

HIGH-LEVEL CHINA-AFRICA MEDIA COOPERATION FORUM



2020 REPORT



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BACKGROUND

The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) is convened every 3 years since 2000, where the latest ones were Johannesburg Summit in 2015 and Beijing Summit in 2018. Under the FOCAC framework, Kenya hosted the 2020 China-Africa Media Cooperation Forum. The forum is aimed at promoting China-Africa cooperation in the field of media, including setting up a China-Africa media network, exploring models for long-term cooperation, providing technical support and capacity building especially for the digitization of radio and TV. The 2020 forum themed China-Africa Media Cooperation in the Digital Era coincided with the 20th anniversary of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC).

The Media Council of Kenya, in partnership with the Chinese Embassy in Nairobi, held The High-Level China-Africa Media Cooperation Forum 2020, at the Serena Hotel on Tuesday 17th November 2020.

Kenya was chosen to host this high-level meeting because the country's media is on the top level of Africa, with many vigorous and innovative media houses and high-level professionals. Kenya currently has nearly 200 FM radio stations, 92 Television stations, 100 print and online publications and very high internet and mobile phone penetration that are ideal for digital media.

The forum provided the opportunity for stakeholders to look at how media is remodeling its viability plans in the face of challenges in revenue streams, the safety of staff and coping up in the COVID-19 era. Most of the COVID-19 containment measures seemed to recommend the use of digital in news collection, management, sourcing, and distribution, and for those yet to embrace digital technology, what are the opportunities and lessons, and how do they acquire it.

In the opening session, chaired by Mr. Victor Bwire, Director Media Training and Development at MCK, he introduced key speakers of the forum. The speakers were to give a richer background of the event. He pointed out the purpose of the discussion and acknowledged the presence of audiences from all over the globe. He further noted that the pandemic was relevant to the theme of the forum- Africa Media Cooperation in the Digital Era. He added that this important forum allows the audience to learn how speakers from different countries were dealing with the new media space, from a newsroom, regulatory and business perspective.



OPENING STATEMENT



In his opening statement, **Mr. Churchil Otieno**, President, Kenya Editors' Guild (KEG), stated that there were four ideas that came about when he thought of China-Africa relations from a digital perspective. The first major issue was the fight for the truth, noting that the major impact of digital technology has reduced the size of the world leading us to ponder on the purpose of journalists in a digitalized world. Secondly, he cited that the media must step higher in the ladder and be of necessity to verifying of facts, so that journalists can have their democratic rights by making contributions, sharing their opinions and expressing themselves.

Thirdly, he stated that we need to identify ways in which we can benefit from the fusion of China-Africa Media cooperation, because there is untapped opportunity in thi fusion. Lastly, he stressed that the presence of major newsrooms in Nairobi should also be visible in seeking to be part of the immense media development and called for collaboration and partnerships.



Mr. Erastus Mwencha, Chair, ACBF Executive Board, the CS ICT, Innovation and Youth Affairs representative in his speech stated that digitalization has caused disruptions beyond expectation. He noted that there has been a bit of resistance in receiving technology, due to fear and self-interest of losing out in the 'game'. These fears emanate from the challenges brought about by the digital divide. He further added that a World Bank study cited that Africa will be left behind if it does not go out of its way, and make sure it adopts digital technology as soon as possible.

He added that out some of the challenges brought about by digital technology from a consumer perspective include lack of barriers of entry into the media world, that brings about challenges of regulation and standards. Regarding the quality and content that we read, he noted that it was a challenge for consumers to get the actual story and identify journalists in this digital era. As a result, it has prompted the need and urgency to create standards for the consumer.

In his closing remarks, he challenged journalists to do faithful research and give accurate information, by pointing out where there are truths and challenges. He observed that there has been a need for investigative journalism that will truly inform the society, because journalists hold the lens that is able to reach and transform the correct picture of the society.



Mr. Tian Yuhong, Executive Secretary, All-China Journalists Association, when giving his speech noted that Chinese government confers great importance to and supports the development of media convergence. They have specifically released guiding principles to promote its in-depth development. He promised collaboration and partnerships and that All-China Journalists Association are ready to work with African journalists' organizations to explore training models, innovate training mechanisms, exchange training experience, and promote mutual learning among journalists of different countries.



CEO Media Council of Kenya, **Mr. David Omwoyo**, in his speech at the forum cited that despite technology making it convenient for the media to operate, it has brought about the challenge of fake news and hate speech. He stated that there has been a rise in citizen journalism which has not been necessarily of goodwill and the ability to edit and share information online is on the increase. He emphasized that journalists must stick to truth, the media, and the tools of ICT that have been put in place to be used to drive the conversation forward. He concluded by stating that without human interaction technology will not work, and that values of seeking the truth, and reporting it firsthand, all the values of responsible journalism over technology.



