

## **Africa: Over 100 Ministerial Officials Gathered in Beijing**

**By Fei Zhou**

**BEIJING, China, August 29, 2016 (FOCAC)** -- July 29th witnessed a momentous event in China-Africa communication and cooperation. Over 100 ministerial officials from China and African countries gathered in Beijing to attend the Coordinators' Meeting on the Implementation of the Follow-up Actions of the Johannesburg Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation(FOCAC), jointly planning for China-Africa cooperation.

The coordinators' meeting was an innovation in FOCAC mechanism. It sounded like a "technical meeting", but went beyond people's expectation in terms of standard, scale, and results. Diaoyutai State Guesthouse became an international convention center, drawing wide attention of Chinese and foreign media and heading for the global spotlight.

There was a warm participation from the African side with over 300 participants of the 52 FOCAC members from Africa attending the meeting, including 104 ministerial or higher level officials including one state-level leader, 53 ministers and 50 vice ministers. There were 11 foreign ministers in the African delegations, as well as dozens of ministers for finance, planning, business and project development.

Over 10 African countries each sent more than three ministers. Foreign Minister of South Africa headed a delegation of 20 officials across government departments. Kenya sent a delegation of seven ministerial officials for the ministries of foreign affairs, finance, industry and trade, and transportation. The meeting was indeed a "special ministerial meeting" of FOCAC.

Actually, after the FOCAC Johannesburg Summit, over 30 African countries have established high-level coordination mechanisms for implementing the Summit outcomes, some being chaired by presidents or prime ministers, which shows the importance African countries have attached to implementing the Summit outcomes.

After the Coordinators' meeting, nearly 70 African ministers and 37 African ambassadors to

China visited the Suzhou Industrial Park to draw China's successful experience of reform and opening up. Such a large scale delegation might break the record of Suzhou Industrial Park in its reception of foreign delegations.

The Chinese side attached great importance to the meeting. President Xi Jinping sent a letter of congratulations to the meeting, and Vice-President Li Yuanchao had a group meeting with heads of African delegations. Vice-Premier Zhang Gaoli, State Councilor Yang Jiechi, and ministers and vice ministers of foreign affairs and of commerce had respective meetings and talks with the African delegations. State Councilor Yang Jiechi attended the Opening Ceremony and delivered a keynote speech. Foreign Minister Wang Yi and MOFCOM Minister Gao Hucheng jointly hosted a welcoming banquet and gave work reports. The warm China-Africa relations and the dynamic China-Africa cooperation stand in sharp contrast against the current global economic slowdown and sluggishness.

Why were there so many ministers from African countries flooding to Beijing? The outcomes of FOCAC Summit last year are bearing fruits in the African continent. China has always been the true friend and reliable partner for Africa to realize self-sustainable development. China always honors her commitments and accomplishes whatever she has promised. Therefore, the African friends rushed to Beijing not only for deepening friendship, but also for promoting cooperation. In a word, they hoped to come to China to attract investment.

During the meeting, officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Commerce, the NDRC, and Ministry of Agriculture held bilateral meetings and talks with African ministers. The Chinese side also arranged business exchanges, interactions and signing ceremonies, dialogues between Chinese financial institutions and African coordinators, and a group visit of African participants to Suzhou Industrial Park.

Throughout the meeting, the two sides signed 63 cooperation agreements of various types worth about US\$18.287 billion, of which the volume of commercial loans and FDI in Africa by Chinese financial institutions and businesses was about US\$16.228 billion, making up 88.74%. According to statistics collected, the two sides have reached 245 cooperation agreements since the Johannesburg FOCAC Summit, worth US\$50.755 billion, including US\$46.5 billion of investment and commercial loans which make up 91.73% of the total value of the agreements.

In spite of the global economic sluggishness and slow recovery momentum, China-Africa cooperation is becoming a new landscape in international arena. FOCAC Johannesburg

Summit has born fruitful results, and presented a new dimension of common development. China-Africa cooperation is expected to become the new hope and drive of world economic growth. **(Source: FOCAC)**