ASSEN MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2022

COMMITTEE GUIDE

Economic and social council

Understanding the influence of China in the African continent

Content

Chairs

Quinten Out

Hello delegates. I hope you are all looking forward to the 2022 ASMUN conference. My name is Quinten and I have the honour of being your chair. I currently study at cs Vincent van Gogh Lariks and I am in VWO 6. ASMUN can be very fun, but it can also be intimidating, especially if I am your chair. I hope you will all show up so we can fill up the gossip box and create some questionable policies.

Rick Faber

My name is Rick Faber and I identify myself as the chair of this committee. After years of participating in MUN's, I am finally chairing one. In this conference I will be looking for every opportunity to give out fun punishments, or punishments. I am looking forward to this conference, but especially the sandwiches, they are amazing.

Writer

Honourable delegates,

Welcome to the Assen Model United Nations (ASMUN) 2022 conference! I'm Jasper Feitsma, part of the Inner circle of ASMUN 2022 and writer of this committee guide.

As the Inner Circle, we are honoured to welcome you to the fourth conference of ASMUN. We are looking forward to seeing you and hearing your ideas for solving crucial international problems.

Our generation is currently witnessing a world of unprecedented change and development, however, there is a need for improving and resolving many current world ideas. Therefore, I have chosen to write the committee guide of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) about China's influence in Africa.

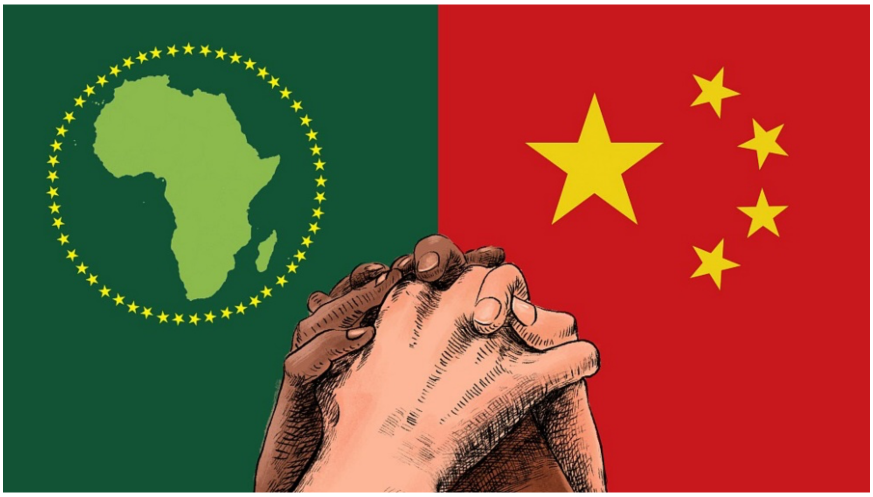
China's influence is growing and growing around the world, but particularly in the African continent. They owe this influence to investment and development projects, which carry significant benefits to the African population. However, it can also pose problems to current international relations. How should the United Nations manage these changes?

On a final note, during the fourth edition of ASMUN, you will be given an opportunity to discuss about present and future ideas, to learn, interact with new people and finally, share thoughts.

Sincerely,
Jasper Feitsma
Inner Circle ASMUN 2022
Treasurer

Countries on the committee

- The Republic of Angola
- The Republic of Armenia
- The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
- The Republic of France
- The Kingdom of Denmark
- The Republic of India
- The Islamic Republic of Pakistan
- The Republic of Sudan
- The Kingdom of Sweden
- Republic of Kazakhstan
- The Arabian Republic of Syria
- People's Republic of Bangladesh
- The Republic of Turkey
- The United States of America
- The Modern Republic of Yemen
- People's Republic of China



INTRODUCTION

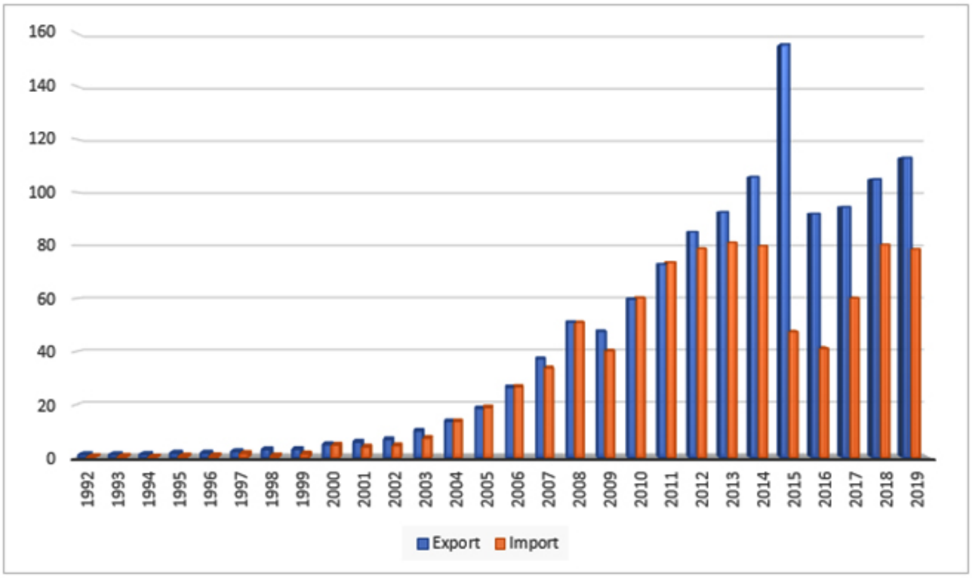
Dear delegates, welcome to the committee of the Economic and Social council.

