a processing plant in Arcadia in Zimbabwe's capital city, Harare, and in Bikita in Masvingo province, while Tsingshan has developed a smaller lithium mine in Gwanda town which is forecast to produce 200 000 tonnes of lithium concentrate annually once its plant reaches full capacity (Clowes and Marawanyika, 2024). These investments have helped Zimbabwe become the largest lithium producer in Africa.

It is not only in Zimbabwe that China is spreading its tentacles over lithium supply chains. A Chinese company, Ganfeng Lithium, the largest lithium producer in China, commenced production in the Goulamina Lithium project in Mali at the beginning of 2025. The project, which is a partnership with the Malian government, is expected to produce 506 000 tonnes of lithium concentrate and the output is expected to rise to 1 million tonnes upon the completion of the second phase of the project. The Malian government, which has a 10 per cent free carry stake in the project, could increase its stake to 35 per cent once the second phase of the project has been completed, reflecting the Sahelian states' increasing control of the mining sectors in their countries (Shanghai Metal Market, 2024).

According to a Malian law passed in 2023, local suppliers should be contracted for 51 per cent of the mine's contracts. The mine is expected to generate revenue of over US$150 million per year, a portion of which the Malian government says it will channel into infrastructure development (Cascais, 2025).

China's Zijin Mining Group has made another potentially game-changing investment in DRC's lithium reserves in Manono town, located in the south-eastern Tanganyika province. Zijin is investing under a joint venture with a local state mining firm, Cominiere, with the latter owning a 39 per cent stake while Zijin is the majority shareholder with 61 per cent. This will be the country's first operating lithium mine and one of the biggest lithium producers in the world once it begins operations in the first quarter of 2026. However, the project is the subject of a legal challenge by an Australian mining firm, AVZ Minerals, which claims that the DRC government illegally withdrew its exploration license for the Manono site (First Mining, 2025; Argus Media, 2025). AVZ is also in talks to sell its rights to the southern part of the Manono deposit to a US company, KoBold Metals reportedly backed by US tech moguls Bill Gates and Jeff Bezos. However, the DRC government insists that AVZ no longer has any rights to the Manono deposits since the state-owned firm, Cominiere terminated its relationship with the company in 2022. KoBold's bid comes at a time when the DRC is in talks with the US that could see the latter securing mineral rights in exchange for helping Kinshasa resolve the security situation in the country's eastern provinces, which have endured violent conflict between the government forces and numerous rebel groups including the M23 (Mukoko, 2025).

In addition to its investments in lithium, Tsingshan is also heavily involved in Zimbabwe's iron and steel industry. Last year, the company, through its subsidiary, the Dinson Iron and Steel Company (Disco), completed the building of a steel manufacturing plant in Zimbabwe's Midlands province. The first phase of the project is forecast to create over 2 000 employment opportunities and produce 600 000 tons of steel. The output will grow to 5 million tons in the final phase. Having initially focused on producing pig iron when it came online in mid-2024, the plant began producing steel bars in early 2025 and will soon diversify its product items to include pipes, bolts and nuts, smaller slags, rolled tubes, fences, shafts, and wires (Darabshaw, 2024). Disco claimed to have secured orders from neighbouring South Africa which marks its initial move into the region's biggest potential export market (The Zimbabwe Mail, 2025). The setting up of the iron and steel plant in Zimbabwe may be a strategic attempt to take advantage of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) under which Zimbabwe will be able to export its steel to African markets under preferential terms.

South Africa's Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) and China's Hebei Iron and Steel Group signed a memorandum of understanding to conduct a detailed feasibility study for an South African iron and steel project which will be a greenfield investment. A pre-feasibility study completed by the IDC showed that a low-cost iron and steel plant with a production capacity of 5 million tons can be developed at a cost of US$4.5 billion. The establishment of an iron and steel facility will drive steel prices down, which will go a long way in reducing the production costs for South African manufacturers (IDC, 2024).

Chinese investment copper mining in Zambia

Zambia is another country where China has interests. In November 2024, the Chinese Mining Enterprise Association in Zambia pledged to invest US$5 billion by 2031 to increase Zambia's copper and cobalt production in line with the government's National Three Million Metric Tonnes Copper Production Strategy (Doreen, 2024). This strategy rests on the resolution of legal disputes which saw companies like Konkola and Mopani resume their production activities, thus setting Zambia on track to retain its status as one of the biggest copper producers in Africa. Moreover, China's JCHX Mining completed the acquisition of a controlling interest in the Lubambe Copper Mine in Zambia committing to invest US$300 million in developing the mine and growing production, while the China Non-ferrous Metals Company committed to invest US$500 million in the Luanshya Copper mine which had been dormant for over 20 years (Ministry of Mines and Minerals Development, 2025).

