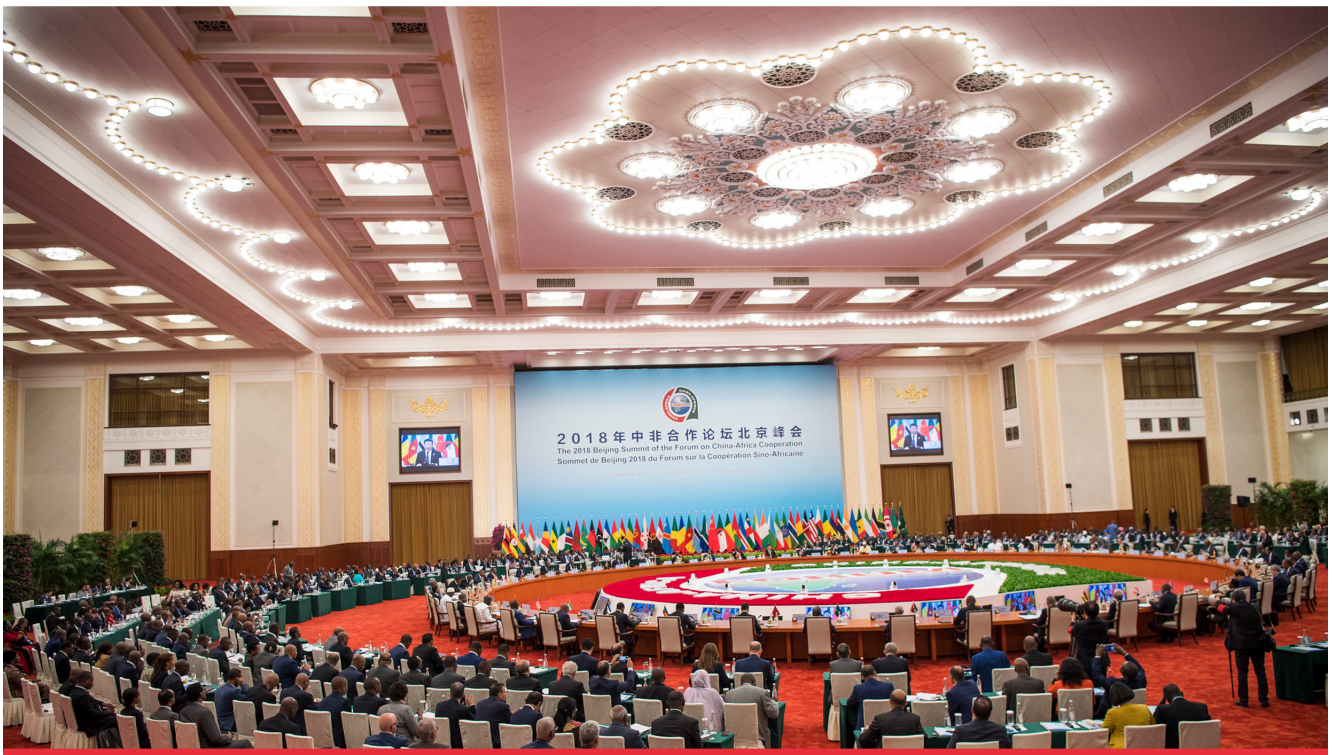




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The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, FOCAC is and continuous to be a leading plurilateral mechanism for Africa’s engagement with China since it was first held and established in 2000.

Twenty-four years later, the FOCAC is without a doubt the most influential forum for interaction in China's history with Africa. Its establishment sparked the current trend towards deeper China-African engagement.

It has been widely perceived as a Sinocentric, self-serving construct by the Chinese and as a major tool of foreign policy manipulation imposed and controlled by China, the dominant actor, in order to further its goals in Africa.

Despite this popular belief, the FOCAC is actually a collaborative project between China and Africa. African nations actually originated the concept of a framework to direct China-Africa ties.

It has evolved from being merely a channel for diplomatic talks to a forum for sharing knowledge and insights in order to further common development objectives.

This year, Beijing is scheduled to host the 9th FOCAC, as it has been a tradition since 2000. The gathering is held triennially, alternating between African countries and China.

*Table 1: List of FOCAC summits between 2000–*2024*

Edition	Year	Location
1 st FOCAC	2000	Beijing, China
2 nd FOCAC	2003	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
3 rd FOCAC	2006	Beijing, China
4 th FOCAC	2009	Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt
5 th FOCAC	2012	Beijing, China
6 th FOCAC	2015	Johannesburg, South Africa
7 th FOCAC	2018	Beijing, China
8 th FOCAC	2021	Dakar, Senegal
*9 th FOCAC	*2024	*Beijing, China

FOCAC & Africa's other Plurilateral Engagements Compared

It is imperative to interrogate Africa's other engagement in what has become known as Africa+1 Summits, just like FOCAC. China is not Africa's only partner, as the continent continues to court strategic partnerships with multiple players.

A closer examination of African summitry can help us better understand why African leaders are taking part in these diplomatic exercises. It also shows how African leaders may be more effectively included in these summits to better serve their interests.

