



A cyclist passes beneath a poster in Beijing for the 2006 China-Africa summit, which celebrated 50 years of diplomatic relations and was intended to strengthen political and economic ties between China and Africa.
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PROMOTING PEACE THROUGH THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS WHAT ROLE FOR THE FORUM ON CHINA-AFRICA COOPERATION?

After two years of discussions, United Nations Member States have finally agreed on a new set of Sustainable Development Goals, which will replace the Millennium Development Goals and establish a global development framework for the next fifteen years.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were formally adopted by UN Member States at a high-level summit in September 2015, include peace as a central and integrated part. China and Africa have both demonstrated that they acknowledge the strong link between peace and development. The Common African Position (CAP) calls for the SDGs to give adequate attention to peace and security, recognising the inextricable links between peace, security, stability and development. While China has acknowledged the importance of peace for development, it initially voiced some scepticism over whether the issue should be addressed explicitly through the SDGs. Nonetheless, China has committed to coordinating its position with that of

African countries and has now accepted the inclusion of Goal 16, which aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies.

Indeed, China has already expressed its strong support for African peace and security as an enabler for development in other forums. This paper demonstrates how many of the commitments made in the last Forum on China Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) Action Plan (2013–2015) in fact overlap with many of the peace-related targets in the SDGs. This suggests that the upcoming Sixth FOCAC Summit in South Africa on 4–5 December 2015 could be an opportunity to discuss how the next Action Plan can serve as an implementation mechanism for the SDGs, including with regards to their focus on peace.

THE 2030 AGENDA

What is the current state of play?

The global debate on what development framework will replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has come to an end. After two years of discussions, a finalised text of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – previously called the Post-2015 Development Agenda – has been agreed at the United Nations (UN) Headquarters and was formally adopted at the UN Sustainable Development Summit on 25 September 2015. During the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, in 2012, UN Member States adopted an outcome document, which set out a mandate to develop a set of SDGs and to integrate these into the 2030 Agenda. It also stated that the new development framework should integrate the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in a comprehensive manner.¹ The international community has adopted a development framework which aims to be much more ambitious and transformative than the MDGs. Unlike the MDGs, the SDGs are set to be universal in nature and apply to all countries.

Furthermore, while it is widely accepted that the MDGs have made a significant contribution to development they have also been criticised for being donor-driven and overly technical in their approach, and for missing out on crucial dimensions of development.² In contrast, the 2030 Agenda aspires to catalyse action on a much wider set of issues in an effort to encourage a more integrated and transformative approach to development. The UN Open Working Group (OWG) proposed as many as 17 SDGs in July 2014. These goals and the accompanying 169 targets form the basis of the new development framework.

Why is the focus on peace in the SDGs important?

Poverty eradication and development gains cannot be sustained under conditions of violent conflict and insecurity. The evidence shows that violence and insecurity have undermined development and MDG attainment.³ Strikingly, all seven of the countries that are unlikely to meet a single MDG by the end of 2015 have been affected by high levels of violence.⁴ Reducing violence and

insecurity will matter most to the world's poorest people who will increasingly be left behind in conflict-affected countries. The countries that the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) defines as 'fragile' are currently home to 43 per cent of the world's population living in absolute poverty. If we continue with business as usual it is estimated that by 2030 62 per cent of those in extreme poverty will be living in countries at risk from high levels of violence.⁵ While the African continent has become more peaceful, it has suffered from the developmental consequences of violence and insecurity. According to the African Development Bank, "armed conflicts have been the single most important determinant of poverty and human misery in Africa affecting more than half the continent's countries during the 1980s and 1990s."⁶

Leaders from Africa and China have also reaffirmed the importance of peace, including at the 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2013, which was focused on the MDGs and the new development framework. For example, South Africa's President Zuma argued that "development and security are two sides of the same coin"⁷, with leaders from Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria and other African countries making similar points. China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi agreed in his speech to the UNGA, stating that: "In advancing the development agenda, we must cherish peace as we do our eyes. War has made tens of millions of people homeless, reduced infrastructures to rubble, and brought decades of hard work to naught. To uphold peace is the purpose of the UN Charter as well as the precondition for the MDGs."⁸

It needs to be remembered that violence and insecurity are universal issues with a negative impact on people's lives worldwide, not solely in states currently affected by armed conflict.⁹ For instance,



Pope Francis addresses the UN General Assembly at the UN Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015, during which the SDGs were adopted. © UN PHOTO/CIA PAK

“Poverty eradication and development gains cannot be sustained under conditions of violent conflict and insecurity.”

the murder rate in South Africa in 2014 was around five times higher than the 2013 global average.¹⁰ South Africans – along with Venezuelans – are also the least likely to say that they feel safe walking home at night. In a Gallup poll from 2012, nearly 75 per cent of South Africans had this sense of insecurity.¹¹ It is important to note that poor and marginalised people everywhere are often the ones most affected by violence and insecurity. For example, there is a close relationship between higher poverty rates and violence in South Asia. In India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh, conflict is concentrated in regions where per capita income is lower than the national average.¹²

People around the world recognise these realities. In fact, protection against crime and violence rank among the top six development priorities in the My World Survey, in which more than eight and a half million people have voted.¹³ In addition, freedom from fear is a declared aspiration for all peoples around the world, guaranteed by Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.¹⁴

How is peace being addressed in the SDGs?