In West Africa, China's State Power Investment Corporation (SPIC) and the government of Guinea-Konakry signed a deal to build a bauxite-to-alumina plant – a project expected to be completed by the end of 2027. Alumina is used to make aluminium, a metal that is in high demand in transportation, construction, packaging and electronics industries. The plant is forecast to produce 1.2 million tons of alumina annually. Since seizing power through a military putsch in 2021, Mamadi Doumboya's regime has put pressure on foreign companies to begin locally processing the minerals they extract. The country is the world's second largest producer of bauxite and exports 100 million tons of the mineral annually, yet it has only one refinery. The shift towards local beneficiation could create much-needed jobs and increase government revenue significantly since alumina sells for much more than bauxite ore (Tossou, 2025).

Ethiopia has also attracted interest from Chinese enterprises in the mining and renewable energy sectors. Ethiopia's Finance Ministry and several Chinese companies signed investment deals worth US$1.7 billion in May at the Ethiopia High-level Business Forum. The deals include a commitment by Hua Ye Mining Processing Company to invest US$500 million towards minerals exploration and processing, a US$600 million joint venture between Ethiopian and Chinese enterprises to embark on coal mining, and another US$360 million commitment by Hainan Drinda New Energy Technology to build a solar manufacturing plant in Ethiopia (Groenendaal, 2025; Endeshaw, 2025). However, there were no concrete timelines provided as to when these projects will materialise. The emphasis on mineral processing in the various engagements between China and African countries is in line with the commitments made at the 2024 FOCAC summit in Beijing (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024).

Chinese investment in solar in Ethiopia

A Chinese state-owned company, Chinalco, and the government of Guinea-Bissau signed a Framework Agreement on Mineral Resources Cooperation in December 2024. The agreement will pave the way for Chinalco, whose representatives met with President Umaro Sissoko Embalo prior to signing the agreement, to conduct exploration activities in a country which boasts deposits of diamonds, phosphate and bauxite. If successful, this could lead to the setting up of the first large-scale mining operation in Guinea-Bissau, whose mining sector has been dominated by small-scale miners (Rare Earth Exchanges, 2025).

China continued to position itself favourably in Africa's mining sector with ten Chinese companies operating in Ghana launching the Association of China-Ghana Mining (ACGM) in April, aimed at promoting responsible and sustainable mining practices in Ghana (Ghanaian Times, 2025). While this arrangement will improve communication and cooperation between the government of Ghana and the Chinese mining interests, it also creates a potentially powerful lobby group that will protect Chinese interests at times at the expense of Ghanaian citizens.

China's mining interests in Africa cut across energy transition minerals (cobalt, Lithium, copper) , industrial minerals (iron Ore, Bauxite and Uranium) and precious metals (Gold)

Infrastructure

China is also building infrastructure to facilitate its import of African minerals. One of the significant infrastructure projects aimed at achieving this objective is the deal that was struck between Tanzania and Burundi on the one hand and the China Railway Engineering Group Ltd and China Railway Engineering Design and Consulting Group on the other to construct a 282-kilometer standard gauge railway from Burundi to Dar es Salaam port at a cost of US$2.15 billion. The project will be financed by the African Development Bank (AfDB) where the People's Bank of China sponsors the US$2 billion Africa Growing Together Fund (AGTF) which has been used to fund infrastructure projects across the continent. The railway will facilitate the transportation of an estimated 3 million metric tonnes of minerals annually, including nickel, vanadium and rare earth minerals from Burundi and graphite and copper from Tanzania (Agbetiloye, 2025). Palix (2025) notes that Burundi has significant potential in rare earth minerals having produced 200 tons in 2021, making it the eleventh biggest producer in the world. The country also boasts 12.7 million tons of cobalt and tin reserves, hence the location of the railway (Ibid). The line will also serve other countries in the Great Lakes region including Rwanda, Uganda and the DRC because of their proximity to Burundi. The DRC's considerable deposits of the so-called 3Ts – tungsten, tin and tantalum – may also see a growth in other investments as a result of the new transport corridor, which will greatly reduce transportation costs and thus attract even more investments into the region.

