

# Celebrating China's achievements

*Independent Media's foreign editor, Shannon Ebrahim, interviews Chinese Ambassador to SA, Chen Xiaodong*

## COMMENT



CHEN XIAODONG

**Q: WE HAVE noted that many leaders from the political parties and the government in South Africa attended the celebrations of the centenary of the founding of the CPC (Chinese Communist Party) held by the Chinese Embassy in South Africa.**

Many of them fondly recalled and thanked the CPC for its support to South Africa's national liberation movement. In the mid-20th century, the CPC gave strong support to Africa and other developing countries in their struggle for national liberation and independence.

**What do you think is the significance of this special friendship to the future development of China-Africa relations?**

**A:** The CPC strives for the well-being of the Chinese people and human progress. The Chinese and African peoples have supported and co-operated with each other in our respective endeavours to fight against colonialism and imperialism to win independence and liberation, and in pursuit of development and national renewal.

A fraternal bond of a shared future has been forged between us.

China cannot develop in isolation from the rest of the world or Africa. The rest of the world, including Africa, also needs China to seek prosperity and stability.

We are bound not only by profound traditional friendship and closely linked interests, but also by the dreams we all have.

As put by state councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi at a recent forum on "China and the UN: co-operation in 50 Years and beyond", chairman Mao Zedong once said, it was our fellow developing countries that "carried" the People's Republic of China into the UN. The word "carry" aptly captures the profound friendship between China and other developing countries.

Chinese people will never forget the touching scene at the UN general assembly where African delegates sang and danced in celebration of China's restoration of its lawful seat in the UN. Chinese people will never forget our African brothers' valuable and firm support for China.

Whether in the past, present or in the future, China always stands together with developing countries, upholds win-win co-operation for common development and provides all-round support for Africa's economic and social development.

Since the 18th CPC National Congress, general secretary Xi Jinping has attached great importance to relations with Africa.

He proposed that relations with Africa must be developed under the principle of honouring sincerity, real results, amity and good faith and that of pursuing the greater good and shared interests among countries.

President Xi Jinping has devoted himself to developing relations with Africa.

In 2013, he chose Africa as part of his first trip abroad after taking office. So far, he has visited Africa four times, including three state visits to South Africa.

In 2015 and 2018, our two presidents co-chaired two historic Focac (Forum on China-Africa Co-operation) summits held in Joburg and Beijing.

The 10 co-operation plans and eight major initiatives, each providing \$60 billion in financial support, have helped Africa achieve long-term

stability and sustainable development. At the end of January, over 85% of the eight major initiatives have been implemented.

Since Covid-19 started, general secretary Xi Jinping has cared about Africa and South Africa. President Xi Jinping and President Ramaphosa jointly initiated the China-Africa Extraordinary summit on solidarity against Covid-19. He also spoke many times with various African leaders.

China has actively provided emergency Covid-19 response supplies and sent medical teams to Africa. China has actively participated in the G20 debt service suspension initiative.

We have cancelled the interest-free loans due to mature by the end of 2020 for 15 African countries within the framework of Focac. In the next three years, China will provide another \$3bn (about R43bn), based on the provided \$2bn, of international assistance to help developing countries fight the virus and restore economic and social development.

China has now entered a new development stage, which brings new opportunities. China stands ready to

China has paid a huge price and made a huge sacrifice to curb the spread of the virus

take advantage of this year's new Focac meeting to promote the connection between China's 14th five-year plan and the long-range goals for 2035 on the one hand, and the AU's Agenda 2063 and the development strategies of various African countries on the other.

China is ready to embrace technology, innovation and green development to lead post-Covid economic recovery and seek high-quality Belt and Road co-operation.

China is also ready to move forward co-operation in infrastructure, people's well-being, health, human resource training, green energy, and 5G, so as to help Africa advance industrialisation and modernisation, and usher in the fourth industrial revolution.

**Q: The ANC and SACP, as members of the alliance, have maintained friendly relations with the CPC. What does this mean for the development of relations between South Africa and China in your view?**

China-South Africa relations started from party-to-party exchanges. The strong friendship, close exchanges between and important guidance provided by the leaders of the CPC, the ANC and the SACP have boosted the sustained development of bilateral relations.

