

Keynote speech

By

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On

***The Occasion of the Inaugural of Meeting
of China-Africa Entrepreneurs Summit***

AddisAbaba

April 21, 2026

- Excellency Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, Chairperson of the AU Commission,
- Ambassador Jiang Feng, Head of Mission of the People's Republic of China to the African Union,
- Mr. Song Shangzhe from the Ministry of Commerce of the Republic of China,
- Distinguished Government Officials;
- Distinguished Members of the Chinese Delegation; Commissioners and Representatives of the African Union, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
- Leaders and Representatives of Chinese and African Entrepreneurs,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my distinct pleasure to address you today on a subject that resonates deeply with the aspirations of Africa: entrepreneurship and jobs. Our dialogue is even more relevant as we dedicate **2026** the year of “China-Africa People-to-People Exchange.”

When we launched the China-Africa People-to People Exchange Initiative, in January this year, I emphasized that a relationship defined by dignity and mutual respect is the only foundation for sustaining a meaningful and durable friendship. It has now become self-evident that in the realm of global economics, such foundation can best be translated into **transformative trade and investment**. This is the very ideal that Africa has continuously been demanding; a relationship that perceives partnership

not as an instrument of extraction, but as a catalyst for a "joint community with a shared future."

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The theme of this Inaugural Summit, “Deepening Practical China-Africa Cooperation and Embarking on a New Journey for Development,” is timely and relevant. We met at a time when geo-economic uncertainty characterized by unrestrained competition for strategic minerals is driven by Unbridled Self-interest, sadly disregarding Africa’s sustainable future; and our youth who should have positioned themselves at the center of the global economy. Within this reality, China and Africa are showcasing an exemplary commitment to rejuvenate such strategic imperatives.

Africa provides plentiful (abundant) opportunities for entrepreneurship in trade, investment and innovation. With the operationalization of the **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)**, and expansion of digital ecosystem; Africa is not a future promise; it is a present reality where business flourishes. Therefore, initiatives such as this one would further help us move beyond the traditional government-to-government partnership model toward a multi-layered cooperation where the entrepreneur, the innovator and the private sector are the primary drivers of

development.

Distinguished guests;

Let me seize this opportunity to underscore three points that I believe may help spur your discussions and deliberations;

The first one is that entrepreneurship in Africa must find its strong foundation on agro-industry and the empowerment of youth. From Algeria to Angola, and from Equatorial Guinea to Ethiopia, there is an immense opportunity to make every youth an entrepreneur in the agro-industrial chain. With China's decision to grant zero-tariff market access to African countries starting in May 2026, entrepreneurs would have the opportunity to enter the Chinese market without duties, accelerating Africa's export-led growth.

This is not only for China and Africa; this would immensely contribute the wider world when global trade faces severe supply chain challenges.

The second one is the need to make use of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement as the center of our joint strategy to advance joint business. For Chinese investors, establishing operations across the African continent means gaining a strategic foothold in the world's largest single market of 1.4 billion people. Ethiopia has already commenced trading under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) system and is implementing the investment protocol to unlock

manufacturing and logistics opportunities.

In Ethiopia, Chinese enterprises account for almost 60% of foreign direct investment(?). Ethiopia's reform agenda has placed private sector development at the heart of our economic transformation, ensuring a reliable, favorable and institutionally stable environment.

The third one is the need to look beyond simple technology transfer, that is the necessity of the establishment of joint Research and Development centers to best tap the Chinese business skill and expertise. These centers would serve as dedicated ecosystem where Chinese expertise meets with Africa's creativity and resourcefulness in Artificial Intelligence, green energy and mobility as well as digital economy. This way, we can develop technologies specifically designed for the African context.

We must, therefore, bridge the digital divide to ensure that an African entrepreneur in a rural village can access the global marketplace as easily as a trader in Shanghai.

Before I conclude, I would like seize this moment to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Chinese investors who have shown a true commitment to our shared vision, particularly those who took an important step for signing agreements during the recent Invest in Ethiopia Forum. This level of engagement is exactly what is required to turn our strategic frameworks into lived realities. I am happy to note that this is the case in many African Countries.

Let this summit be the platform from which we launch a new generation of entrepreneurs where Africa and China walk together toward a future of innovation and shared prosperity.

I wish you all productive deliberations and the blessing of the lasting partnership.

I thank you!