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Q & A

SINO-AFRICAN VOICES

Q&A with:

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*In this Q&A, ACCPA interacted with **Fikayo Akeredolu**, who is the China-Africa Programs Officer at the **African Climate Foundation**.*

She shared key insights and perspectives on Sino - African relations and Climate Change.



What can you say about climate change and sustainability response of African governments?

What is most important to note is that; African countries are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change due to factors such as reliance on agriculture, limited infrastructure, and limited resources for adaptation and mitigation.

African governments have shown varying levels of commitment to addressing climate change and promoting sustainability. While there is no one-size-fits-all approach, several trends and initiatives can be observed across the continent:

- *Several African countries are investing in renewable energy sources like solar, wind, hydroelectric, and geothermal power. These initiatives aim to diversify energy sources, reduce reliance on fossil fuels, and promote sustainable energy generation.*
- *Some African countries have entered Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs) with Global North partners, and some have launched Just Energy Transition Plans for which they seek funding.*
- *African countries have participated in multilateral climate regimes to varying degrees at events like COP and African Climate Week.*

Overall, I would say all African governments are aware of the threat climate change poses, but they have had different responses with varying success levels.



What are some of the key climate change policy differences between China and African countries and how are these being addressed?

I don't think it is fair to compare China's response to the response of African countries. First, because China is the second largest economy in the world and the largest CO2 emitter, it is also on track to double its capacity and produce 1,200 gigawatts of energy through wind and solar power by 2025, reaching its 2030 goal five years ahead. China has ability that Africa simply does not have. And last but not least, Africa has many countries with many climate change policies.

But if I were to answer your question, I would say the key difference lies in the speed of energy transition. China has worked hard at transitioning. Its utility-scale solar capacity has reached 228GW, more than the rest of the world combined.



What role does climate change play in shaping public opinion and diplomatic discussions surrounding African-China relations, and how can these two entities work together towards common climate goals?

This is a very interesting question. Afrobarometer appears to have the best answers to this question. Surveys have shown that climate change awareness is generally high across African countries.

Many people recognize that climate change is happening and significantly threatens their communities and livelihoods.

African citizens often express concerns about the impacts of climate change, including droughts, floods, changing weather patterns, and adverse effects on agriculture. These concerns are often more pronounced among rural populations and those directly dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods. Perceptions of climate change in Africa can vary based on factors such as education, geographic location, socioeconomic status, and cultural beliefs.

Additionally, public attitudes can change over time due to shifts in climate events, media coverage, and government policies. African countries and China all fall into the Global South category. Global South organisations like the G77 and BRICS are vehicles for both entities to work together.



How is China's economic engagement with Africa impacted by climate change and what key steps are being taken to address this?

China's economic engagement with Africa is influenced by climate change in several ways, and addressing these impacts requires a combination of strategic actions. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which involves significant investment in infrastructure and development projects across Africa, can contribute to positive and negative environmental outcomes.

Impacts

- *Infrastructure projects, particularly those involving fossil fuels, can contribute to increased carbon emissions. This can exacerbate climate change and affect China's and Africa's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.*
- *Some projects related to resource extraction, such as mining and logging, can lead to deforestation, habitat destruction, and ecosystem degradation, impacting biodiversity and local communities.*



Steps to Address Impacts

- *African countries should prioritize renewable energy sources in infrastructure projects to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and minimize carbon emissions.*
- *The focus should be on designing infrastructure projects that account for changing climate patterns and are resilient to extreme weather events, contributing to long-term sustainability.*



Are there any renewable energy projects or initiatives in Africa that China is actively supporting to mitigate the effects of climate change?

There are several projects and initiatives in Africa that China is actively supporting to mitigate the effects of climate change. There is the work on “Greening the BRI.” This involves integrating principles of environmental protection, social responsibility, and sustainable development into BRI projects' planning, design, and implementation.

There is also China’s Global Development Initiative (GDI), launched in September 2021 to raise awareness of the challenges threatening the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and re-prioritize and renew global commitments to these goals.

We also have the FOCAC 2021 commitments. In this agreement, China is supposed to fund ten green developments, environmental protection and climate action projects for Africa, support the development of the “Great Green Wall”, and build centers of excellence on low-carbon development and climate change adaptation in Africa.



How is China's expanding infrastructure development and investment in Africa being affected by increases in greenhouse gas emissions?

China's expanding infrastructure development and investment in Africa is increasingly influenced by the growing concern over increases in greenhouse gas emissions. In many African countries, the effects of climate change are already being felt, affecting communities, agriculture, and ecosystems. Infrastructure projects that increase emissions could exacerbate these impacts, harming vulnerable populations.

As the conversation about Great Power Competition continues, the international community is closely watching China's role in promoting sustainable development in Africa. As the impacts of climate change become more pronounced, infrastructure that does not account for sustainability and climate resilience could become outdated or even obsolete, leading to economic losses.



What role is China playing in terms of funding and supporting climate change initiatives in Africa?

China has talked a good game about supporting climate change initiatives on the continent. With conversations about a green BRI and climate change being a focus at the last FOCAC meeting, there definitely is a prioritization of climate change in the Sino-African relationship. The tangible output/outcomes are mixed, though.

A significant amount of Chinese investment on the continent still focuses on coal and other non-renewable fuel sources. Hence, Chinese-investment-emissions on the continent are not as reduced as one would like.

One key role China has played in terms of supporting climate change initiatives in Africa has been the work of the G77 and China in the UNFCCC. China's participation in this negotiating bloc has definitely given the group more leverage in the multilateral climate regime.

About **Expert**



Fikayo Akeredolu is China - Africa Program Officer at the African Climate Foundation. She is also working on her DPhil at The University of Oxford, her research focuses on Climate Change and Multilateralism in the Sino-African Relationship.

Her research focuses on Sino - African relations, specifically Climate Change, from the African Agency & Perception lens.

She studied at Tsinghua University as a Schwarzman Scholar. She has previously worked as a Financial Products and Technology Growth expert at Bloomberg and Refinitiv in the Middle East, Europe and Africa.



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INSIGHTS

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The Africa-China Centre for Policy and Advisory is a Sino-African research and policy think tank and advisory firm headquartered in Accra, Ghana.

The Centre is dedicated to providing unbiased policy and market research as well as distinct views on Africa-China relations.

We offer strategic guidance on key issues regarding China and Africa, covering multiple sectors and industries.

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