

Africa Briefs

Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Met in Dakar

The highly anticipated Eighth Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), a hybrid virtual and in-person event, took place in Dakar, Senegal, Nov. 29-30. Fifty-three of Africa's 54 countries were represented, of which Eritrea and Guinea-Bissau are the latest additions. FOCAC, while older than China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), supports the implementation of the BRI.

In his keynote speech, China President Xi Jinping, speaking live via video link, noted that this was the 65th year of Chinese engagement on the continent, as well as the 50th anniversary of the restoration of China's seat at the United Nations, for which the President acknowledged the support of African countries. "China will never forget the profound friendship of African countries," Xi said, adding that, "China will work together with African friends to promote and carry forward the spirit of China-Africa friendship and cooperation from generation to generation."

President Xi announced proposals to guide relations in the next three years, with primary emphasis on defeating COVID-19, towards which goal China will be producing one billion vaccine doses, 60% of which will be donated. The second focus is on deepening practical cooperation and shared efforts for poverty elimination. China proposes that "green lanes" be created to increase African food production, with an eye toward increasing Africa's export capabilities. Finally, China proposes that bilateral exchange

programs be increased, especially for students and instructors.

EIR will feature a review of the conference in next week's issue.

Blinken To Africa: Deal With U.S. Private Firms, Not China

U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken made a whirlwind tour of three African nations Nov. 14-17, from Kenya to Nigeria to Senegal, a trip timed to bring him to Dakar on Nov. 17, one week before the most anticipated development event for Africa: the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) conference in Dakar.

While fooling no one as to what country he was targeting, Blinken said in Nigeria that infrastructure deals with "other nations" can be "opaque, coercive, and burden countries with unmanageable debt, are environmentally destructive and don't always benefit the people who actually live there. We will do things differently."

In June, Senegal had shocked western governments by announcing the move of its entire administrative data technology base to a network designed and built by the Chinese company Huawei. The system is designed so that all data will be stored *within the country*.

Ahead of FOCAC 2021: Intra-African Trade Fair Nets \$36 Billion in Deals

The Intra-African Trade Fair (IATF)—sponsored by Afreximbank in collaboration with the African Union and the African Continental Free Trade

Area—was held in Durban, South Africa over seven days, Nov 15-21. Delivering closing remarks Nov. 21, managing director of the Intra-African Trade Initiative at Afreximbank, Kanayo Awani, said the event exceeded all expectations. The IATF had 11,828 attendees, with another 27,000 attending virtually, Awani said, and a total of 1,161 exhibitors, against a target of 1,100.

"Fifty-nine countries participated in the exhibition stands," Awani said, "46 were countries from Africa and 13 were outside the continent... the trade fair had resulted in \$36 billion worth of trade deals," she said.

Former president of Nigeria and chairperson of the IATF Advisory Council, Olusegun Obasanjo, said what had been achieved at the fair was impressive because it had a lot of challenges. "To say that my heart is full of joy would be an understatement... It is impressive that we had such a display of African ingenuity and our readiness to collaborate and work together. It is impressive that so many deals were closed over the past seven days," he said.

Life Expectancy Falls in South Africa, In Other Countries It Dropped More

The just published Rapid Mortality Surveillance Report for 2019-2020 of the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) [reveals](#) that South Africans lost "only" 0.6 years of life expectancy in 2020, with an even bigger loss expected in 2021. The report says the drop is mild compared to other countries with significant COVID rates.

In South Africa, females lost a full

year in 2020, dropping to 67.2 years, while males lost 0.2 years, dropping to 62.2 years. The figures would have been worse without a surprising drop in *child mortality*, where deaths in the first five years of life went down almost 25% in 2020. Until the onset of COVID and the related lockdowns, life expectancy in South Africa had been slowly rising for ten years.

