

Rethinking the China-Africa Security and Development Strategies under Covid-19

新冠疫情下中非安全与发展战略的新定位

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*Speech by TALING TENE RODRIGUE**

Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends and Colleagues, greetings to you all from my home country Cameroon from where I am currently sharing these words with you. I am honored to be invited at this double event, namely the *<Establishment of the African Security and Development Research Center and China-Africa Security and Development Seminar>*. In the following lines, I will share with you some of my thoughts and findings on the question of “Security and development” with regards to the China-Africa cooperation on this particular time where the Covid-19 pandemic has dictated a sort of new world order.

First of all, let me remind that this year marks the 20th anniversary of the China Africa Cooperation Forum (FOCAC) that was at first lunched as a Ministerial Conference on the year 2000, but quickly upgraded to a Presidential Forum given the growing importance our relationship. As you know, Security has always been a key word of the FOCAC, so it is not a coincidence that it comes over again on the table at this particular moment. The issues of Security surrounding the China-Africa Cooperation has not only been one of the top priorities of the FOCAC summit, but has also been at the frontline of various development initiatives between China and Africa such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Dear Friends and Colleagues, despite billions of Yuan investment in the sector, Security today still remain a big *challenge*, especially on the African side where we still witness many hotbeds of instabilities. However, Security presents huge *opportunities* as well, especially for those determined to do business in a peaceful environment. So, to speak, as the global economic status of China and Africa is rising and drawing the world’s attention, it is great time to rethink the question of security regarding our cooperation and proposed new *measures* that should be taken at this particular time where the Covid-19 has complexify the security Context. Therefore, Ladies and Gentlemen, I will insist on 3 particular keywords, they are the *challenges, opportunities and measures*.

Firstly, the CHALLENGES. Security with regards to the China-Africa Cooperation remains a multilayer challenge:

- At an international layer, superpowers still fail to speak in one voice when it comes to maintaining peace and security in certain African countries. The case of Lybia, Sudan, Congo,

or even Mali are palpable examples. The failures to set up joint multilateral forces to decisively end-up conflicts have sometimes worsened the security situation in Africa.

- At a Bilateral layer, China and some African countries haven't yet settled a consistent framework to tackle security challenges vis-a-vis of their bilateral cooperation. Most of the time, pledges are made at the fora through platforms such as FOCAC without taking specific measures at a bilateral level and without a clear roadmap detailing how things will be operated between China and each individual African country in all transparency.

-At a national layer, many African countries still remain resources limited over their own security challenges. Moreover, the political instabilities, corruption at the state level generated by the bad governance in some cases have brought additional challenges to the question of Security in Africa.

- And finally, the health security challenge brought by the Covid-19 is an issue of emergency. In fact, the Covid-19 Pandemic has put to test the health-security system of any country of this world. In the case China and African countries, it has revealed serious loops and weaknesses of the China-Africa health cooperation.

Secondly, the OPPORTUNITIES. With regards to the China-Africa Cooperation, security presents untapped opportunities both at the geopolitical and political levels, it has remained an open field for business and investments:

- At the geopolitical level, security provides world's superpowers, powers and small countries a unique opportunity to work together. The fight against terrorism shows us a good example; a situation where no country can succeed alone. Countries must have to cooperate sometimes regardless of their individual interests to bring back world peace. And that's precisely the spirit of "*Community with shared destiny*" advocated by the Chinese President Xi Dingping.

- At the political level, the security issue offers China and Africa a best opportunity to strengthen the mutual trust as they will have to work closer and share sensible data (intelligence sharing, etc.).

- Finally, security is an open ground for business and investment. In fact, the lack of basic infrastructures and security equipment in some African countries are still obvious; China has successfully tackled some security concerns thanks to its technological advancement and security equipment readiness. When walking over Chinese cities, we can see Hundreds of surveillance cameras dispatched, as well as many other equipment for maintaining public security. This is still new or barely inexistent in some African countries. Additionally, the health security challenge brought by Covid-19 has created rooms for further investment in the health and sanitation sector. That mean business opportunities for Chinese and African people.

Thirdly, the MEASURES. Great credits and acknowledgments should be given to the efforts and endowments shown on measures already put in place to address the security issues in the framework of the China-Africa Cooperation. A great share of the FOCAC investment as well as the BRI initiative have been directed to the field of security development. Many other investments projects and loans granted by China to some African countries has been of support to tackle some securities concerns on the continent. However, a lot remain to be done:

- China must step further by taking even greater responsibilities through more pledges and investments in the field of security in Africa. However, we suggest that, the pledges frequently done at the FOCAC summit on security investment be done not only at the continental level as usual, but at the countries' level with regards to the specific needs of different African countries in all transparency.
- African countries as well should be doing more and taking more shares and responsibilities to safeguards their borders, their people and all valuable goods within their territories. To achieve this purpose, African countries must speed up their technological advancement in the field of security. This can be done through a smooth cooperation with a reliable partner like China.
- We concede that security is a vast domain, a matter of everybody. Therefore, governments actions alone will never be sufficient. So, under the framework of China-Africa Cooperation, we suggest that governments (Chinese and Africans) should encourage the private sector to invest in security; and so, provide them with the right policies and funding to support their actions.
- Finally, we suggest in our cooperation to always put the health security as top priority of all security concerns and never spare our resources to prevent pandemic such as Covid-19.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as I'm closing my speech, let me conclude by reminding us that the friendship between China and Africa didn't started yesterday but thousands of years ago, and won't end up tomorrow no matter the challenges we will meet. Security is an important issue in our cooperation and we will give it the attention it deserves. A safe and secure cooperation is our common goal and we will make it happened in the spirit of mutual respect and win-win cooperation. May the friendship between our people last forever.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION!

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