

# UNAIDS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REMARKS

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CHINA INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY FORUM SIDE EVENT: INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: COUNTRY, REGIONAL AND GLOBAL ACTIONS FOR A BETTER FUTURE



H.E. Siddharth Chatterjee, UN Resident Coordinator in China,

H.E. Mr Zhao Fengtao, Vice Chairman, China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA),

H.E. Mr Andrew Gittens, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Transport and Works, Barbados,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It's a great honour to be here speaking with you at this forum.

When I was growing up 50 years ago, I'm much older than that, but I was a teenager 50 years ago in my country Uganda, I used to help out my mother in her hardware store. After raising seven children, putting us into primary school, she opened a hardware store on a main street of our town. She was the first African to own a store on a high street and the first woman to own a hardware store in the whole town. In the shop peasants would come to buy their farming implements. We were a peasant country then, we still are a peasant country now, reliant on household agriculture mostly done by women, also men, using handheld hoe. Small plots of land, growing crops, using very rudimentary tools.

At that time the hoe that was bought in my mother's shop was the brand called Chillington. It was a British hoe. Then, as a teenager, I started seeing another hoe on my mother's hardware shelves. And this one was called Great Wall. The Great Wall hoe. And this hoe came from, of course, China. Chinese products were coming into our market in Africa. Great Wall was a product by Sino-Agri, a state owned Chinese company. And the peasants of Uganda would come and say I want Chillington, I don't want the Great Wall. And my mum would try to tell them the Great Wall works, take the Great Wall, that's the one you can afford. It was cheaper. But the people still wanted the Chillington hoe from the UK.

Today, we Africans don't head to London to shop, when it is shopping time we go east to Beijing.

China is a world power. China has grown. China's industries in these fifty years, China's scientists have innovated and Chinese products are all over the world and they are respected and good products.

So here we are today. The task before us on global development is a big one. We set targets, global targets, Sustainable Development Goals, set by the whole world and we at the United Nations support countries to push forward and achieve them. However, these goals are at risk.

At the last score, the UN Secretary-General showed in his report that only 12% of the SDGs are on-track; close to a half are off track and about 30% have not seen any movement since the SDGs were signed onto in 2015. So we are off track.

This is serious. This needs correction. We have to get ourselves onto the path of acceleration to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

And here is where China's greatness will come to help.

I've spent a week here and it has confirmed what I already knew: that China is an important player in global development. China can play a role that can accelerate many countries towards the SDGs, and China's Global Development Initiative is a framework that compliments and that can lead to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

We saw and learned a lot during COVID. COVID was a time when multilateralism was tested and multilateralism unfortunately did not deliver.

Because many countries instead of coming together to fight a global problem, chose to look inwards, they had vaccines, they hoarded them, but China showed the spirit of multilateralism and I commend China for this. Because China put out its technology, two vaccines. These vaccines were available for developing countries, which were locked out of the vaccines that were being developed in the North, saving millions of lives with these two vaccines. China shared its PPE, its ventilators, all this was put there for developing countries that were struggling, with no production of their own, locked out of the few vaccines in the North. China came to the rescue. I salute China.

And so I call on China to continue building this solidarity. Where it fails, China will use strength to step in and push for global solidarity, push for a multilateralism which works.

This is how we will achieve our goals.

Let me share with you a story of successful multilateralism. This is the story of fighting HIV/AIDS.

I lead the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. This Joint Programme was created as an act of global solidarity. At the height of this pandemic, millions were dying all over the world. The world came together, the world said we must fight this together. They created this Joint Programme that I lead. UNAIDS opened in 1996. The Joint Programme sets a direction. Our Joint Programme brings the world together to set a strategy. Every five years the strategy is renewed. The governments of the world come together and line up behind new targets we set every five years. Our Joint Programme also shows evidence of what works and the whole world, all countries, move along this direction by following the guidance of what works. This is how we have made progress. The whole global community, again as an act of global solidarity, created the Global Fund. The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria was created in 2002. That was putting down the money to help those countries that didn't have enough money to push against HIV.