Peace is also about much more than just the absence of physical violence. While often the search for peace is seen as an end to armed conflict or the enforcement of stability, for many peacebuilders the absence of physical violence is only the shallow beginning of a much longer-term peacebuilding process. A deep or ‘positive’ peace includes changes in the attitudes of conflicting parties and the transformation of the systemic and structural elements that form part of the reasons for why the tensions that are present in every society spill over and become violent. Acknowledging and transforming structural violence, including the systems responsible for marginalising and exclud-



Women take part in a focus group discussion conducted as part of a study on resource and land conflict in northern Uganda. An SDG target on fair access to resources and control over land is included in the 2030 Agenda. © SAFERWORLD/CAPSON SAUSI

ing sections of society and the historical and contemporary causes of poverty, inequality and under-development, is key to understanding how peace and development imperatives are inextricably linked. Pillar 5 of the CAP acknowledges the need to address the root causes of conflict and to tackle economic and social inequalities and exclusion; to strengthen good and inclusive governance; to fight against all forms of discrimination; and to forge unity in diversity through democratic practices and mechanisms.¹⁵

A range of issues, necessary to create a holistic ‘positive’ peace that is sustainable over the long run and goes beyond dealing with the symptoms of violent conflict and insecurity, are outlined in Table 1.¹⁶ These include transparent and accountable governance and decision-making, tackling corruption, promoting access to security and justice, and addressing external factors such as flows of arms, drugs and illicit financial flows. As well as seeking to reduce levels of violence, many of these issues are captured in the 12 targets

included in Goal 16, which aims to “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.”¹⁷

However, other important drivers of conflict are addressed elsewhere in the framework. For example, Goal 5 focuses on gender equality. The norms and values that underpin gender inequality often drive and perpetuate conflict.¹⁸ Indeed, the Institute for Economics and Peace has demonstrated that countries that are less peaceful also have lower levels of gender equality.¹⁹ Other types of inequalities are also important. For example, a large body of evidence demonstrates that horizontal inequalities between social groups – including economic, political and social inequalities – can exacerbate grievances and lead to conflict.²⁰ Many goals and targets across the framework seek to address this issue directly and indirectly through a focus on inclusive development.

TABLE 1: KEY TARGETS FOR PEACE

Key issues for peace	Key SDG targets
Reducing violence and making the public secure	16.1 significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere 16.2 end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children
Voice and participation in decision-making	16.7 ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels 16.10 ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements 10.2 by 2030 empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status
Ending impunity and ensuring access to justice	16.3 promote the rule of law at the national and international levels, and ensure equal access to justice for all 16.b promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development 16.9 by 2030 provide legal identity for all including birth registration
Transparency, accountability and controls on corruption	16.5 substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all its forms
Addressing the external stresses that lead to conflict	16.4 by 2030 significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen recovery and return of stolen assets, and combat all forms of organized crime
Fair access to social services and resources	1.4 by 2030 ensure that all men and women, particularly the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership, and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology, and financial services including microfinance
Shared economic growth and opportunities for decent livelihoods	8.5 by 2030 achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value 8.6 by 2020 substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training
The ability of states to manage revenues and perform core functions effectively and accountably	16.6 develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels
Ensuring equality between social groups – especially between men and women	5.1 end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere 5.2 eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation 5.5 ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life 10.1 by 2030 progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40% of the population at a rate higher than the national average

Table 1 illustrates how many of the key issues necessary for a positive peace are captured across the new framework's goals and targets, creating opportunities for taking a preventive, holistic and developmental approach to reducing violent conflict and insecurity. Indeed, the fact that such a range of drivers of conflict are addressed across the framework demonstrates how the SDGs are distinct from other global peace and security initiatives, which have tended to focus on the symptoms of conflict or violence, for example through the use of UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions or the deployment of peacekeepers.

Global inequalities and their historical roots – including colonialism – are one of the underlying areas of tension that have informed some of the differences in approach to the SDGs that have emerged during the international negotiating process. The overarching global systems and structures that inform global governance and that regulate trade and financial flows have also come under fire. In addition, many developing countries have emphasised the importance of addressing the democratic deficit at the global level and countering the skewed manner in which existing systems benefit those who already wield significant power. As such, targets have been included to reduce inequalities between countries and to increase the representation of developing countries in systems of global governance. Even if it is unlikely that at this juncture the SDGs – which form part of a voluntary development framework – will significantly alter the overarching systemic and structural status quo, it is positive that these issues are starting to be debated.

