
Chinese envoy briefs UN on China-Africa relations

Chinese Special Representative on African Affairs Liu Guijin briefed Monday diplomats and officials of the United Nations on China-Africa relations.

"China has a long and traditional relationship with Africa. China is not a newcomer. China has been engaged in Africa for at least five decades," Liu said at the briefing at the UN Headquarters in New York.

The briefing was co-organized by the UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and the Permanent Mission of China.

He pointed out that there are three basic outstanding characteristics in China's foreign relations with Africa.

"One is equality. China views African countries, big or small, as equal partners. We never try to impose our ideas, our ideologies and our social systems on African countries," the Chinese Representative said.

"Another distinguished characteristic is mutual benefit. When we have economic dealings, and when we have projects, we will respect the choice of the African people and the African governments. We don't serve our own interest. We serve the interests of the African governments and the Chinese government, the African people and the Chinese people," he said.

"The third is mutual respect. With regard to African issues, the Chinese government respects the opinion of relevant African countries, of the neighboring countries and of regional organizations," Liu said, adding that these are the three aspects of the Chinese foreign policy toward Africa.

On the China-Africa Cooperation Forum, he said the two sides launched the first ministerial conference meeting in Beijing in October 2000.

"That was really a milestone in our relations with the African continent, because before that our relations were basically on a bilateral basis," Liu claimed.

He said this forum has been serving as a very important platform from which to promote regular ties between China and Africa, particularly African countries with diplomatic relations with China.

On economic cooperation between the two sides, Liu said, "All cooperation between China and African countries in the oil and mineral sectors is transparent, mutually-beneficial, open, inclusive, and does not rule out other partners."

He said bilateral trade between China and Africa has been increasing steadily, adding that overall China-Africa trade was just 2 billion U.S. dollars at the end of 2000 while the number was close to 55 billion at the end of 2006.

However, the Chinese official pointed out that compared with the potential trade between the two sides, the trade volume is not big.

In the area of investment, more and more Chinese companies are now going to Africa to invest mainly in infrastructure as well as the mineral and energy sectors, Liu said.

"On this aspect, we are faced with some criticism basically from the media and NGOs mainly from the developed countries," he said, describing it as some kind of tendency to politicize the commercial dealing between the two sides.

"According to the calculations of international organizations, the total oil China imported from Africa in 2006 was only 8.7 percent of the total African oil exported to other countries," Liu said, adding, "The oil the United States imported from Africa was 33 percent, and European Countries 36 percent."

"That means China only buys a small proportion of African oil exports," the Chinese representative concluded.

Liu arrived at the United Nations after his visit to Washington, where he met with U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte, U.S. special envoy to Darfur Andrew Nations, and some U.S. Congressmen.

Source: Xinhua