

African Development Bank opens annual meetings in Shanghai

The African Development Bank (ADB) on Wednesday opened its annual board meetings in [Shanghai](#), which are widely seen as a move to deepen China-Africa cooperation. In his address to the opening ceremony, Chinese Premier [Wen Jiabao](#) said the current annual meetings would surely boost the ADB's growth, strengthen its role and increase its influence.

It is the first time the annual board meetings of the ADB are held in Asia, and the second time outside Africa.

While reviewing the traditional friendship between China and Africa, Wen said the Chinese government and people are committed to Africa's peace and development. Since China started to establish diplomatic relations with African countries in the 1950s, China has built more than 900 infrastructure and public projects in Africa, provided nearly 20,000 government scholarships to 50 African countries, and dispatched altogether 16,000 medical personnel to 47 African countries, he said.

China also extends zero-tariff treatment to the exports of some least developed African countries to China and offers greater market access to African products, Wen said. The Chinese government has canceled a total of 10.9 billion yuan of African debt to China, he said.

To enhance bilateral partnership, China announced further measures including more aid and wider market access to Africa, during the [Beijing](#) Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation held last November.

China will fully deliver on the commitments and is working with African countries to implement the measures, Wen said.

Wen also urged to explore new ways of cooperation and upgrade current cooperation to bring about mutual benefit.

Governments should provide more guidance for businesses, he said.

Wen called for better project evaluation and higher efficiency of investment and loans. China places great value on its cooperation with the ADB and sub-regional development organizations in Africa, he said.

The Chinese government is also ready to strengthen cooperation with other countries and international financial institutions including the ADB, Wen said.

On China's economy, the premier said the overall situation is good but it also faces "problems", citing growing imbalance in international payment, rapid accumulation of foreign exchange reserves, and excessive liquidity.

China will improve the mechanism of setting the Renminbi exchange rate and give greater scope to the role of the market and introduce greater interest rate flexibility, Wen said.

China will also expand the scope and ways of using foreign exchange reserves, Wen said. "We are fully confident and capable of resolving the problems and maintaining sustained, stable and sound growth of the financial sector," he said.

Themed "African and Asia: Partners in Development", the two-day meetings will focus on infrastructure development in Africa, regional integrity and poverty relief. Around 2,000 people attended the opening ceremony, including Rwandan President Paul Kagame, President of Cape Verde Pedro Pires, and President of Madagascar Marc Ravalomanana.

Zhou Xiaochuan, governor of the [People's Bank of China](#), the central bank, and Donald Kaberuka, president of African Development Bank, also attended the opening ceremony. "Since its inception, the African Development Bank has made a lot of achievements in poverty reduction, development and African integration," Zhou said.

"China has taken part in seven replenishments of the African Development Fund, and pledged a total of 364 million U.S. dollars as contribution, out of which 314 million U.S. dollars has been disbursed," he said.

"I'm confident that this annual meetings will become a fresh starting point for all parties to intensify cooperation and promote development in both Asia and Africa," Zhou said. "Africa is better poised for economic prosperity and better governance than it has been for decades," said Kaberuka, the ADB president, who forecast economic growth of Africa above 6.5 percent in 2007.

Kaberuka expected to consolidate progress and maintain a sustained and sustainable economic growth of Africa, which currently has "serious cause for concern" including lack of progress in part of the continent, vulnerable and low-based economy and relatively faster-growing population.

Founded in 1964, the ADB has 77 members from Africa, America, Europe and Asia. China became a member in 1985.

Source: Xinhua