Tanzania railway network map with proposals

In a similar initiative, the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC) agreed to invest US$1.4 billion to revamp the Tanzania-Zambia Railway (TAZARA) to facilitate the movement of mineral exports mainly from Zambia and the DRC, and possibly from Zimbabwe and Malawi. The 1 815km TAZARA was constructed with Chinese concessional funding between 1970 and 1975 to bypass the then Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and apartheid South Africa whose control of Zambia's export routes undermined the country's fight against colonialism. About US$1 billion will be used to rehabilitate the railway line's tracks while the rest of the funds will go towards the procurement of new locomotives and wagons to increase the capacity of the railway (Muriri, 2025). A rehabilitated TAZARA will boost trade between Zambia and Tanzania and the surrounding countries, while significantly lowering the transport costs.

Indian Ocean is juxtaposed to the US-led Lobito Trans-Africa Corridor which stretches in the opposite direction, starting from Zambia and the DRC to Angola's Lobito Port in the Atlantic Ocean.

The US$4-6 billion project is part of former US President Joe Biden's Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII) which is widely seen as a rival to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Now in the environmental and social impact assessment stage, the Lobito Corridor is touted as a potentially transformative project that will drastically reduce the transportation costs of the critical raw materials from Zambia and the DRC's Copperbelt. It has attracted funding from various sources including the African Finance Corporation (AFC), the African Development Bank (AfDB), the European Union (EU), and the US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC). KoBold Metals, the US company on the verge of securing mineral rights over the DRC's lithium reserves in Manono town, has committed to transporting 300 000 tons of critical raw materials annually to ensure the commercial viability of the project (Chabala and Hofmeyr, 2025).

Oil and Gas

Chinese entities are also intensifying their activities in Africa's oil and gas fields in Angola, Mozambique, Gabon, Algeria, Niger, Nigeria and Congo as China bids to enhance its energy security. Angola's state-owned oil company, Sonangol, is in talks with the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) as it seeks to raise US$4.6 billion to complete the building of the Lobito refinery which was contracted to the China National Chemical Engineering (CNCE) in 2023. If completed, the Lobito refinery would turn Angola, one of Africa's largest producers of crude oil although it's currently importing almost 100 per cent of its petroleum needs, into a net exporter of petroleum (The Macao News, 2025). Moreover, in February, Angola took delivery of a floating production storage and offloading (FPSO) vessel which was made in China. The new vessel will increase oil production in bloc 15/06 by 120 000 barrels per day, which will be a welcome development for the cash-strapped country (Energy, Capital & Power, 2025).

In March, over 200 Chinese companies sent their representatives to Nigeria to explore investment opportunities. About 74 of the companies expressed interest in investing in Nigeria's oil and gas sector. The two countries signed a US$8 billion deal to develop green hydrogen energy facilities in Nigeria in an effort to boost the share of clean energy sources in Nigeria's energy mix (Udokang, 2025).

In Congo-Brazzaville, a Chinese company, Wing Wah, and the Congolese government entered into an agreement which saw the former undertaking to develop the Banga Koyo conventional oilfields. With 250 wells already drilled and producing 45 000 barrels per day, the oilfields are expected to produce up to 80 000 barrels per day at their peak. Wing Wah will also develop the gas resources with production capacity expected to reach 5 million cubic meters per day once the project is completed later this year. The Banga Koyo project employs over 3 000 people, the majority of whom are Congolese nationals (Africa Energy Chamber, 2024).

In February, Algeria's state-owned oil company Sonatrach and the Chinese giant, Sinopec, signed a deal worth US$850 million for the exploration and development of hydrocarbons. In May 2024, another Chinese oil giant China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) and Mozambique's National Hydrocarbon Company inked a deal which granted CNOOC exploration rights for five offshore oil blocks (Freight News, 2024).

The government of Equatorial Guinea also signed an agreement with Shanghai Supezet for the construction of an oil refinery which will supply the domestic market (Energy, Capital & Power, 2025). However, it is not clear how Equatorial Guinea will pay for the refinery. It cannot be ruled out that this may be yet another resources-for-infrastructure deal which may see Equatorial Guinea pay for the refinery using its crude oil.