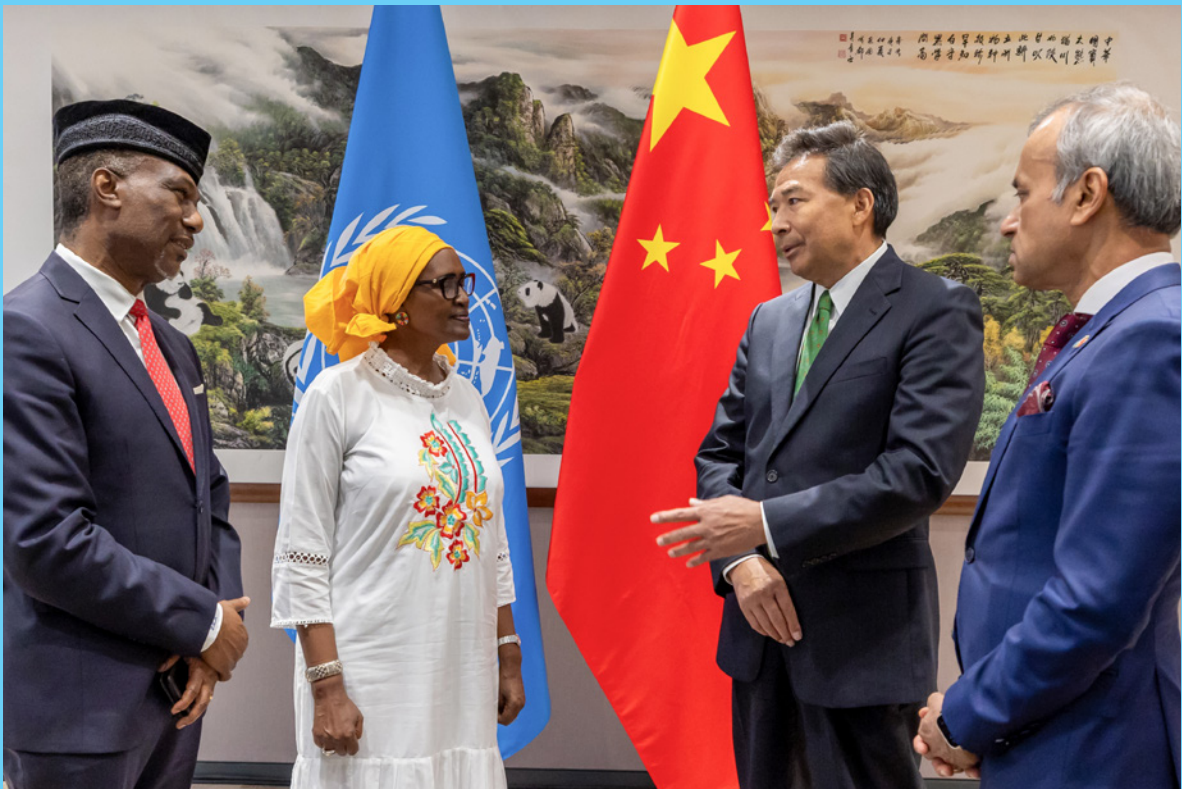
A bilateral programme, by the United States, called PEPFAR (The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) was created in 2003. A bilateral programme accompanying the multilateral programme to fight HIV/AIDS.

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Through these two forces—the Global Fund and PEPFAR—and us the Joint Programme of the United Nations on the ground across the world, we have been able to put nearly 30 million people on treatment—we are still trying to put nearly 10 million more people on treatment—but nearly 30 million people are living healthy lives, even without a vaccine and without a cure. We are able to put people on treatment.

Why? Because of the global community, because of solidarity.

Money was put behind research. Research to find innovations for better and better drugs. Better and better treatments. Better and better prevention tools. Better therapeutics, diagnostics. Then money was also put down for countries to be able to afford. Prices were brought down. A method of multitier pricing was created so that those who have more money pay more, those who have less pay less, but a person, whether you are in Burkina Faso or you are in the United States in New York, you all can get the same good treatment for HIV. All this came because of global solidarity. Because the world could come together and reach agreements. Because those who were richer could put down for those who don't. Because scientists were encouraged to find solutions.

This is what we want. This is what we have to do to move towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Today's forum and discussions provide the space to reflect:

- how can we recapture this spirit of global solidarity from the AIDS response example? How can we recreate that to solve the problems of today?
- how can we lift multilateralism to the next level?
- how can we make the most of the Summit of the Future in September? Our Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has put forward a bold proposal to breathe new life into multilateralism, calling on governments of the world to remove the barriers that are blocking the multilateral system, to remove those parts of the rules of the global economy, of the peace and security framework that are not presenting opportunity for solving problems.

I hope China will stand tall and lead. I hope China will show an example of what is needed and urge others to join in reforming our United Nations to make it work for all people.

It was the great warrior and philosopher and thinker, Sun-Tzu, who said that "in the midst of chaos, there is also opportunity".

For the health of our people, for the security of our nations, for the resilience of our economies, we have to stand together and seize the opportunity.

We may be facing geopolitical tensions, facing climate change, economic inequality, wars, pandemics, in the midst of all that chaos, there is opportunity.

And I count on China to be a leading light to restore multilateralism to find global solutions to these global challenges.

I wish us all an inspiring exchange today.

Thank you.