What needs to happen next?

With an agreement on the 2030 Agenda – which includes a strong focus on peace in Goal 16 and across other elements of the framework – discussions are now



Crowds in Tripoli protest against insecurity. Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, there is now consensus around the need to promote peaceful societies in the new development framework. © UN PHOTO/IASON FOOUNTEN

increasingly turning to issues of securing greater buy-in to the SDGs by governments and other stakeholders as well as broader matters of implementation. On the former issue, some member states, including China, have voiced concerns over the inclusion of issues related to peace within the SDGs. More work will be required to address their concerns in order to ensure genuine political buy-in and avoid giving way to a pick-and-choose approach to the goals and targets. On the issue of implementation, the SDGs will largely be implemented at national level, with different countries taking context-specific actions to meet the targets. Nonetheless, support from the international community and cooperation between states will be necessary if all countries are to be able to meet them. A new global partnership for development will need to recognise that underdevelopment has a long history, rooted in forms of colonialism and imperialism. Acknowledging and addressing development needs is the collective

responsibility of all countries, and must include efforts to mitigate all international factors that inhibit development.

Although a new global partnership for implementing the 2030 Agenda is necessary, the many existing global initiatives to build more peaceful societies should not be overlooked. The FOCAC Action Plan (2013–2015) counts amongst these initiatives and provides a great opportunity to advance many of the peace-related targets in the 2030 Agenda. Indeed the limitations of a nation-state approach to sustainable development and durable peace makes these forms of international cooperation an essential element of an effective programme aimed at taking the SDGs forward. Tapping into and unleashing the potential of international cooperative partnerships, especially among developing-country blocs, will be essential if the potentially transformative effect of a new development trajectory is to be realised.

CHINA AND AFRICA'S POSITIONS ON THE 2030 AGENDA

How have China and Africa committed to coordinate their positions on the 2030 agenda?

African countries agreed on the CAP on the post-2015 development agenda, which broadly guided their collective engagement in negotiations. The CAP is also aligned with the African Union's (AU) Agenda 2063, which sets out a longer term vision for development in Africa. As a country with growing international influence and a large stake in global development, China has played a relatively active role in discussions in New York. Aside from participation with the wider Group of Seventy-seven (G77) developing countries at the UN, China and Africa also agreed to work together to formulate a new development framework. In the Fifth FOCAC Action Plan (2013–2015), the two sides called on the international community to build consensus on the post-2015 agenda²¹ and

on the sidelines of UNGA in September 2013, China and African states agreed to “strengthen coordination and cooperation on the post-2015 development agenda”.²²

The foundation for further cooperation is evident in several ways. First, the two sides have cooperated through FOCAC since 2000 with the purpose of promoting development cooperation.²³ Second, China has demonstrated a clear commitment to strengthening development ties with Africa. High-level leaders and officials such as President Xi Jinping have made mutual development the focus of bilateral visits to African countries.²⁴ China has also agreed to increase its aid and expand investment and finance cooperation with Africa.²⁵ Third, South-South cooperation between China and Africa has been seen as a contribution to MDGs attainment. This flourishing cooperation can be expanded upon in order to meet the SDGs over the next 15 years.²⁶

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What were the similarities and differences between Africa and China's positions?

There was a lot of convergence between Africa and China's positions during the negotiations on the 2030 Agenda. In the position papers the CAP²⁷ and 'China's Position Paper on the Development Agenda beyond 2015' in 2013,²⁸ poverty eradication is identified as the overarching goal of the new development framework. The two papers also agree on priorities such as social progress, inclusive economic growth and strengthening global development partnerships. In their positions, China and Africa also adhere to the principles of mutual respect, mutual benefit, win-win cooperation and respect for diversity in development models.²⁹

However, China and Africa's positions also differed slightly. Although both sides uphold the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR), Africa put more emphasis on the growing importance of South-South cooperation and would like to explore this area of cooperation further, working with a range of different development partners.³⁰ China, however, has argued that “North-South cooperation should continue to serve as the main channel of development financing” and that “South-South cooperation is a supplement to North-South cooperation”.³¹



Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China, addresses the United Nations summit for the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. © UN PHOTO/CIA PAK



People take part in a march to promote African solidarity in an area of Alexandra, South Africa that is affected by xenophobic violence. © ACTION SUPPORT CENTRE

China still views itself as a developing country with its own domestic challenges and is reluctant to be seen as a donor. As such, China does not believe it should make concrete commitments on aid to the same degree as developed countries. In addition, China has tended to envision a narrower development framework, which focuses on the three core pillars of development – the economic, social and environmental pillars³² – while Africa has committed itself to a more ambitious agenda, which includes issues of human rights, good governance, rule of law and peace and security.³³

As noted, China and Africa have both demonstrated that they acknowledge the strong link between peace and

stability, and development. The fifth pillar on peace and security in the CAP acknowledges the “importance of peace and security in Africa and in the world, and the inextricable links between development and peace, security and stability”.³⁴ Various African states called for a strong focus on peace in the OWG and have actively supported Goal 16. Despite an initial reluctance to embrace Goal 16, at the 11th OWG session South Africa stated that “Achieving stable and peaceful societies should be considered as an important part of sustainable development. What is significant is the relationship between peaceful, stable and non-violent societies, as well as rule of law at all levels and respect for human

rights and development.”³⁵ Once an initial set of 17 Goals had been agreed South Africa sought to protect the delicate compromise that had been reached, with its public positions on Goal 16 also influenced by its role as the Chair of the G77.