In another infrastructure project that is ongoing, the CNOOC partnered with Total Energies and other enterprises to construct the 1 443 km oil pipeline that will connect oilfields in western Uganda to Tanzania's Port of Tanga. The pipeline is financed through loans from an array of financial institutions including the African Export Import Bank (Afrexim), the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), China Exim Bank, Standard Bank, and Stanbic Bank Uganda among others. The project was 50 per cent complete at the end of 2024 and is expected to be completed by mid-2026. About 8 000 Tanzanians and Ugandans have been employed in the project while US$500 million has been spent on local goods and service suppliers (Groenendaal, 2025). The pipeline will have the capacity to transport almost 250 000 barrels of oil per day and China has already committed to buying the oil.

However, it has not been a smooth sailing for China in the continent's oil and gas sectors. For example, Chinese oil companies – Sinopec and CNPC had to stop operations and evacuate their workers in South Sudan following the outbreak of violence and the force majeure declared by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) on the pipeline they rely on (Yihe, 2023). Production resumed in February 2025 after the force majeure was lifted (Francis, 2025).

The stoppage of oil exports severely crippled South Sudan which depends on selling oil for 90 per cent of its revenues and contributed to the worsening political instability in the country. The course of events in South Sudan and Sudan will perhaps compel China to reconsider its long-standing foreign policy principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, which has defined its relationship with African states, because what happens in African countries has a direct impact on Chinese investments. In Niger, the military government expelled three Chinese executives working for the CNPC in March for several reasons, including failing to pay local workers fairly, not respecting local supplier quotas in contracts, failure to train and promote local staff, and refusing to transfer technology for the development of national skills base (Nova News, 2025). The grievances raised by the Nigerien government have been widely discussed in the scholarship on China-Africa relations where Chinese enterprises have been accused of flouting environmental and labour regulations, in most cases with protection from the host governments (Mambondiyani, 2011; Muchabaiwa, 2022). It is a rare occurrence for an African government to take a resolute stand (as the Nigerien government has done in this case) against the well-documented malpractices of some Chinese enterprises.

Renewable Energy Sector

China is also increasingly visible in Africa's renewable and clean energy sector. Africa's imports of Chinese clean energy technology, including solar, wind, geothermal and hydropower, grew by 153 per cent between 2020 and 2024 (Global Energy, 2025). The continent's solar panel imports from China showed a 110 per cent year-on-year increase in January 2025 indicating a growth in the demand for China's clean energy technology. Most of the shipments were destined for South Africa and Morocco (Fitchner, 2025). Clause 7.2 of the 2024 FOCAC Action Plan stated that "The African side appreciates China for assisting Africa in carrying out green development and environmental protection projects and building low-carbon demonstration zones in Africa and is willing to explore with China a green and sustainable way of energy cooperation. China will encourage investments in a range of renewable energy projects across Africa, including solar, wind, green hydrogen, hydroelectric, geothermal power initiatives" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024). In clause 2.2.9 China further committed to "implement 30 clean energy and green development projects and set up a Special Fund for China-Africa Green Industrial Chain" (Ibid). As such, the FOCAC Action Plan sets the policy framework which is guiding China's interventions in Africa's energy sector in the aftermath of the 2024 FOCAC Summit.

To that end, a Chinese firm, Longi Green Energy Technology Company, signed a deal worth US$8.6 billion with the federal government of Nigeria to build a green hydrogen plant in Akwa Ibom State as part of Nigeria's energy transition policy (Onyedinefu, 2025). During Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Morocco in November 2024, a Chinese enterprise, Gotion High-Tech, pledged to invest US$1.4 billion in the construction of an EV battery gigafactory in the Moroccan city of Rabat. Other firms (BTR New Material Group and Shinzoom) committed to investing US$300 million and US$690 million respectively in battery component manufacturing (Faouzi, 2025). The Chinese may be taking advantage of Morocco's strategic geographic proximity to Europe and its free trade agreement with the European Union (EU) to gain access to the lucrative EU market for their electric vehicles.

In September 2024, Namibia's state-owned power utility, NamPower, signed a contract with two Chinese enterprises, China Jiangxi International Economic and Technical and Zhejiang Chint New Energy Development to build a 100 MW solar farm within 18 months at a cost of US$89 million. The German bank, KfW, will fund 80 per cent of the costs while NamPower will be responsible for the remaining 20 per cent (Okorie, 2024)

. Another 100 MW solar power project is underway in Botswana, contracted between the Botswana Power Corporation and a consortium comprising China Harbour Engineering Company, China International Water and Electric Corporation, and Botswana's New Energy Company Proprietary Limited. The consortium will be responsible for the engineering, procurement and construction as well as the operation and maintenance of the plant for 25 years (ESI Africa, 2024). The US$78 million project reached financial closure in March 2025, which paved way for its implementation scheduled for completion by the end of 2025 (Ministry of Minerals and Energy, 2025). This project will nudge Botswana closer to its target of increasing the share of renewable energy sources in its energy mix to 50 per cent by 2036. Zambia also has an ongoing US$71 million 100 MW solar power plant project funded by Stanbic Bank Zambia with a Chinese entity, Power China, being responsible for engineering, procurement and construction. The project is expected to reach completion in June 2025 (Burger, 2025).