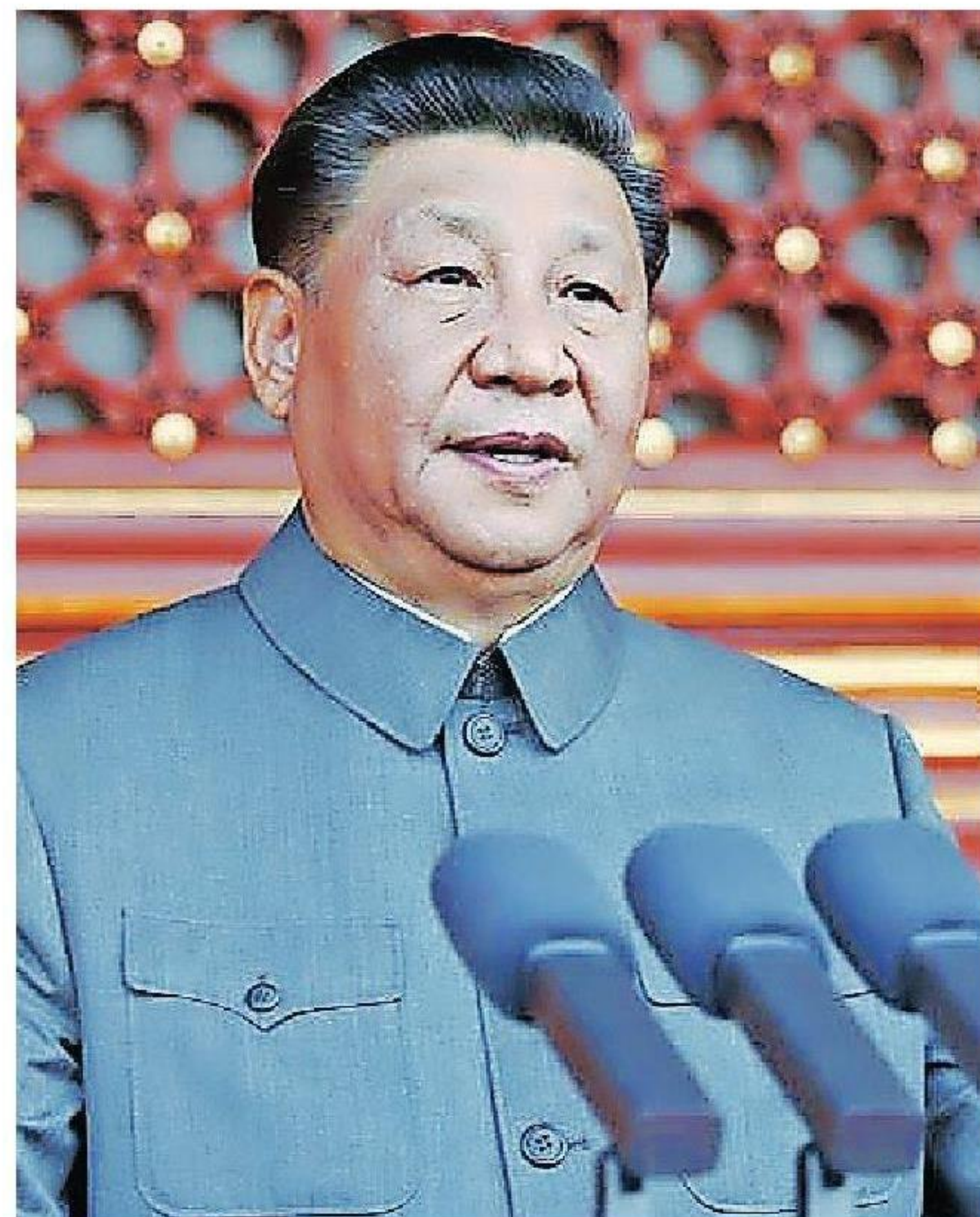
The CPC and the ANC are friendly parties. Besides, the CPC and the SACP are born in the same month of the same year. The parties of two countries are important progressive forces in the world and have forged a deep friendship since South Africa's struggle against apartheid.

Walter Sisulu, Yusuf Dadoo and other former leaders of the ANC and the SACP have visited China in the 1950s, and were received by chairman Mao Zedong and other former leaders of China. China has firmly supported the just struggle of the ANC and the SACP.

After the founding of the new South Africa, our party-to-party relations developed rapidly. The two sides have had close personnel exchanges and in-depth exchanges on governance.

We share broad common positions on opposing hegemony and power politics, opposing interference in internal affairs, safeguarding the common interests of developing countries, establishing a more reasonable international political and economic order and jointly building a community with a shared future for mankind.

The ANC's Top Six have all visited China. The ANC and the SACP have



CHINESE President and Communist Party of China general secretary Xi Jinping has devoted himself to developing relations with Africa. | Xinhua

sent many delegations to China for training sessions.

President Cyril Ramaphosa, general secretary Blade Nzimande and other top leaders of the two parties attach great importance to and are personally involved in exchanges with the CPC. In 2009, President Cyril Ramaphosa led the ANC's first national executive committee delegation to China.

