

China pledges support for Africa despite economic slowdown

By [Michael Appel](#)

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China's Ambassador to South Africa, Zhong Jianhua, has confirmed China will not reduce its investment in Africa, and is even considering expanding aid to the continent during the global recession.

"At present, almost all the countries of Africa including China are facing a financial storm. It is a challenge but also a test for us.

"China must and will stand by its friends and its African brothers during this financial storm," the ambassador said, at the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) where the book, *The Forum on China-Africa cooperation: A Strategic Opportunity*, was launched on Tuesday.

The Forum on China-Africa cooperation

Jianhua said the launch of the book, detailing the history, effectiveness and opportunities presented by the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), comes at a very important time as China prepares to meet African leaders from across the continent for the fourth FOCAC in Egypt in November 2009.

The book is a wealth of knowledge on the history of relations, both economic and political between China and the African continent and will serve as a lasting testament to the cordial and robust relations that exist in Sino-Africa relations.

The ambassador highlighted that the Chinese government is confident that working together both Africa and China and overcome the difficulties presented by the global economic recession.

Reduced tariffs and increased investment

Last month, Jianhua said, China's foreign minister held very successful talks with South African President Kgalema Motlanthe and Foreign Minister Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma.

Testament to China's efforts to reassure Africa of its commitment to the continent during the economic slowdown is Chinese President Hu Jintao's visit to four African countries at the moment, the ambassador said.

"China will continue with its promise to increase aid, reduce trading tariffs and increase investment on the African continent," the ambassador said.

Studying perceptions

Co-author of the book and University of Witwatersrand Professor Garth Shelton said the main focus of the book is to examine Africa's perception of China's involvement and activities on the continent.

There are a lot of foreign views on Sino-African relations, but Africa's perceptions have never really been explored, Prof Shelton explained.

“We ourselves need to investigate these perceptions Africa has on China.

“If you had to look at the speeches made by African leaders they are all very positive about China, and African leaders actually welcome China with an enormous positive energy,” Prof Shelton said.

Key pointers

The professor highlighted that certain key points his book focussed on included Africa as part of China's foreign policy; China's peaceful rise in Africa promoting economic development as it was key to commerce; and the fact that China seeks peace and stability in Africa.

Africa needs to take advantage of these notions practiced by China's foreign policy and should not question the motives continually.

Much of the positive work the Chinese government has done on the African continent like the building of schools, roads, railway lines, hospitals and clinics is often ignored by western media, the professor highlighted, adding China is only reported on when they are involved in an oil deal with an African country.

China is the best in the world at poverty alleviation lifting some 150 million people out of poverty, Prof Shelton said.

“If there is one thing Africa can learn from the Chinese, how to alleviate poverty should be the continents biggest priority,” Prof Shelton said.

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