Up north in Egypt, two Chinese enterprises, the China Energy Engineering Corporation (CEEC) and JA Solar (as contractor and equipment supplier respectively), are involved in the development of what is going to be Africa's largest photovoltaic (PV) storage project with a capacity of 1.25 GW. The solar farm will occupy a staggering 20 square kilometers and will generate 3000 GWh of power upon completion, with the capacity to supply almost 500 000 households. If successful, the project will reduce Egypt's carbon emissions by 1 million tonnes annually (Kavetha, 2025).

Aerial view of COBCO plant in Jorf Lasfar

China is also working with Mali to build a 100 MW solar power plant in the Koulikoro region, which is set to be completed at the end of 2025. China's Sinohydro is responsible for the design and construction. The project is co-financed by the Malian government and Chinese sources that have not been specified. The plant will generate about 5 per cent of Mali's electricity and have the capacity to supply up to 90 000 households (Hakeenah, 2024). In 2023, Mali and China signed a memorandum of understanding under the Chinese-proposed Africa Solar Belt which sought to provide tens of thousands of African households with electricity (Lijun, 2024).

China's TBEA International Engineering was awarded the contract to oversee the design, supply and assembly of Togo's 25 MW Daopang solar plant, which is currently under construction. With a battery energy storage system of 36 MWh, the plant will be able to supply about 145 000 households with power. While Togo is one of the countries that joined China's Africa Solar Belt, the project is financed by the World Bank to the tune of US$69 million as part of the Regional Emergency Solar Power Intervention Project (Jowett, 2025).

In October 2024, Power China began the construction of a 35 MW geothermal power plant in Kenya's Great Rift Valley which is being funded by another Chinese firm, the Kaishan Group, to the tune of US$93 million. The project will be implemented under a public-private partnership model. Kenyan President William Ruto claimed that the completion of the power plant will see Kenya become the fifth largest producer of geothermal power in the world and push forward the efforts to de-carbonise the country's power grid (Xinhua, 2024).

Chinese companies are involved in the supply of wind turbines to some of Africa's biggest wind farm projects. For instance, Chinese enterprises, Envision Energy and Goldwind, have been contracted to supply a total of 1.34 GW wind turbines for a 1.1 GW wind farm in Egypt and a 380 MW wind farm in South Africa respectively as two of Africa's biggest economies continue their journey in transitioning to green energy sources (African Review, 2025; Renews, 2025).

China is also making its mark in Africa's hydroelectric power sector, with several projects involving Chinese entities across different countries. The biggest Chinese-backed hydropower project is Tanzania's Julius Nyerere Hydropower Station built by China's Dongfang Electric Corporation (DEC). The facility boasts nine 235 MW Francis turbines with a total installed capacity of 2 115 MW. Six of the turbines were commissioned in 2024, which was itself a record-breaking feat. The remaining units are yet to be commissioned. With a power generation capacity of over 3 billion KWh, the plant will produce over 40 per cent of Tanzania's total power output, thus helping the East African country meet the power demands of its people and industries (Zeya, 2025). Tanzania is also home to the 222 MW Rumakali hydropower project co-developed and co-owned by Tanzania Electricity Supply and China Gezhouba Group. The construction of the plant is set to begin in 2025 and reach completion in 2029 (Power Technology, 2024).

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni commissioned another mammoth hydropower project in September 2024 – the 600 MW Karuma Hydropower Station – constructed by Sinohydro and co-funded by the Ugandan government and China's Exim Bank to the tune of US$1.7 billion. The plant will provide power to millions of households and the country's major industrial areas, thus boosting Uganda's economy (Xinhua, 2024). The State Grid Corporation of China is the contractor in the modernisation of Mozambique's 2 075 MW Cahora Bassa hydropower station which is set to begin this year. The US$125 million project is funded by the AfDB-administered US$2 billion Africa Growing Together Fund financed by the People's Bank of China (Africa Energy Portal, 2022).