Mr. Maina Muiruri, The Chair, of the Council (MCK), stated that, as we focus on the impact of digitalisation, statistics show Kenya hosts one of the most vibrant media in the continent. In his introductory statement he emphasized that, the forum offered an opportunity to look at ways in which media is remodeling its viability plans in the face of challenges in revenue stream, safety of staff and coping in the COVID-19 era.

He shared some of the sustainability proposals by industry players which include appeals to the government to ensure zero-rating taxes on digital tools used by the media, regulation on digital distribution of content and enhancing media information and digital literacy programs. To be particular in education institutions to create responsible use of media content instead of reverting to draconian laws to regulate the digital space. He emphasized that the Council continues to lead as an example in putting in place policies that promote digital models of regulation in consultation with other players in the industry.

OPENING STATEMENT



While giving his opening remarks, **H. E. Dr. Zhou Pingjian**, the Chinese Ambassador to Kenya, noted that the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation has established itself as a pacesetter for international cooperation with Africa. He also stated that the Fourth Industrial Revolution, characterized by the digital technologies among others has ushered in a new era for both China and Africa. This is a huge potential for digital innovations emerging across the continent. He further noted that the media acted as an early bird in championing multilateralism.



The forum was presided over by **Mr. Gwaro Ogaro**, the Acting Director at the Government Advertising Agency on behalf of Ms. Maureen Mbaka, the Chief Administrative Secretary, at the State Department of Broadcasting and Telecommunication, Ministry of ICT, Innovations and Youth Affairs. In his speech, Mr. Owaro stated that one of the greatest beneficiaries of Chinese support and relations has been the ICT sector, through modernisation which has enabled the Ministry to offer improved and quality services. In his closing remarks, he highlighted that Kenya has been on the forefront in pushing for improved and respectable representation of African matters to the international media. In the speech read on her behalf she reported that Kenya is incorporated digital strategies to bring about a transformative approach to learning promising that the government will continue to increase the digital infrastructure and ease service delivery.



Naim Bilal: MD KBC in his speech appreciated the collaboration his institution has had with China adding that this and more forums will continue to encourage further collaboration with China especially in the digital era for the benefit of the media industry





FROM SPEAKERS DURING THE HIGH-LEVEL FORUM



H.E. Dr. Zhou Pingjian

“ FOCAC has established itself as a pacesetter for international cooperation with Africa, a champion of multilateralism, a fine example of mutually beneficial cooperation. It has come a long way for good reasons. This forum will help to carry out collective dialogues as well as an effective mechanism for practical cooperation, and represents an important flag for South-South cooperation.



Erastus Mwencha

“ The belt and road initiative's main purpose is to implement and impact the United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda 2030. Digital technology is part and parcel of this framework which is the basis of this event. Technologies have been evolving through history and have brought about digitization. Technology cannot be restrained because it has no boundaries. There is need to invest in research, without proper research, news given to the population can become disastrous.



David Omwoyo

“ Technology has offered opportunities and without human interaction technology cannot work. There is need to stakeholder partnership in exploring opportunities available in the digital space. Technology has also created the challenge of fake news especially with the rise of citizen journalism. Journalists, therefore, in their practice must stick to the truth



Otieno Churchill

“ We are in interesting times that defines the media we are in today. The media has a duty to define the world we are living in. One of the major issues to consider and acknowledge is fight for the truth. Even as we consider what digital technology has done to our media and society, it has made the world a global village and our timelines are not the same. And I hope that during the forum we will look at ways to partner and collaborate in creating avenues of exchanging knowledge.



Victor Bwire

“ Such engagements are crucial especially in these digital times, also looking at the work the media Council does on promoting media development. The topic becomes very relevant especially in this pandemic era looking at the newsroom, industry, and regulatory experience in the changing world.



Maina Muiriru

“ As a Council we commit to continue leading by example in putting in place policies that promote digital models of regulation in consultation with other players in the industry and we are making proposal that will appeal to the government to consider zero-rating taxes on digital tools used by the media, regulation of digital distribution of content and enhance media information and digital literacy programmes.

Prof. Zhang Yanqiu



FROM SPEAKERS DURING THE HIGH-LEVEL FORUM



Dr. Ezekiel Mutua

“ We must not allow misinformation neither should we compromise objectivity and abdicate our critical role of setting the right agenda. Objective reporting of issues from a people perspective will make this collaboration both attractive and sustainable



Tom Mshindi

“ Part of the challenge is the lopsided nature of the media, covering the soft sides of the story instead of doing narratives that explain. Fake news is a serious problem being seen from a spectrum of news. We cannot avoid this because it being deliberately done. We can avoid it by elevating the journalists to be able to verify using technology



Erick Oduor

“ We must find a way in which digital platforms/ networks will be able to share the revenue they generate stories from media houses. “Journalists and media houses need to benefit from their sweat to sustain their operations.



