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China and Africa Perspectives of development cooperation/ the role of civil society and churches

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in cooperation with:

China with Africa – Africa with China: Respectful Cooperation in Business, Faith, Environnement, Politics

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1. Personal background of China and Africa Relations

The connection between China and Africa is rooted in my memory since childhood. My uncle Dr. Hans Meister was a medical doctor. He worked as Head of the Basel Mission hospital in Kanton/Guangzhou in South China 1933-1950, when all foreigners had to leave the country under Mao. He then continued to serve the Basel Mission (now mission 21) in Ghana/ West Africa as Head of the mission hospital in Agogo until his retirement. As a child, I looked at the Chinese children's book and children's games and later heard his stories and experiences from Ghana. Not knowing as child, how distant China and Africa geographically are, the emotional basis for the bridge was given by my uncle and my aunt. Their three daughters, all born in China, grew partly up in Africa and one served as teacher in Africa.

Later, as Director of the development organization 'Bread for all' (The Swiss 'Bread for the World') and as ethicist, I started a program to set up and support ethics centers in order to strengthen value-driven development and to better equip church leaders with ethical instruments for church development and advocacy. The first program 2002-2004 included a program in Nairobi and Shanghai. It was for me so obvious to support both. Out of these 'test programs', I then invited in 2004 25 ecumenical ethics experts for a one week intense work at the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey/ Switzerland. I invited handpicked experts from all continents, including from China and several African regions. It was the founding week of Globethics.net⁵⁹ where the exchange and cooperation between African and Chinese regional programmes is alive.

I studied in St. Paul's theological College, now St. Paul's University, in Limuru/Kenya in 1974/75 as the first white student. I work since four decades with African partners, churches, universities, regional and pan-African institutions, on development programmes, trainings, as visiting professor, publication series etc. I visited China in the last two decades 2-4 times per year for teaching, researching, cooperation programmes, trainings for entrepreneurs, exchange programmes etc.

⁵⁸ Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Christoph Stückelberger, President Geneva Agape Foundation, Founder and President of Globethics.net Foundation, Professor of Ethics Basel, Moscow; Enugu/Nigeria, Beijing/China. Cooperation with China since over 20 years and on China-Africa since 10 years.

⁵⁹ www.globethics.net

I mention all this only as introduction and background for better understanding the next chapter. Based on these experiences I jump now to some summarizing observations in form of ten benchmarks for fruitful, innovative China-Africa cooperation.

2. Ten Benchmarks

1. Relations: *Personal relations between humans are the foundation for institutional cooperation.* Even with all technological instruments of communication like emails, zoom, and video-conferences (which are key especially in times of the pandemic), the personal contact and trust is fundamental. Emotions and empathy are the basis for cooperation.
2. History: *Increased knowledge about the political, cultural, religious and ethical history of the others is needed.* I am often surprised, how little we know about each other's history and context, even among very well educated people. We cannot understand Chinese without acknowledging their deeply rooted identity in their 5000 years of history (3600 recorded years).⁶⁰ And we cannot value the identity of Africans if we continue with the prejudice that African history started with colonialism. When we recognize, that the first humans, homo sapiens, originated from East Africa and we study the history of Africa, discovering that it includes cultures as old as the Chinese (e.g. the Badari Culture 5000 BC)⁶¹, we can meet at eye-level.
3. Respect: *The attitude of mutual respect is a condition for building trust and cooperation.* Before we see the others and ourselves as citizen of a nation, as representative of a religion or denomination, as part of an upper or lower social class or as defendants of our gender roles, we should first of all see the others and ourselves as human being. We all are humans with similar basic needs of food and water, shelter and security, love and joy, a sustainable environment and aging in dignity. The same faith facilitates to find this respect. It is the role of Christians to emphasize and live this mutual respect. Different faiths need increased attention and sensitivity, but also enables mutual respect.
4. Cooperation: *Dialogue and joint action go together.* Cooperation starts with talking and careful exploring. It then should go beyond talking and lead to walking the talk by acting together. Let us take philanthropy as example. Publications are important for mutual understanding.⁶² Mutual cooperation and support needs an understanding of charity, philanthropy, diaconia⁶³ etc. a rich field for further exploration as it is no more a unilateral process from Europe/North America to China or to Africa, but a fascinating complex multilateral exchange. In addition to European and American Christian

⁶⁰ Shouyi, Bai, *An Outline History of China*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing 2002, 17.

⁶¹ Ki-Zerbo, Joseph: *Die Geschichte Schwarz-Afrikas*, Wuppertal: Peter Hammer Verlag: Wuppertal 1979, 60.

⁶² All books mentioned below which are published by Globethics.net, are available for free download from www.globethics.net/publications and for print order on the same page.

⁶³ Sigrist, Christoph / Rügger, Heinz, *Diaconia: An Introduction*. Theological Foundation of Christian Service, In Chinese from German edition, Geneva: Globethics.net 2019. Published also in China by Nanjing Theol. Seminary Publications, 2020.

Development and Mission agencies and philanthropic institutions, Chinese philanthropy foundations⁶⁴ and networks (like the Amity Foundation⁶⁵ as one of the first in modern China), the African Philanthropy Forum⁶⁶ with African Donors came up. It is important to understand common praxis, but also different concepts, including different roles of states, private sector, non-governmental and religious organisations⁶⁷.