Equatorial Guinea and Gabon are jointly implementing the Border Power Interconnection Project which will see electricity transmission from the Djibloho Hydropower Plant in Equatorial Guinea to the border towns in Gabon. Power China is the contractor for this project. Meanwhile, China's TBEA is doing the construction in Guinea-Konakry's 300 MW Amaria hydropower plant which reached financial closure in September 2024, with construction scheduled to begin in 2025. The Chinese-constructed 112MW Gribo-Popoli hydropower in the Ivory Coast began full commercial operation at the end of 2024. Hundreds of thousands of households will gain access to power as a result of this project.

Agricultural Sector

Agriculture has been one of the key areas of cooperation between China and Africa. In his speech at the 2024 FOCAC Summit, President Xi Jinping made several significant promises in relation to China's cooperation with Africa on agriculture. These include the building or upgrading of ten agricultural technology demonstration centres, building over 6 000 hectares of Chinese agricultural standardisation centres, building 100 demonstration villages for poverty alleviation through agricultural development, sending 500 agricultural experts to Africa, and training 1 000 Africans in agriculture.

The FOCAC Action Plan also zeroed in on agricultural development making several commitments around the modernisation of agriculture in Africa.

Some of the most notable measures to be taken include conducting joint research on agricultural technologies; promoting localised production of key inputs like fertilisers, pesticides, and small machinery; increasing African agricultural exports to China; encouraging Chinese enterprises to invest in Africa's agricultural sector; and supporting the establishment of the China-Africa Agricultural Science and Innovation Union (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024).

A number of developments have taken place since the 2024 FOCAC summit which will impact the two parties' cooperation in agriculture. In December 2024, China adopted a zero-tariff policy for 100 per cent of the products coming in from least-developed countries (LDCs), including 33 countries in Africa. The new trade policy adds agricultural products such as wheat, cotton, rice, sugar and soya bean oil which were previously not eligible for duty-free access. Benin and Tanzania which are major producers of cotton, Djibouti which produces wheat, and Zambia which produces soya beans will likely benefit from the new arrangement (Nanyang Technological University, 2025a). Moreover, this latest development will attract more foreign direct investment into African LDCs' agricultural sectors to take advantage of the duty-free access to the world's biggest agricultural market. This will make Africa and China's commitment to increase Africa's agricultural exports to China to US$20 billion in 2030 more achievable. Kenyan President William Ruto's state visit to China in April saw two Chinese enterprises – Shandong Jialejia Agriculture and Animal Husbandry and Zonken Group – pledge to invest US$30 million in poultry farming and US$400 million in large-scale aloe cultivation respectively in Kenya (Nanyang Technological University, 2025b).

Early in May, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA) signed an agreement to support the Leveraging Satellite-based Digital Solutions for Climate-Resilient Agriculture in Tanzania (SAT CARE) project.

The US$2.2 million project funded by China's Global Development and South-South Cooperation Fund will assist up to 5 000 smallholder farmers in Tanzania with actionable and accessible satellite-based information to help with better decision-making and increasing agricultural productivity (Xin, 2025).

As per the commitment made in the 2024 Action Plan to launch 100 demonstration villages across Africa, a group of Chinese agricultural experts launched an agricultural demonstration village in Zimbabwe's Mashonaland Central province in May 2025. The demonstration village trains smallholder farmers on advanced irrigation systems, high-yielding drought-resistant seed varieties, precision farming techniques, and integrated livestock-crop systems. The farmers also learn how to move beyond subsistence farming and adopt a more commercial and business-oriented approach to farming (Mugwara, 2025). Earlier in April, Chinese experts launched the first Juncao technology training project in Mashonaland West province in Zimbabwe. The project sought to teach local farmers and experts how to cultivate and use Juncao – a hybrid grass developed in China and used in growing mushrooms, feeding livestock, and conserving the soil, among other things (Global Times, 2025).

China's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs donated five plant protection drones to Zambia in March in a bid to improve productivity by making the application of fertilisers, spraying pesticides, and monitoring crops more efficient and accurate. This is part of the agricultural modernisation efforts which both China and Africa committed to at the 2024 FOCAC summit. Zambia and China also signed a trade deal in April which will see the former exporting macadamia nuts to the Chinese market under China's 100 percent tariff-free policy for LDCs. In 2023, Zambia produced 2 000 metric tonnes of macadamia nuts, of which 95 per cent were destined for the export market. This will go a long way in boosting the incomes of the macadamia farmers and helping alleviate poverty in the Southern African country (Setswalo, 2025).