As you may know, China's influence is currently growing and growing at a fast rate, especially in Africa. China's relations with the African continent date back to the 15th century. In the Ming Imperial Tomb in Beijing, there is a wall painting of a giraffe – it was the famous Chinese admiral and seafarer Zheng He who brought it to the court in Nanjing during several expeditions to the Arab world and the east coast of Africa between 1413 and 1419.

In modern times, official relations were established with South Africa after Sun Yat-Sen was elected as provisional president of the Young Republic of China in 1911. As the communist leadership consolidated its hold on power in the early 1950s, China launched a more active policy of establishing contacts in Africa. Under the shadow of the cold war, 29 leaders from political movements in Africa and Asia assembled in Bandung in 1955. They discussed peace, economic development, and decolonisation, and they agreed to increase cooperation between the peoples of the third world. Although China, at that time, was relatively underdeveloped, it provided extensive assistance to emerging African countries.

In 1989, the relations between China and African countries grew closer after the events of Tiananmen Square. On this square, students initiated demonstrations to push for democratic reforms in China. The Chinese government suppressed these demonstrations with excessive force, leading to a death toll of several thousands. Western countries did not condone these events and imposed sanctions on China. African countries, Angola, Burkina Faso, Egypt, and Namibia in particular, however, approved China's reaction to the demonstration. Consequently, China used official tours to visit African countries and started the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), to meet the challenge of globalization together.

Until the late 1970s, the People's Republic of China's economic relations with Africa were driven by ideological imperatives. Today, China's political leadership views economic relations with the continent as a means to achieve the country's development goals. Within a few decades, China has emerged as Africa's biggest bilateral trading partner and as one of the biggest investors in the continent.



In 2019, Chinese exports to African countries reached 113 billion dollars and imports from African countries amounted to 78 billion dollars. China's biggest export partners in Africa are South Africa and Nigeria, both accounting for 15% of total exports. Angola takes the lead with imports from China, accounting to 30% of total Chinese imports from Africa.

China is not only trading with Africa, but they also invest large sums of money too. In 2019, China invested 44 billion dollars in Africa, which may seem a lot, but is only 2% of total foreign investments. For example, the U.S., the top investor in Africa, invests 78 billion dollars yearly. The countries that receive the biggest share of investment from China are South Africa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, and Zambia, which are all rich in raw materials. 30% of investments is designated for infrastructure and construction, while 20% is channelled to mining and extraction of raw materials.

The fact that China is investing heavily in the African continent is not unusual. In 2013, China's leader Xi Jinping launched the Belt and Road Initiative, a foreign policy strategy meant to make China a leader in global affairs. This strategy is aimed at nearly 70 countries around the world and follows the routes of the former Silk Road. Until now, 46 African countries have signed up for the initiative and are largely positive of the effects it has had.

So, the African continent has been in the Chinese spotlight for the last decade. In what economic and political context can we place China’s interest for Africa and how does the rest of the world react to it? During this conference, it is your role to keep the development of Africa, stimulated by China, fair and beneficial for all participants. Good luck.

HISTORY OF ECOSOC

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) was established as one of the six main or principal organs of the United Nations (UN). ECOSOC is considered to be the biggest and most complex subsidiary body of the United Nations. In short, the function of ECOSOC can be described as responsible for directing and coordinating the economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian activities carried out by the United Nations. For example, ECOSOC has the main responsibility within the United Nations to follow up on all major past international conferences linked to the sustainable development goals. ECOSOC was one of the biggest players during the examination of the Millennium Development Goals and during the implementation of the new sustainable development goals for 2030.

First of all, it's important to know that ECOSOC does not only consist of delegations of states, because NGOs participate in their work too: they have a consultative status. In 1965 and 1974, the number of members of ECOSOC was changed after an amendment. Where there used to be 18 states/members, there are now 54 members. ECOSOC membership is based on geographic representation, which means that every geographical area (such as continents) has a fixed number of members. For ECOSOC applies that Africa has the highest number of members, which is 14. Western Europe and North America have one seat less, so 13 seats. 11 seats are allocated to Asia, where Latin America and Caribbean states have a total of 10 seats together. The last 6 members are from East European states. Every three years, there are elections (which take place at the General Assembly), to choose new member states for ECOSOC.