“...China and Africa have both demonstrated that they acknowledge the strong link between peace and stability, and development.”

Initially, China was also more sceptical about the inclusion of these issues. During the opening OWG negotiations it noted several concerns with regards to such an explicit focus on peace at the goal level. In particular, China argued the SDGs should focus solely on the three aforementioned dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) as mandated by Rio+20 in 2012. In this regard, it was argued that underdevelopment, poverty and inequality are key drivers of conflict so these issues should be prioritised in the SDGs. Addressing these would, in turn, lead to peace and so there was no need to focus on it as an explicit development outcome. Furthermore, it was argued that peace and security are already being addressed in other institutions and forums that are more suitable for dealing with peace and security-related issues such as the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC).³⁶ Finally, Beijing was also concerned that the sovereignty of countries risks being violated if the SDGs include a focus on internal affairs.³⁷

Nonetheless, as dialogue increased on this issue and concerns and misconceptions were addressed, China showed greater flexibility. At the Tenth Session of the OWG, China stated that “we acknowledge the importance of peaceful and non-violent societies, rule of law and capable institutions and their linkage with development, which create an enabling environment for sustainable development.”³⁸ In addition, at the 12th and 13th Sessions of the OWG, China was open to putting a number of peace-related targets into a merged Goal called “Means of implementation, enabling environment for sustainable development and strengthening institutions”, combining Goal 16 and Goal 17. This included targets on violence reduction, corruption, organised crime, illicit flows of arms, finance, drugs and wildlife as well as



A young man in Beijing reads about Zimbabwe on a display for the 2006 China-Africa Summit.
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inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making. However, these issues were referred to only in general terms and without setting timeframes or quantitative targets. Although China cautioned against target language on political and civil freedoms, rule of law and human rights during the negotiations,³⁹ it recognises that it is important to “modernize the national governance system and governance capacity, comprehensively promote the rule of law, protect human rights, and create a good social environment conducive to development”⁴⁰ in its final position paper on the Post-2015 development agenda.⁴¹ While China’s position in the OWG shifted, whether officials prioritise a focus on peace with regards to implementation of the agenda remains an open question. An examination of China’s relations with Africa suggests that there is some room for optimism.

“...there is a broader recognition in China that efforts to promote mutual development between China and Africa cannot ignore matters of peace and security.”

A SHARED COMMITMENT TO PEACE IN AFRICA

How has China committed to promote African peace and security?

Over the past few years, issues related to peace in Africa have moved up the agenda of China-Africa relations. The support for the promotion of peace and stability in Africa has been voiced at the highest political level in China. During President Xi Jinping's tour of Africa in March 2013, he promised that China would remain a reliable partner of Africa, stating that, "China will continue to uphold the principle of peace, development, co-operation and mutual benefit, and dedicate itself unswervingly to safeguarding world peace and promoting common development."⁴² This promise was echoed by Premier Li Keqiang during his four-nation tour in Africa on 2 May 2014, when he said that China is ready to support African countries in upholding peace.⁴³ In his speech to the UN General Assembly on 28 September 2015, President Xi Jinping announced that China will provide US\$100 million in free military assistance to the AU in order to support the establishment of the African Standby force and the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crisis.⁴⁴

The FOCAC process has been a key forum for specific agreements on African peace and security. Peace was identified as one of five key areas for deepened cooperation in former President Hu Jintao's speech at the opening ceremony of the Fifth FOCAC meeting in July 2012. He stated that the Chinese and African people shared a desire to seek peace and development and recognised the need to "promote peace and stability in Africa and create a secure environment for Africa's development", which China would contribute to.⁴⁵ In the current FOCAC Action Plan (2013–2015) which emanated from this meeting, China and Africa stated that they "shared the view that the challenges confronting



Chinese peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo march to a road rehabilitation project, which was undertaken to enable greater access to the Ruzizi One Dam Power Plant – the only source of electricity for the east of the country. © UN PHOTO/MARIE FRECHON

peace and security in Africa are increasing and reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen cooperation in policy coordination, capacity building, preventive diplomacy, peace keeping operations and post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation on the basis of equality and mutual respect to jointly maintain peace and stability in Africa".⁴⁶ The Action Plan also outlines a large number of commitments on enhanced cooperation including support to post-conflict reconstruction, the development of the African Peace and Security Architecture and the creation of the 'Initiative on China-Africa Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Security', which will provide the AU with support for its peace-support

operations.⁴⁷ These issues look set to stay on the agenda: China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi has expressed that the maintenance of regional peace and security is one of three key areas in which he expects China-Africa cooperation to be enhanced as a result of the next FOCAC Summit in South Africa.⁴⁸