Pointing to the need for a global health approach to defeat the pandemic, Dr. Glenda Gray, SAMRC President and CEO said, “For the country to get back on track with efforts to improve health and extend life expectancy, there needs to be a concerted effort to ensure that our health programmes and services are restored to pre-pandemic levels and COVID-19 vaccination of vulnerable people, such as people aged 60 and older, needs to be prioritized.”

China Counters Claim That It Will Use Debt To Confiscate National Assets

A scurrilous article, circulating in Uganda media Nov. 25, attempted to portray China as determined to seize assets of delinquent debtors. It purported to document attempts by unnamed Ugandan officials to change “unfavorable provisions” in loan agreements concerning Entebbe International Airport. Appearing just days before the FOCAC conference, the article, “Uganda to Surrender Entebbe International Airport over Chinese Loan,” constructed an implicit risk to all Belt and Road countries.

The article drew immediate denunciations from Chinese Ambassador to Uganda Zhang Lizhong and the Ugandan Civil Aviation Authority spokesman, Vianney Luggya. Zhang said in a tweet: “The claim that ‘China is to confiscate the Entebbe Airport’ is a fiction. It is eye-catching but simply false and

toxic. China should receive more flow-ers instead of unfounded accusations, thanks to the mutual benefit cooperation between China and Uganda.” Luggya tweeted: “I wish to make it categorically clear that the allegation that Entebbe Airport has been given away for cash is false. @GovUganda can’t give away such a national asset. We have said it before and repeat that it has not happened. There isn’t an ounce of truth in it.”

Nigeria Caves In to IMF, Drops Fuel Subsidies, Sparking Popular Revolt

Caught between the pincers of the Green Reset and the pandemic collapse, Nigeria announced Nov. 23 that it would eliminate the national fuel subsidy in February and replace it with a monthly transportation grant of 5,000 naira (about \$12, enough for 16 liters) for lower-income families and individuals. This exact procedure had been spelled out on November 20 by the IMF, which said in a statement: “The complete removal of regressive fuel and electricity subsidies is a near-term priority,” adding that, “well-targeted social assistance will be needed to cushion any negative impacts on the poor, particularly in light of still elevated inflation.”

The change has not been well received. The Nigeria Labour Congress President, Ayuba Wabba, called the plan “comical” and said that Nigerians “refuse to take the bait.” Pointing directly to the IMF, Wabba said, “What we are hearing is the conversation of the Federal government with neo-liberal international monetary institutions.” Wabba also pointed to the “hyperinflationary effect” of doubling the cost of fuel, and said the dislocation of employment would only worsen the “insecurity crisis” (a reference to the jihadist terror threat) by putting people out of work.

The National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) has gone further, threatening a national strike should the subsidy be removed. “Nigerians are really suffering,” said NANS president, Sunday Asefon. “We are in dire socio-economic straits,” further deploring the cave-in to “neo-liberal and imperial economists.” As a result, he said, the NANS, “shall ensure that the entire country is shut down and paralyzed should the Federal Government proceed with its insensitive plan of deregulation ... We have had enough.”

Kenya To Enter Space Era by Establishing Domestic Launch Pad

Kenya has announced the selection of northern Marsabit County as its optimal location for a future spaceport—a launch pad and support center. Kenya straddles the equator, and an equatorial location is an advantage for space launches.

Speaking Nov. 22, Kenya Space Agency Director General Col. Hillary Kipkosgey said, “The development of highly innovative industries such as this provides current and future employment opportunities in many sectors, and the potential for growth in supporting industries. Development of such a spaceport would also foster research, innovation and growth of knowledge within this country, rippling out to Kenya taking the lead globally as a significant player in the space sector.”

Strategically located on Kenya’s northern development corridor—referred to as LAPSET, or Lamu Port, South Sudan and Ethiopia Transport Corridor—the announcement will give impetus to efforts to develop the entire region. The Lamu Port opened its first of a planned 32 berths in May of this year, but so far, has only highway transportation to support it.