We are only able to mention a handful of these Africa Plus One Summits with a brief introduction. Following this, we will share key insights on how FOCAC differs and its impact on Africa's development agenda.

US-Africa Leaders' Summit

The first United States-Africa Leaders' Summit was held in 2014 by United States President Barack Obama in Washington, D.C., from August 4–6, 2014.

Following the election of Donald Trump, the summit was shelved as US foreign policy under his administration shifted away from Africa.

In December 2022, eight years later, President Joe Biden hosted the 2nd US-Africa Leader's Summit, again in Washington, DC, attended by leaders from 49 African states as well as the head of the African Union Commission.

France-Africa Summit

This was created in 1973, which was just a decade after the independence of French colonies. The main resolutions were to consolidate the influence of France.

It was originally scheduled to be held annually, with the host alternating between France and Africa. This, however, changed beginning in 1990, when it was decided to be held biennially.

The last edition, dubbed The New Africa-France Summit, was held in Montpellier on October 8, 2021.

Arab-Africa Summit

In March 1977, in Cairo, Egypt, the first Africa-Arab Summit was held, culminating in the oldest cooperation arrangement that Africa has entered into through a Declaration and Program of Action adopted during the Summit.

The second was held in Sirte, Libya, in 2010, the third in Kuwait in 2013, and the fourth in Malabo in 2016, the capital of Equatorial Guinea. The fifth, which was due to be held in Riyadh, was postponed as a result of ongoing developments in Gaza.

AU-EU Summit

Institutionally, it started with the 2000 Cairo, Egypt, Africa-EU Summit and continued with the 2007 Lisbon, Portugal, Second Africa-EU Summit, where an Action Plan and the Africa-EU Joint Strategy (JAES) were approved.

It was structured to be held triennially; however, that has not been delivered. The last edition of the AU-EU Summit was held in Brussels in February 2022; it was initially scheduled for October 2020 but was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Russia-Africa Summit

The First Russia-Africa Summit took place on October 23–24, 2019 in Sochi under the motto 'For Peace, Security, and Development'. It attracted 39 African heads of state.

The second Russia-Africa Summit was postponed from its initial October 2022 date at the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to July 27 and 28, 2023, at the Expo Forum in St. Petersburg.

Saudi-Africa Summit

The first Saudi Arabia-Africa summit took place in Riyadh on November 10, and it was the most recent in a series of meetings known as "Africa+1."

Other Africa+1 Summits:

The list is endless. There are several other such gatherings including Italy-Africa Summit, Korea-Africa Summit, Turkey-Africa Partnership Summit, India-Africa Forum Summit, UK-Africa Investment Summit, Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), EU-Africa Business Summit, Indonesia-Africa Forum, Brazil Africa Forum amongst others.

Why FOCAC Matters Most

- FOCAC is by far the most consistent and comprehensive Africa+1 Summit in existence in terms of areas of cooperation. Since its establishment in 2000, it has been held every other three years as per the original plan. It has never been postponed, not even during COVID-19.

According to a report by Development Reimagined, a total of 56 FOCAC cooperation areas have been covered since FOCAC 2000. During FOCAC 2015, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals were included in the action plans.

None of the other Africa+1 Summits have this level of commitment and cooperation areas as FOCAC at the scale of relevance to Africa's development agenda.

- Although other financial and non-financial pledges have been made to African countries in different forums, FOCAC has created some of the largest ever financial (and other) commitments to African countries on the part of a single country.

Aspects of FOCAC's interaction with African nations include investment, loans, and grant lines for infrastructure, manufacturing, and SMEs. Because of this, FOCAC operates efficiently and produces tangible outcomes.

China's increasing loan commitments under FOCAC offer significant advantages for Africa, primarily by addressing the continent's substantial infrastructure deficit and fostering economic development.

China's loan commitment through FOCAC increased significantly over the years:

- 2006: \$5 billion – FOCAC III, Beijing, China
 - 2009: \$10 billion – FOCAC IV, Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt
 - 2012: \$20 billion – FOCAC V, Beijing, China
 - 2015: \$35 billion – FOCAC VI, Johannesburg, South Africa.
 - 2018: \$60 billion – FOCAC VII, Beijing, China
- In terms of monitoring, evaluation, and follow-up, FOCAC has the most potent timelines and agencies. Many other forums don't seem to have the unique monitoring and preparation system that FOCAC has.

It currently consists of three main components: a coordinators' meeting (since 2016) and follow-up meetings (since 2016); an internal Chinese follow-up committee consisting of 36 agencies; and one secretariat of six important ministries, which was established in 2001 and is co-chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Commerce.

FOCAC continues to serve its purpose as a platform for collective discourse on cooperation between Africa and China. However, in order to address new issues and guarantee the forum's continued relevance and efficacy in advancing the alliance between China and Africa, it will be essential that it continues to evolve and adapt as the 9th FOCAC gathering draws near in a few months.

About author



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ACCPA is Sino-African research and policy think tank in Ghana, with teams in Morocco, Tanzania, Tunisia, the DRC, China, the UK, Ethiopia, and Botswana.

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