China's growing engagement on Africa's peace and security challenges has been driven by a number of factors. National interests certainly play a role: the protection of increasing numbers of Chinese citizens and deepening economic interests on the continent has become a higher priority for Beijing. However, more broadly than this, China's leadership has been explicit about the need for

China to be seen as acting as a responsible great power which is concerned with promoting peace overseas along with other global public goods.⁴⁹ Furthermore, African states themselves have pushed China to deepen its engagement, thereby addressing concerns in Beijing about adherence to the policy of non-interference.⁵⁰ Indeed, deepening engagement on African peace and security issues is increasingly seen as a means to strengthen bilateral and multilateral relations.⁵¹ Finally, there is a broader recognition in China that efforts to promote mutual development between China and Africa cannot ignore matters of peace and security, and that mutually beneficial cooperation will need to include a focus on these matters from a development perspective.

What kind of actions has China taken in order to meet these commitments?

China's practical engagement in the promotion of peace and stability on the African continent has increased over recent years, ranging from the deployment of peacekeeping troops to direct mediation efforts. China's contribution to UN peacekeeping operations has included both logistical support and troop contribution. For example, Beijing has contributed 170 soldiers to the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali, provided US\$1 million in assistance to the AU to support its mediation and coordination efforts in the Mali conflict⁵² and deployed a Chinese infantry battalion of 700 troops to South Sudan to assist the UN peacekeeping mission there.⁵³ Out of the 3,040

Chinese peacekeeping troops deployed around the world, over 2,200 of these are in Africa.⁵⁴ In fact, among the permanent members of the UNSC, China has deployed the largest number of peacekeeping forces.⁵⁵

In addition, China is part of the international naval operation to combat piracy off the coast of Somalia and has participated in anti-piracy patrols by sending ships and by taking part in joint exercises, including in the Mediterranean Sea.⁵⁶ China has also supported the operationalisation of the African Standby Force (ASF).⁵⁷ In the field of diplomacy, China has supported mediation efforts in the South Sudan conflict by regional organisations such as the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD).⁵⁸ China's Special Envoy for Africa, Ambassador Zhong Jianhua, has travelled frequently to Africa to mediate the South Sudan issue.⁵⁹ In addition, Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited Addis Ababa in January 2014 to meet with rebel and government officials and called for an immediate cessation of hostilities in South Sudan.⁶⁰ Responding to crises elsewhere, China provided funding for the humanitarian response to the crisis in the Horn of Africa in 2011⁶¹ and contributed humanitarian aid and medical personnel to support international efforts to tackle the Ebola outbreak in West Africa.⁶²

It is argued by Chinese officials and scholars that China's engagement on African peace and security issues extends beyond reactive and hard security approaches – such as the deployment of peacekeepers – to actions that will help address the root causes of conflict. Promoting economic growth has been seen as one such contribution. During a UNSC meeting on post-conflict peacebuilding in March 2014, Chinese Ambassador Liu Jieyi stated that "...post-conflict peacebuilding efforts should focus on removing the deep-rooted causes of conflict, with a particular



A Chinese operations manager works at a copper mine in Zambia. The mine is owned by the Non-Ferrous Company Africa, a Chinese company that owns and operates several mines in Zambia's Copperbelt Province.
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“The support for the promotion of peace and stability in Africa has been voiced at the highest political level in China.”



People visit Lido Beach in the Somali capital Mogadishu. The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), a peace enforcement mission, has been deployed in southern and central areas of the country since 2007. AMISOM has received significant financial and logistical support from China. © UN PHOTO/STUART PRICE

emphasis on economic and social development.”⁶³ Looking at official Chinese discourse on the roots of conflict in Sudan, Chinese scholars argue that the belief that reducing poverty reduces conflict is based on China’s own experiences of attempting to bring stability to its own restive frontier regions.⁶⁴ China’s economic engagement on the African continent has increased rapidly in recent years – China’s investment in Africa grew from US\$ 210 million in 2000 to US\$3.17 billion in 2011.⁶⁵ Trade between Africa and China shot up from just US\$10bn in 2000 to US\$210 in 2013.⁶⁶ In addition, Africa counts among the top recipients

of Chinese development financing⁶⁷ – totalling \$6.4 billion in 2013 – which covers areas such as education, transport, communication and health.⁶⁸ Through promoting win-win economic cooperation, it is argued that China is promoting not only development in Africa, but long-term peace. While the reality on the ground may be much more complex – with the type of economic growth mattering more for peace than whether it happens at all⁶⁹ – this emphasis on economic development demonstrates recognition of a more holistic approach to preventing conflict and building sustainable peace.

