

# CHINA–AFRICA RELATIONS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

*China's rapid emergence as an economic world power has aroused both expectations and concerns in Africa. To unpack these responses, a major colloquium was held at the University of Cape Town on 21–22 May 2015. AU Chair Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma was the keynote speaker. The opening ceremony was addressed by Tian Xuejun, China's ambassador to South Africa, and Dr Max Price, vice-chancellor of UCT. On the platform were former South African President Hon. Kgalema Motlanthe, and Prof. Ben Turok, who introduced Dr Dlamini-Zuma. Deputy Vice-Chancellor Prof. Francis Petersen presided.*

*The audience that filled Jameson Hall for the opening session heard frank and robust discussion of China–Africa relations. It is clear that China, as the largest trading partner and with substantial investment in many countries, has become a major factor in Africa's development. Its involvement is based on a principle of non-interference in internal affairs, irrespective of the nature of the domestic regime.*

*In subsequent sessions on multilateral relations, industrialisation, trade and*



**Agenda 2063 is grounded in African experience and realities, while learning from other parts of the world – Asia and China in particular – that it is possible to effect transformation in one generation.**

*investment, the BRICS Bank, agriculture and other topics, it became ever clearer that China takes Africa seriously. Senior officials and academics from China spoke and answered questions about the role of Chinese companies operating in*

*Africa, including distortions in labour practices, price distortions and, above all, whether China is primarily interested in mineral extraction. Assurances were given that economic relations are meant to go much further in the interests of both Africa's economic advance and China's needs.*

*Speakers from Africa included Dr Said Adejumobi, representing the head of the UN Economic Commission for Africa, Prof. Adebayo Olukoshi, head of the UN African Institute for Economic Development, Dr Yao Graham, head of the Ghana-based Third World Network-Africa, Prof. Muna Ndulo of Cornell University Law School, and economist Prof. Thandika Mkandawire.*

*This China–Africa Colloquium was hosted by the Confucius Institute, the Centre for African Studies, both of UCT, and the Institute for African Alternatives (IFAA). Attendees said it was a novel meeting that generated mutual understanding and goodwill between African and Chinese participants. It is hoped that the papers and presentations will be published as a book.*

**– Ben Turok**



The China-Africa Colloquium held at the University of Cape Town in May 2015. China's ambassador, Tian Xuejun, is pictured left.