In November 2024, China's Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration with the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) launched the second phase of the FAO-China South-South Cooperation project in Malawi. This project seeks to stimulate the growth of agriculture in the country. While the first phase of the project introduced innovative agricultural techniques and helped improve agricultural productivity, the second phase of the project will focus on horticulture, including the production of vegetables, fruits and legumes using modern agricultural machinery. Having secured US$1.3 million in budget support, the project will run for two years and will contribute to addressing food security and building technical capacity in Malawi's agricultural sector (Pathera, 2025). A similar programme was launched in Sudan's Red Sea State in May 2025 with a US$2 million funding package. Named "Poverty Alleviation and Agriculture Assistance in the Red Sea State", the initiative aims to enhance food production in agriculture, livestock and fishing in a region that has been one of the worst-affected by food malnutrition since the outbreak of the civil war in April 2023 (Mutethya, 2025). The initiative will help 40 000 people directly, and an estimated 300 000 indirectly through improved food supply and income-generation.

As China and Africa seek ways to expand agricultural trade, Uganda and China held the inaugural Uganda-China Coffee Tour between 12 and 21 May 2025, which was attended by Chinese experts and investors. The initiative was aimed at building friendships and connections which will see Ugandan producers take advantage of China's growing coffee market. Uganda is among the top 10 producers of coffee worldwide and the crop generates over 12 per cent of the country's export earnings. Securing access to the Chinese market will attract more investments and boost production in the country's coffee sector (Musenze, 2025). Moreover, according to reports, an unnamed Chinese entrepreneur invested US$20 million in the cultivation of rice in the southern Angolan region of Cuito Cuanavale. The new investment is set to create 600 local jobs and positions Angola to take advantage of China's tariff-free policy for LDCs. Work on the project will start in the second half of 2025 (Chilamphuma, 2025). In January 2025, Rwanda and China signed a US$40 million deal that will see China providing concessional loans and grants for the construction of the Giseke Dam and Irrigation project in Rwanda. Over 2 600 hectares of farmland will be cultivated through the irrigation scheme, serving over 900 households and boosting the local community's food security (Food Business Africa, 2025).

Tanzania railway network map with proposals

Nigeria's National Sugar Development Council (NSDC) entered into a memorandum of understanding with China National Machinery Industry Corporation (Sinomach) with the latter pledging a US$1 billion investment in large-scale sugar cane cultivation and processing in Nigeria. Under the agreement, Sinomach will build a sugar processing plant with the capacity to produce 100 000 metric tonnes of sugar, with plans to eventually increase the capacity to 1 million tonnes. Sinomach officials present at the signing ceremony said that their company will explore RMB-denominated financing models for the project to speed up approvals in China and to reduce transaction costs.

As China delves deep into Africa's agro-processing sector, a Chinese company, China Light Industry Nanning Design Engineering, has just finished building a cocoa-processing plant in the Ivory Caost. The plant is one of the two plants that the company committed to building in the country as part of a deal that was signed in 2019. The deal was funded by a US$200 million loan from the Chinese government which will be repaid through cocoa beans. Ivory Coast is the world's largest producer of cocoa, supplying 40 per cent of the world's cocoa. The new plant will enable the country to move up the value chain of the chocolate industry which generates over US$130 billion in revenue annually, although Ivory Coast earned only US$3 billion from its exports of raw cocoa in 2022. This new plant will place the country in a good position to capture a larger share of the global chocolate industry revenue. It is also estimated that the plant will employ almost 500 workers when it starts operating at full capacity (South China Morning Post, 2025).

In Zambia, Sino Great Chemical Company Limited is investing US$340 million into the building of a phosphate processing plant which will produce high value industrial and agricultural inputs such as phosphoric acid, gypsum, and ammonium phosphate, making Zambia self-reliant in the supply of fertilisers in its agricultural sector with additional capacity for export. About 2 000 people will be employed during the construction of the plant, while 1 600 direct and over 10 000 indirect job opportunities will be created when the plant becomes operational (Xinhua, 2025). A similar development is taking place in Egypt, where Asia-Potash – a Chinese company with expertise in phosphate mining and fertiliser production – is investing US$1.6 billion into mining phosphate and processing it to produce fertiliser in Egypt. The first phase of the project will see the firm extracting up to 2 million tonnes of phosphate to produce fertiliser for export in a venture that will create an estimated 3 000 job opportunities. In the subsequent phases, the investment is expected to increase to between US$7 billion and US$10 billion with annual production capacity of 10 million tonnes of phosphate, which will turn Egypt into a dominant player in the global fertiliser market (Nanyang Technological University, 2025).