What are the linkages between FOCAC and the peace aspects of the 2030 Agenda?

It should first be noted that discussions on China’s existing commitments to African peace and security could be used to help address the concerns about the inclusion of peace in the SDG framework which were raised by China in past negotiations. While China has now accepted Goal 16, in line with the CAP, addressing lingering concerns will be crucial for developing buy-in for implementation. The concerns identified on page 8 could be addressed by:

“...existing China-Africa commitments in the current FOCAC Action Plan overlap significantly with a number of goals and targets that promote peace in the SDGs.”

- **Ensuring that the sovereignty of countries is not violated.** The SDGs are about how individual countries can help themselves and not about what the international community can impose on them. The SDGs are non-binding and their implementation will take place at national level, with requests for support defining engagement in these countries by other states. Also commonly agreed between states, the FOCAC process has similarly outlined general areas for China to support African countries without a threat to their sovereignty.
- **Emphasising that the inclusion of peace will strengthen and build on the Rio+20 agenda.** Although there is consensus that the 2030 Agenda should be framed by the three pillars of Rio+20, the intention was not for these to be used to delimit the new development framework, which will reflect a broader conception of sustainable development. The inclusion of a focus on peace and security within the FOCAC is explicitly framed in reference to enabling and promoting development in Africa.
- **Respecting the mandate of the existing peace and security architecture.** Just as FOCAC commitments on African peace and security do not undermine other processes on the continent or globally, the SDGs must complement the wider peace and security architecture. Furthermore, the inclusion of peace is not about reconfiguring existing institutional responsibilities but about mainstreaming a preventive approach within development.

More specifically, existing China-Africa commitments in the current FOCAC Action Plan overlap significantly with a number of goals and targets that promote peace in the SDGs.

Particularly notable are the various commitments that would promote Goal 16

on peaceful and inclusive societies. For example, the launch of the Initiative on China-Africa Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Security and the ambition to strengthen cooperation in preventive diplomacy and post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation⁷⁰ would serve as means to achieve progress on target 16.1 on the reduction of violence, as well as Goal 16 as a whole. Another example is the commitment to increase cooperation in the field of law research, legal services, training of law professionals and the mechanism of non-judicial settlement of disputes⁷¹, which could potentially help advance SDG target 16.3 on the promotion of the rule of law and equal access to justice for all.

Transnational threats such as illicit flows of arms, finance and drugs have a negative impact on the stability of many countries and, ultimately, on sustainable development. It is therefore encouraging to see that China and Africa have committed to cooperate in order to address these issues in the FOCAC Action Plan (2013–2015). They have, for instance, agreed to combat illegal trade and circulation of small arms and light weapons, and fight transnational organised crime.⁷² This provides opportunities for cooperation in order to achieve the SDG target 16.4 to ‘significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime’.

