

## Deepening China-Africa Ties Through Media Cooperation



By Ambassador Liu Guangyuan\*

**NAIROBI, Kenya, November 20, 2013 (African Executive)** -- The beginning of this century brought with it a new strategic partnership between China and Africa. This new partnership has nurtured and maintained sound momentum in promoting political equality, mutual trust, cultural exchanges and a win-win economic cooperation.

In March this year, the Chinese President, H.E. Xi Jinping, made his maiden visit to Africa shortly after taking office. This gesture not only demonstrates the profound friendship between China and Africa, but also highlights the importance that China attaches to China-Africa relations.

Currently, the 1,3 billion Chinese people are working hard to realise the Chinese dream of great national renewal. At the same time, one billion African people are committed to the African dream of gaining strength from unity while achieving development and rejuvenation. Nowadays, both the Chinese and the African people are eager to understand each other more than ever

before.

This is happening mainly through political contact and economic, educational, cultural exchanges. This trend presents vast opportunities for the China-Africa media cooperation. In this era of fast development of information and globalisation, media play a crucial role in the transformation of international relations and foreign policies. Unfortunately, in today's setting, dominant information mainly flows from the few developed countries to the developing countries.

Stories and information from developing countries are often edged out. This reality creates a serious gap that affects how developing countries view themselves and the rest of the world. The fact is that only a small number of countries monopolise the international media discourse. In this ongoing conspiracy, both the images of China and those of Africa have suffered gross distortions.

It is unacceptable to continue to portray Africa as a continent overtaken by poverty, war and turmoil. It is also unethical to force a bad image on China-Africa relations. Indeed, China and Africa should flatly refuse to be part of this insincere scheme. On a more positive note, in recent years, many African journalists have travelled to China, where they have witnessed China's successes and challenges. These journalists are reporting China professionally and independently.

Meanwhile, more and more Chinese media groups are setting camp in Africa. They have gradually changed the rules of the game and created a regime, in which Africa is positively presented to the world. I call this 'the Chinese perspective.'

As China and Africa continue to engage each other, it is becoming more and more apparent that the two entities share destinies with many similarities. To realise the dreams of both China and Africa, our media must play a significant role:

First, our media must break the monopoly of the current international discourse. Being the biggest developing country in the world, China has a lot to share with Africa, the continent with the biggest number of developing countries. Second, our media should report China-Africa friendship positively. The traditional friendship between China and Africa is very precious

indeed. It deserves thoughtful attention from both sides. It is normal for others to both admire and be suspicious about the current China-Africa relations. But this must not be in the case among the Chinese and African media players.

Most of the misunderstanding between China and Africa is superficial. Such misunderstanding is caused by poor communication, ignorance and unexplained cultural differences. Thankfully, the Chinese and African media have first-hand information on China-Africa realities. Both know when and how slander and falsehoods are thrown at China or Africa. And both media, no doubt, hold the key to greater cooperation between the two sides.

Third, our media should serve common development interests shared between China and Africa.

China is expected to invest 500 billion US dollars overseas in the next five years. Africa is one of the continents with the greatest development potential in the world and the main beneficiary from China's investment. The cooperation between China and Africa in energy, infrastructure, modern agriculture, manufacturing, tourism and so on enjoys and will continue to enjoy bright prospects.

To play rightful roles, I suggest that our media do the following things:

With regard to goals, the Chinese and African media should strengthen capacity building to enhance their international clout. We particularly commend the African media for their efforts in supporting self-determination and resisting neo-colonisation. On our part, the Chinese media are ready to fully cooperate with their African counterparts in order to improve their capacity for communication and global recognition. Through this way, we shall tell the "story of China," the "story of Africa" and the "story of China-Africa friendship" to the global audience.

In terms of the approach, our media should enhance direct communication so as to promote mutual understanding between the Chinese people and their African compatriots. To this end, both the Chinese and African media should increase coverage on each other. Besides, both our media should invest in more research on China-Africa relations. This will bring our people much closer.

So far, four Chinese state media houses have established their African headquarters in Kenya and branches in other African countries. Besides, China intends to set up the "China-Africa Press Exchange Centre" in China. This facility will offer tremendous opportunities for positive reporting of China-Africa relations.

From this centre, our hope of telling our own story will come true. I warmly welcome African media to set up offices in China to gather and disseminate news to their audiences across Africa. In terms of scope, our media should both expand and diversify areas and methods of cooperation. Our media should engage in more practical partnership. They should strengthen cooperation in areas such as training, technical support, programme exchange and information sharing.

On her part, China, within its ability, will continue to provide assistance to Africa's media, particularly in capability building and technology development. China will support well-established and credible Chinese media and media-related companies to invest in Africa.

Ultimately, our aim is to lend a hand to Africa's efforts in adapting to new media trends. In the next ten years, media cooperation will significantly impact the development of China-Africa relations. This cooperation will enhance the friendship between the Chinese people and the African people, and promote the cultural integration between our two sides. I am confident that our joint efforts in improving China-Africa media cooperation and China-Africa new strategic partnership will usher us into a brighter future!

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