General secretary Nzimande has visited China more than a dozen times.

On the 100th anniversary of the founding of the CPC, President Ramaphosa as president of the ANC and general secretary Nzimande sent congratulatory letters to the CPC.

President Ramaphosa, general secretary Nzimande and President Xi Jinping jointly attended the CPC and World Political Parties Summit held on July 6, which once again demonstrated the special friendship of comrades plus brothers between the political parties of the two countries.

Whether in South Africa's struggle for national liberation or in the development of the new South Africa, the CPC has always stood firmly with the South African people and progressive political parties such as the ANC and the SACP.

It can be said that the close party-to-party co-operation between the two sides has created good conditions for the establishment and development of the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries.

Under the stewardship of the leaders of the two parties and two countries, especially President Xi Jinping and President Cyril Ramaphosa, the China-South Africa comprehensive strategic partnership has been developing rapidly, bringing huge tangible benefits to the peoples of the two countries.

China-South Africa relations have become a model for China-Africa Relations, South-South co-operation, and the solidarity and co-operation among developing countries.

**Q: Currently the Covid-19 pandemic is still raging around the world. How has China managed to hold grand celebrations? It has been noticed that some countries are still using Covid-19 source-tracing to attack China. What is your opinion on this?**

Since Covid-19 hit China, the CPC and Chinese government have put the people and their lives front and centre. China carried out an unprecedented nationwide lockdown and the most comprehensive, strict and thorough prevention and control measures to quickly and effectively contain the spread of the virus in and beyond China.

China has paid a huge price and made a huge sacrifice to curb the spread of the virus, and achieved major strategic results in this nationwide battle against Covid-19 in only about three months.

On this basis, China co-ordinated efforts on both Covid response and socio-economic development, and quickly restored production and life. China has become the only major

economy in the world that achieved positive growth last year.

China's vaccination drive at home is accelerating, more than 1.26 billion doses have been delivered. China is confident enough to control the spread of the virus and protect every citizen.

While striving to shore up defence through immunity at home, China has also so far provided more than 480 million doses of vaccines to nearly 100 countries.

China has co-operated with many developing countries in rapidly promoting mass production of vaccines, and contributed to further building a global Great Wall of immunity.

The pandemic is indeed still raging, and the international community looks forward to strengthening co-operation in the fight against this virus.

However, some politicians and media in the US ignored the authoritative, formal, and scientific conclusions of the World Health Organization (WHO), frequently hyped up conspiracy theories about source-tracing, and even resorted to the intelligence community to replace scientists for research.

Source-tracing is a scientific issue which should be carried out by scientists worldwide, and should not be politicised arbitrarily. China took the lead in conducting source-tracing co-operation with WHO. China has twice invited WHO experts to China to carry out research, and jointly formulated the Chinese part of the global new Covid-19 scientific co-operation plan.

On March 30, WHO officially released a China-WHO joint study report. The report established that a lab leak is extremely unlikely, and did not reach conclusions such as any large-scale transmission in Wuhan before December.

These conclusions follow the procedures of WHO by adopting science. They are scientific and authoritative. They should be recognized, respected, upheld and used as a basis for the next stage of source-tracing worldwide. China's open and transparent attitude on source-tracing has also been fully affirmed by international experts.

We must oppose stigmatising Covid-19 by associating it with certain countries or regions. For example although African countries are fighting hard against Aids, one can never say that HIV comes from Africa.

Professor Salim Abdool Karim, the then co-chair of the Covid-19 ministerial advisory committee, has made it clear that when we assign a geographical location to name a new Covid-19 variant, it will have a stigmatising effect.

In March 2021, Science published a letter co-authored by Professor Karim, other South African scholars and government officials, calling for accurate naming of various new Covid-19 variants, which was widely recognised by the science community.

The world is still suffering greatly from Covid-19 and South Africa is facing the impact of a third wave of infections.

On July 3, the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority announced that it has authorised emergency use access in South Africa with conditions for the CoronaVac Covid-19 vaccine manufactured by Sinovac Life Sciences Co of China.

The Chinese side welcomes this important development in China-South Africa co-operation on Covid-19 vaccines.

The Chinese Embassy in South Africa will actively follow through on the political commitment of President Xi Jinping on making Chinese Covid-19 vaccines a global public good.

The Chinese side will continue to fully assist and accommodate the South African side to see that Chinese vaccines are delivered to South Africa as quickly as possible, so as to help the South African people fight and eventually defeat the virus.

*This is part two of a two-part interview.*