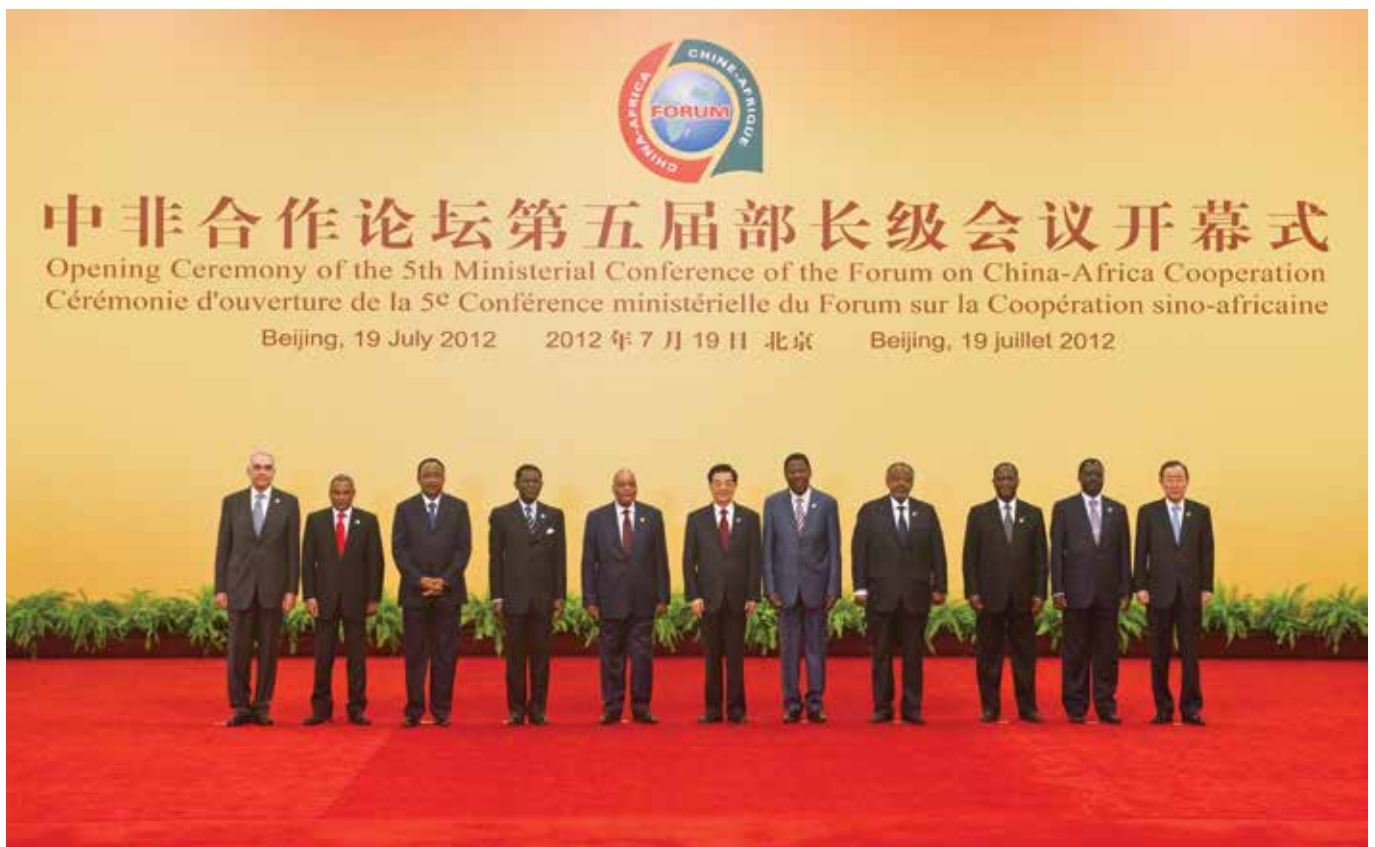
SDG target 16.7 seeks to ‘ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels’, which can be linked to the FOCAC Action Plan (2013–2015) commitment to support African countries in ‘strengthening democracy and good governance’.⁷³ Global governance structures have also come under scrutiny in the discussions that have arisen around this target. In particular UNSC reform has been raised as an important issue and while not a deal-breaker in the compromise that

has been reached, the composition and rules within the UNSC will still form an important element of the global negotiating process and will require further attention. Discussions around this could form part of the FOCAC agenda. Meanwhile, target 16.10 includes a focus on fundamental freedoms while the Action Plan calls for ‘strengthened dialogue and exchanges in the area of human rights and reaffirmed respect for the principle of universality of human rights’⁷⁴.

Nonetheless, there are certain SDG target areas that are not represented in the current FOCAC Action Plan, such as those which seek to ‘substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all its form’ and ‘end all forms of violence against women and girls’.⁷⁵ Furthermore, while the FOCAC Action Plan (2013–2015) has a strong focus on economic growth, addressing inequality and the need for inclusive growth and development are not explicitly addressed. The Sixth FOCAC could present an opportunity to address these gaps to ensure that China-Africa cooperation reflects the wider 2030 agenda.

Indeed, a more holistic vision of promoting sustainable peace and preventing conflict is reflected in the SDGs. The current FOCAC Action Plan focuses largely on hard security or diplomatic responses to existing conflicts in Africa, such as the deployment of peacekeepers or the use of mediation.⁷⁶ These tools will remain crucial in reducing violence and promoting Goal 16 as a whole. Nonetheless, the next FOCAC Action Plan could try to articulate a more holistic vision of peace which takes a preventive and developmental approach to addressing the root causes of conflict in Africa. This would include not only a focus on the need for inclusive, representative and accountable politics, but a focus on economic development which reduces marginalisation and inequality.

“...the next FOCAC Action Plan could try to articulate a more holistic vision of peace which takes a preventative and developmental approach to addressing the root causes of conflict in Africa.”