5. **Business:** *Business cooperation has a great potential, especially when using international common social and environmental standards* such as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)⁶⁸, Environmental-Social-Governance criteria (ESG), ILO and ISO Standards, the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals SDGs, which are accepted and promoted in China and in Africa! The trainings for African church leaders and church administrators on management of church assets (ACAP)⁶⁹ is an ongoing programme of Globethics.net, Bread for the World and the All African Conference of Churches AACC since 2015. It could also be enlarged by trainings for Chinese or joint trainings. E.g. a training was planned in November 2020 in Ethiopia, but postponed due to Covid and the war in Ethiopia. The extensive trainings on values-driven entrepreneurship for Christian entrepreneurs, mainly of SME's, in China since 2013⁷⁰, is in discussion to be adapted for similar trainings in Africa with the St. Paul's University in Limuru/ Nairobi, Kenya.
6. **Faith:** *China-Africa-Cooperation can and should also include spirituality, Bible reading⁷¹, church structures, anti-corruption⁷² from faith perspective and much more.* I could mention many encouraging examples. Also the strengthened ecumenical cooperation between the Council of Churches in Asia (CCA) and the All African Conference of Churches (AACC) – the two large continental Regional Ecumenical Organisations - could be fruitful. However, there are also obstacles related to politics and church politics, as the cooperation between the China Christian Council CCC and

⁶⁴ Liu, Baocheng / Zhang, Mengsha, *Philanthropy in China. Report of Concepts, History, Drivers, Institutions*, Globethics.net: Geneva 2017; Liu, Baocheng / Patel, Chandni, *Overseas Investments of Chinese Enterprises. A Casebook on Corporate Social Responsibility*, Geneva: Globethics.net 2020.

⁶⁵ <https://amityfoundation.org/eng/>

⁶⁶ <https://www.africanpf.org/>

⁶⁷ See the comparison between Europe and China: Li, Jing/ Stückelberger, Christoph, *Philanthropy and Foundation Management. A Guide to Philanthropy in Europe and China*, Globethics.net: Geneva 2017.

⁶⁸ Liu, Baocheng / Gao, Dorothy (Eds), *Corporate Social Responsibility in China*, (in Chinese), Geneva: Globethics.net, 2015.

⁶⁹ Stückelberger, Christoph/ Ogara, William Oriende/ Mawudor, Bright (eds.), *African Church Assets Handbook. Good Stewardship for Sustainable Impact*, Geneva: Globethics.net, 2018.

⁷⁰ Stückelberger, Christoph/ Cui, Wantian/ Lessidrenska, T/ Wang, D./ Liu, Y, Zhang, Y., *Entrepreneurs with Christian Values. Training Handbook for 12 Modules*, Geneva: Globethics.net, 2016.

⁷¹ The new Agape Series of the Geneva Agape Foundation (GAF), many volumes in Chinese, includes e.g. Moses, C, *Daily Bread for Christians in Business*, Geneva: GAF at Globethics.net, 2021 (in Chinese).

⁷² Cui, Wantian/ Stückelberger, Christoph, *The Better Sinner. A Practical Guide on Corruption*, Geneva: GAF at Globethics.net, 2020; Stückelberger, Christoph (Ed.), *Corruption-free Religions are Possible. Integrity – Stewardship – Accountability*, Geneva: Globethics.net, 2021.

CCA is sensitive due to the churches in Taiwan being member of CCA. Nevertheless, creative and innovative ways of cooperation on basis of the common faith in Jesus Christ is possible on other levels than church leadership structures, e.g. in theology, publications, diaconia etc.

7. Environment: *Environmental concerns (Climate, water management, water quality etc.) are global concerns and need definitely global cooperation.* China as the largest provider of solar cells is widely present in Africa. African solar production and many other areas of cooperation need to be strengthened. Environment – as most of the other of the ten benchmarks – are of course also to be considered for trilateral cooperation China-Africa-Europe.
8. Technology: *Respectful cooperation on affordable and good quality technology and agricultural products is essential.* Poor quality of some Chinese products in Africa or African agricultural products with some standards issues led to some backlash and hesitations. At the same time, in the perspective of affordability in Africa and of mutual trade, also of African products to China, the increased trade of mutual benefit. Christians and Christian partners can support for values-driven, fair, corruption-free and qualitative trade of products and services. I also work with African and Chinese experts and partners on a promising programme for e-health for hospitals and rural areas in Africa, which is already successfully implemented in China.
9. A) Politics, bilateral: *Resist the new Cold War.* The new Cold War between USA and China already started to lead to situations in African countries or sectors such as education, mining, health and agriculture, that they more and more have to decide if they stand on the side of China or the USA. This was a disastrous experience in the old Cold War in the 1960-1980th. The victims as re vulnerable people and poor or weak states. A concrete example is also the technological ‘war’ between the Western oriented big four technology/mobile/internet companies GAFA (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon, now GAMA, with the change from Facebook to Metaversum) and the respective Chinese big four companies BATH (Baidu, Alibaba, Tencent, Huawei). Cooperation instead of a ‘bloody’ economic or military confrontation is needed. In Christian perspective, ideologies have to be replaced by poverty-orientation, means working for and with the poor: «My color is neither red nor blue but the Cross» is my slogan.

B) Politics, multilateral: *Strengthen the multilateral UN-System.* The bi-polar impasse can be avoided with multilateral and regional cooperations. Ecumenical partners of this conference like the mission societies, development agencies, churches, regional ecumenical organisations and foundations such as GAF and Globethics.net need a more explicit and coordinated strategy how to strengthen the multilateral global and regional cooperation.

10. Publications: “*Publish or Perish*”. Publications are an efficient, scalable and in online form affordable good instrument to support these benchmarks. Use e.g. over 250 books of www.globethics.net/publications with download for free and print copies for sale for modest prices, many of them from Chinese and African authors. Use also the free online library www.globethics.net/library with 3.6 million documents, 150+ journals and 75+ collections, such as e.g. on [Online Chinese Christianity Collection](#) OCCC with over 32’000 documents. I also invite to publish online for low cost with Globethics.net and Geneva Agape Foundation.⁷³

⁷³ www.globethics.net/publications www.gafoundation.world/publications