

Dialogue on China-Africa Cooperation under BRI and FOCAC- A Report

China-Africa relations has become a focal subject in academic discourses and at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA), we keep breaking the limits and expanding our frontiers as we consistently bring to fore, issues of global attention such as the China-Africa Cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). More so, as power shifts from U.S. dominance to a multipolar world, China grows stronger through its economy and military capacity. Unlike colonial powers, China focuses on building infrastructure and development in Africa. Seasoned scholars converged at the NIIA chambers to discuss this subject matter on Thursday, 30 October, 2025.

At the event chaired by erudite Professor Femi Otubanjo, the first presentation, was jointly made by Professor Babatunde Abosede and Assoc. Prof. Chinasa Ohiri (Head, International Economic Relations Division, NIIA). The focus was on **Mining and Resource Management** while also considering the environmental and social impacts of Chinese mining in West Africa. Prof. Abosede explained that while Chinese mining brings infrastructural development and job creation, it also causes serious harm to the environment. Poor regulation as well as corruption, pave way for exploitation to continue, and illegal mining linked to Chinese networks fund crime and terrorism. Prof. Chinasa added that China now leads mining activities in Africa through state-backed firms and the Belt and Road Initiative, introducing new green regulations to reduce environmental damage. With strong government support, these partnerships could drive sustainable growth, signaling a global shift in resource politics where fairer rules enable Africa to develop rather than suffer exploitation.



Prof. Efem Ubi, the Director of Studies at the Institute, in discussing **China -Africa trade and investment cooperation in an uncertain global order** focused on the role of China's growing

private sector in Africa. He noted that Chinese firms invest heavily in manufacturing, energy, ICT, and infrastructure, making Africa, China's fastest-growing trade partner. The Beijing 2025 Plan of Action urges companies to invest legally, share technology, and create local jobs through projects linked to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Africa's Agenda 2063. According to Prof. Ubi, while some individuals engage in illegal mining, these activities are not necessarily backed by the Chinese government. Overall, China's private investment offers growth opportunities but also faces challenges related to the risk of exploitation.

China and global governance in Africa was discussed intelligibly by Assoc. Prof. Joshua Bolarinwa, the Director of Research at the Institute. He explained the modes through which China is expanding its global influence through cooperation with Africa, via BRI and FOCAC. These programs promote a governance style based on respect and mutual benefit, contrasting with Western conditional aid. In the process, China strengthens Africa's voice globally while showcasing its leadership in global governance.

Dr. Adesuwa Erediauwa, the Co-ordinator of the Bashir Adeniyi Centre for International Trade and Investment (BACITI), an arm of the Institute, deliberated on **China's private sector engagement** and how it is evolving within a changing global order. She explains that the old Western-led economic system is weakening due to global rivalries and nationalism, and Africa is now asserting more control over its development. China's partnerships through the BRI and FOCAC are helping Africa industrialize by building infrastructure, processing minerals locally, and investing in digital and green energy sectors. The cooperation is shifting from just building roads and railways to creating productive and valuable industries, giving Africa more bargaining power, economic independence, and a stronger global voice.

The presentation made by Dr. Rita Agu (Head, Division of International Law, NIIA) and Mayowa Albert (a research fellow at the Gen Leo Irabor Early Warning Centre, NIIA) focused on **China–Africa cooperation in green development**, highlighting joint efforts toward global climate goals like the Paris Agreement and the UN 2030 Agenda. They highlighted that China is shifting from mining to renewable energy, sustainable farming, and eco-friendly industries, while supporting Africa through green finance and technology. Guided by FOCAC, the Belt and Road Initiative, and Agenda 2063, projects include over 80 renewable energy plants in 28 countries, 66,000 km of power lines, and electric vehicle production in Egypt, Kenya, Rwanda, and Botswana. The speakers emphasized the need for Africa to build local capacity, ensure transparency, and secure fair benefits for affected communities.

The second panel session of the program was centered on reparations. Dr. Kester Onor, a senior research fellow, speaking on the **concept and history of reparations**, laid emphasis on colonial servitude, its long-lasting impact, and the idea of reparative justice. Between the 15th and 20th centuries, over 12 million Africans were enslaved and exploited under systems of forced labor and land theft. European empires gained immense wealth –over \$100 trillion in today's value –while leaving Africa poor and underdeveloped. Colonialism justified racial hierarchies and caused weak institutions, poverty, and dependence which persists till date. Reparative justice, therefore, aimed to correct these historical wrongs through accurate education, debt relief, fair trade, and institutional reforms. Beyond money, it sought to restore equality, and healing between nations.

Dr. Nicholas Erameh's presentation was centred on **reparations: between theory and implementation**, and he examined the global debate on justice for historical injustices like slavery and colonialism. He discussed disputes over who should receive reparations, how they should be delivered, and how victims experiences are recognized. He also questioned the neutrality and fairness of global and trade commission's handling such issues. Some nations push for acknowledgment and forgiveness, while others prefer to move forward without revisiting the past. Dr. Erameh, who is the Head of International Politics at the Department of Research, emphasized that true reparations require honesty, fairness, and practical action to promote justice and reconciliation between nations.

The final paper was presented by Dr. Phillipa Inyang, another senior research fellow, who addressed **the legal dimensions of reparations**. She elucidated that the legal dimensions of reparations are grounded in international law, which holds that every wrongful act creates a duty to make amends. However, in practice, leaders often hesitate to pursue reparations due to the political and economic pressure from powerful states that benefited from these wrongs. This power imbalance makes implementing justice difficult.

The interactive session was ably coordinated by erudite Professor Femi Otubanjo, while the event ended on a high and positive note.



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