FOCAC

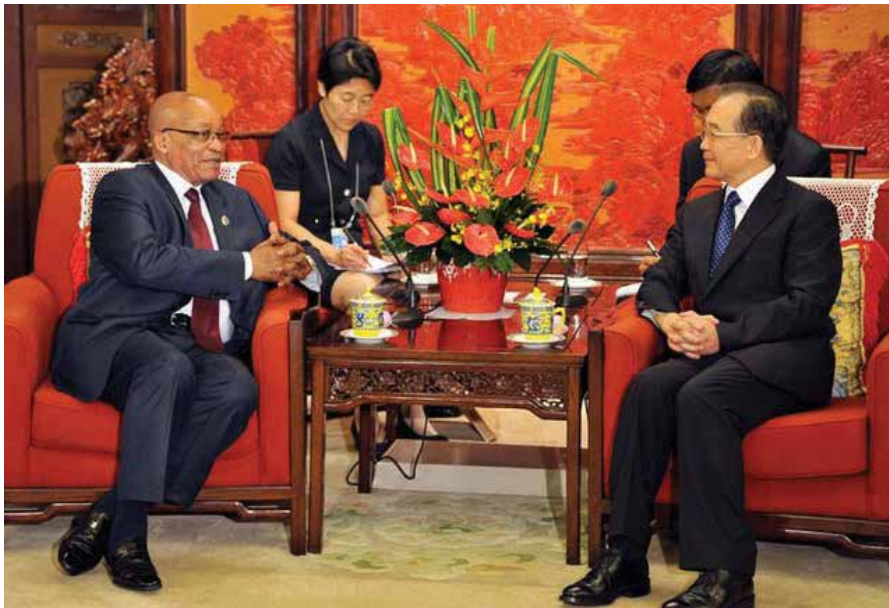
FOCAC was formally established in October 2000 as a joint initiative to strengthen cooperation between China and African states in achieving common development. Since then, FOCAC has become gradually institutionalised and a key mechanism for enhancing cooperation between China and African countries. The follow-up mechanism of the Forum operates at three levels: the Ministerial Conference held every three years, the Senior Officials meetings, which are held one year before the Ministerial conference and lastly, meetings of African diplomats in China with the Chinese Follow-up Committee held at least twice a year.ⁱ

The Sixth Forum on FOCAC – the Second Summit since the inception of FOCAC – will be held in Johannesburg, South Africa from 4–5 December 2015. It is expected that all Heads of State from African countries as well as the AU, regional and multilateral organisations will attend the Summit. It was originally intended to be a ministerial meeting but was upgraded to a Summit after an agreement between the Heads of State of China and South Africa. The Summit will result in a new Declaration and Plan of Action (2016–2018), which will guide China’s Africa policy for the next three years.ⁱⁱ

PHOTO: Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (far right) is pictured with leaders of the Fifth Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in July 2012.
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POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF THE SDGs FOR FOCAC AND BROADER COOPERATION



President Jacob Zuma holds bilateral talks with former Premier Wen Jiabao at his residence Zhongnanhai in China. President Zuma was in China attending the Fifth Ministerial Conference on FOCAC in July 2012. © GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA

1. China’s existing FOCAC commitments to African peace and security demonstrate that efforts to promote peace through the SDGs need not be contentious.
2. The large number of linkages between peace-related targets in the SDGs and the current FOCAC Action Plan (2013–2015) suggest that, while distinct international processes, synergies do exist between their respective objectives. This demonstrates that there is room for specific commitments in the next FOCAC Action Plan that are linked to Goal 16 and other peace-related targets in the SDGs.
3. FOCAC Action Plans lay out a set of action-orientated commitments. They can be used to help deliver on the SDGs, as an implementation mechanism of South-South Cooperation. Given that the SDGs are focused on outcomes, cooperation mechanisms such as the FOCAC can help deliver implementation through a focus on tangible actions to meet these outcomes.
4. The next FOCAC Action Plan could address gaps between the SDGs and the current Action Plan. Specifically, a focus on violence against women and corruption in the next Action Plan would increase coherence between efforts to promote peace in FOCAC and the SDGs.
5. More broadly, the SDGs will allow for a developmental approach to addressing conflict given that efforts to address issues such as inequality or unequal and exclusive economic growth are highlighted across the document. China and Africa could draw from this approach for the articulation of a more holistic and preventive approach to promoting peace in the next FOCAC agreement.
6. Tangible cooperation on peace under the next FOCAC can now be reported on as a contribution to the SDGs at international level. Before, only specific aspects of China-Africa cooperation could be linked to the MDGs, but the SDGs will allow for China to consider wider aspects of its engagement with Africa – including on peace and security – as direct contributions to global development.
7. FOCAC provides a good opportunity to better understand the AU Agenda 2063, to find ways of aligning the longer term developmental goals of China and Africa, and to explore how a FOCAC Action plan could contribute to these long term goals, using the SDGs as a stepping stone.
8. This report has focused only on the peace aspects of the current SDGs – there are likely many other linkages related to sustainable development and poverty reduction which should be further explored.
9. Efforts to create a more rules-based and equitable world order may prove useful in addressing systemic and global drivers of insecurity and conflict. In this regard, the FOCAC itself and South-South Cooperation can, with the right leadership and vision, help create an international environment conducive to building more peaceful and inclusive societies.

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Sudanese people take part in ‘Citizen Hearings’ in Blue Nile State, part of a process of popular consultations where residents can express whether the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) has met their expectations. © UN PHOTO/TIM MCKULKA



The Southern African Liaison Office (SALO) is a South African-based civil society organization which contributes to peace and security through facilitating dialogue and building consensus between national, regional and international actors. Focused predominantly on Southern Africa SALO is now increasingly being consulted on the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and across the Middle East and North Africa. SALO’s approach to building international consensus includes creating ‘safe spaces’ for formal and informal dialogues among and between state and non-state actors, informing key policy makers, and generating in-depth research and analysis.



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