The elections for presidency, however, are held annually and the president gets chosen from one of the countries with relatively less power. The current president is Ms. Inga Rhonda King, a delegate of Saint

Vincent and the Grenadines. A decision can only be taken if there is a simple majority (more than 50% vote in favour).

In 2005, during the ECOSOC World Summit, the decision was taken to organise meetings every month, where they discuss the progress made on the internationally agreed development goals. In 2013, the most far-reaching reform of the Economic and Social Council since 1991 was taken by the General Assembly: the adoption of resolution 68/1. Resolution 68/1 makes sure that ECOSOC is in a leading position when identifying emerging challenges and promoting reflection, debate, and innovative thinking on development, as well as in achieving a balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development. In addition, it makes it possible for ECOSOC to convene a special meeting at another UN location to address urgent developments.

Problem

As China is trading with and investing in African countries, their influence on them is growing. Some countries find this problematic, as Africa will play a larger role in world economics and politics in the future. Others questions the motivations of China.

Currently, we can identify three goals stated by China concerning economic relations with Africa. Firstly, China wants access to the continent's natural resources. Secondly, China is seeking export markets for Chinese manufactured goods. Thirdly, China is pursuing economic and political stability.

China does not discriminate between regions when trading, as it does business with almost all African countries. However, some countries, rich in raw materials, receive more political attention to keep economic ties smooth. One might think that increased Chinese trade with Africa means lower trade with the US and Europe, but the opposite is true: when Chinese trade increases, trade with Western countries increases too. One study even found that African employment and education opportunities rose because of Chinese direct investments.

African countries enjoy a few advantages that Chinese trade has brought about. Economic growth has risen extensively since the 1990s, Africa has gained a trade partner and is therefore less dependent on the US and Europe. African citizens benefit too: they are provided with cheaper and a larger range of consumer goods, as well as more job opportunities. However, there are disadvantages too. If Chinese demand for raw material increases too steeply, it might trigger an increase in world market prices, which could harm African nations that import raw materials. Moreover, growing Chinese imports in Africa could not only displace local workers and enterprises, but also prevent the emergence of an African manufacturing sector.

Another activity of China in the African continent that is often discussed is lending. Chinese banks, which are state-owned and therefore controlled by the Chinese government, have lent record amounts to African governments. This can be seen as a positive development, as this money has financed large-scale investments in infrastructure and international capital markets and banks. However, it has also led to the build-up of debt-service burdens. The terms and conditions of the lending contracts are often kept confidential by the Chinese government, which means other parties cannot monitor or regulate the interest rates or collateral used. When debtor countries run into financial problems, the Chinese government can seize strategic assets in those countries. Additionally, many countries criticize China for their investments and trading projects, as they do not demand much in terms of governance reforms and anti-corruption measures.

China’s activities in the African continent even affects the power-dynamics in the United Nations. As China is lobbying for political support among African states, they promote an anti-Western and pro-Global South narrative. The African continent, comprising 54 countries, has a relatively large vote in the United Nations and could therefore increase Chinese influence.

Lastly, what do Africans think of China’s role in Africa? A study found that 63% of citizens generally had positive feelings towards China’s assistance. They mostly praised the infrastructure, development, and investment projects. Chinese loans are also supported, even though many Africans do think their countries have borrowed too much, but the U.S. is mostly preferred as a development model. A little less than half of African citizens are not even aware of Chinese financial assistance and loans. Around 50% of African citizens think China has an overall positive impact on their country.

Bloc positions

Western countries
Most Western countries are concerned about the growing level of influence China has in the African continent. Additionally, they are worried about the sympathies of African countries in the United Nations and how it might affect decision-making in the future. With their investments and loans, China's role on the international stage and their influence in international affairs increases, which strengthens the strategic depth of China's game with the U.S. The U.S. is trying to prevent China from taking over its role as political and economic leader, which it has been for decades. Europe is rattled too, as European countries used to be a large colonial power in Africa.

Signs are emerging that Western countries and their allies, such as Japan and India, are aiming to counter the economic and diplomatic initiatives from China. For example, organisations like the European Investment Bank have launched 'Ellalink', which might pose an alternative to the BRI.

Africa
As said, African governments and citizens are mostly positive about China's activities in the continent. Undoubtedly, China's investments carry many advantages to a previously impoverished region, where corrupt governments were widespread, and conflict was raging. China is, with regards to their investments and loans, taking risks that no developed country would take and China could therefore be Africa's only road to progress. However, China might care more about their own economic and political gains, which could lead to problems in the future.

Countries involved in the BRI
The Chinese Belt and Road Initiative is spread around the world and many countries have made arrangements with China. For instance, China has already invested billions of dollars in several South Asian countries, like Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, to improve their basic infrastructure. These investments have implications for both China's trading opportunities as well as its military influence. It is proposed that countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative will lean towards a China-positive foreign policy, but it is unclear to what extent.

Further reading

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- https://www.un.org/en/
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Economic_and_Social_Council
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