Conclusion

Over the past 25 years, FOCAC has certainly grown in stature and significance. It has met nine times in the past 25 years, and four of these meetings have been at the summit level. Since its establishment, the forum has grown in leaps and bounds and its prominence certainly supersedes Africa's diplomatic initiatives with other major powers such as the United States, India, France, and the EU (Soule, 2019). It also puts into the shade China's other regional diplomacy forums in the Middle East, Latin America and Eastern Europe (Jakobowski, 2018). This is testament to the geostrategic compatibility between China and Africa.

At its inception, only 44 African countries were in attendance, but this number has since increased to 53 African countries including the African Union Commission (AUC). This represents greater political support for the mechanism and a greater recognition of the value it brings to the continent. Indeed, the fact that it has grown through three Chinese presidents – Jiang Zemin who helped establish it, Hu Jintao who oversaw its growth between 2002 and 2012, and the incumbent Xi Jinping who has successfully made it a major international event in the past 13 years – is evidence that its value is mutually appreciated by both China and Africa. It also represents the People's Republic of China's diplomatic triumph in terms of garnering support for the One China policy.

China has used the FOCAC platform to announce jaw-dropping financial commitments to Africa. For example, in 2015 and 2018, President Xi Jinping announced massive US$60 billion funding packages for Africa. In 2024, China committed to availing a total of US$51 billion in funding, investment and assistance over the next three years.

This paper has discussed Chinese engagement with Africa in the minerals, oil and gas, agricultural and renewable sectors in the context of the 2024 meeting of FOCAC. It is clear that China is intensifying its engagement in the said areas. In mining China is clearly targeting Africa's critical minerals such as cobalt, lithium and alumina in countries like the DRC, Zimbabwe and Mali. This is part of its quest for global technological superiority from clean energy to artificial intelligence by consolidating its control of raw material supply chains.

China's approach to Africa's natural resources is undergoing a shift. Partly as a result of an increasingly assertive African leadership, China is investing in the beneficiation of minerals instead of simply extracting raw materials. As this paper has shown, Chinese companies have built, are building or have pledged to build mineral processing plants for various minerals including cobalt, lithium, and bauxite in the DRC, Zimbabwe, Mali and Guinea and elsewhere.

If this momentum is sustained, this will fast become a continent-wide norm and help to push African countries up the global minerals value chain.

In the agriculture, oil and gas, and renewable energy sectors there are efforts, though still few at this point, to move African countries up the value chain. However, moving up the value chain will need serious investments in infrastructure, especially state power supply, and skills development. Many African countries are still struggling with these two factors.

China is also expanding its footprint in Africa's renewable energy sector building solar and wind farms, geothermal and hydropower plants across the continent. Although this is a positive step in terms of reducing carbon emissions and reducing energy poverty, there is a risk that Africa could become too dependent on Chinese technology. Chinese companies will benefit from maintenance and repair contracts for these power plants as most African countries do not have the capacity to maintain the renewable energy plants independently.

In the oil and gas sector, Chinese companies have embarked on pipeline and refinery projects as well as extraction and exploration projects. However, instability in South Sudan and Sudan has hampered oil extraction activities. Moreover, the East Africa oil pipeline has met with robust opposition from civil society organisations who have argued that its negative impact on the environment outweighs its economic benefits.

The modernisation of African agriculture has been one of the dominant themes in Africa-China relations. This was one of the major talking points at the 2024 FOCAC summit. To this end, China is already sending experts, building agricultural demonstration centres, and localising the production of key agricultural inputs such as fertilisers and machinery. There are also substantial efforts to expedite African producers' access to the Chinese market in an effort to increase African agricultural exports. While these are certainly important steps towards increasing agricultural productivity in Africa, these initiatives are too ad hoc and small-scale to make any significant impact.

The FOCAC accountability mechanisms need to be improved. Tracing and monitoring the implementation of FOCAC projects is difficult because of the lack of transparency. It is important that China and Africa develop a one-stop repository for projects and information related to FOCAC commitments to make monitoring and follow-up easier.

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