Linus Kaikai

“ We should learn from China in terms of use of technology in media as well as in messaging. Kenyan media scene is too political. We should enhance other perspectives like development focused reporting



Zhang Yong

“ China and Africa should use this pandemic to enhance new progress through collaboration and cooperation and it is important to revisit the fundamental roles of journalism and find new approaches for constructive journalism



Rachel Ombaka

“ Parochialism looks at creating news products that targets only audience within your locality. Journalists should be wary of the effect their content creates when they post on social media



FROM SPEAKERS DURING THE HIGH-LEVEL FORUM



Prof. Prof. Zhang Yanqiu

“ China has embraced convergence in newsroom. When reporting the COVID19 pandemic, social media played a key role in bringing cohesion while traditional media conveyed information about the virus, and it is important that a journalist who uses social media to share stories should be able to use all the tools to share stories based on truth.



Harry Misiko

“ Exclusive stories for TV and Newspaper is a creation of editors running the mediums. Exclusive stories can be exclusive depending on how they are told to fit a particular channel/medium.



Barbara Kaija

“ News production and distribution at New Vision in Uganda has been integrated. The achievement so far are integrated adverts, joint planning, joint deployment, multi skilling of teams and content gathering.



Robin Njogu

“ Convergence of operations has enabled us attain good quality control, business opportunity and workmanship. One of the biggest obstacles to convergence is legacy attitudes.



Susan Karago

“ There has been challenges especially on training where student miss some of the basic tools for journalism such as cameras. Training institution should be able to train journalists who are all rounded and can work for any media



Val Boje

“ New media organizations have an advantage because of the use of technology, it has enabled them to have an edge as compared to the traditional media. Media has a role to maintain balance when doing a story. Readers need to trust the information that journalists write, air, or broadcast. “Technology is an enabler of what journalists do.



Ochieng Rapuro

“ In Kenya, the media has already transited into the digital space. It's important to know the integrity of information that comes out of our digital channels. The media is expected to promote the public good yet in it there is opportunity for mischief. Regulation should be from the approach of promoting public good for the media guys & reducing the mischief.

Contributions by panelists: PANEL 1:

IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON MEDIA PRACTICE: Misses, hits and lessons learnt

MODERATOR: Michael Omondi, Xinhua

1. **Linus Kaikai**, Head of Strategy, Royal Media Services
2. **Thomas Mshindi**, CEO of SMANT Media, Former Chief Editor of Nation
3. **Zhang Yong**, Documentary Director and Researcher, Zhejiang University, China
4. **Val Boje**, Independent Media, SA

In the first panel of discussion the impact of technology on media practice was highlighted. Thomas Mshindi, CEO of SMANT Media, highlighted that one of the biggest gaps in our newsrooms has been developing the capacity to contextualize, understand and explain issues. He further explained that if we are going to give readers and viewers believable news, there is need to do it in a thorough manner. As a result, he noted that there is an emerging need to elevate the role of journalists to go the extra mile to verify information.

In his opening remarks, Eric Oduor of Kenya Union of Journalists (KUJ), stated that the COVID-19 has taught media and media houses to invest heavily in technology. He emphasized that media houses can turn the tides against the impact of technology by ensuring that, the content produced is able to attract viewers and readers. He highlighted that with the massive reliance on technology, it has brought about the need to advocate for online tax. This is because when the tax is levied journalists who produce content on social media will benefit from it by having an extra revenue stream. He concluded by stating that, by setting up a media development fund it will help in the growth and production of more content, and power the work of journalists.

Ms. Vaal Boje, of Independent Media, noted that traditional roles of the media such as; fact-checking and editing should not change because of technological advancement. She further stated that some of the ways to deal with fake news is to ensure that information that we share is fair and accurate. This is because the media has a role in presenting balance. She observed that there is need to have an agile team that meets the requirements of journalists.

Linus Kaikai, Head of Strategy, Royal Media Services, emphasized that there is a challenge of media houses failing to verify information that is already circulating. He noted that despite many blogs coming up with different stories, audiences have always gone back to traditional media for fact-checking due to robust citizen journalism. In his final remarks he stated that, human element has affected news gathering process due to COVID-19, this is because journalism is a contact sport.



PANEL 2:

NEWS PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION IN THE DIGITAL ERA: Is the converged newsrooms working

MODERATOR: Momanyi Benard-Capital FM

1. **Harry Misikoh**- Assistant News Editor, Daily Nation
2. **Susan Karago**- Member at the MCK
3. **Robin Njogu**- Managing Editor at RMS
4. **Barbara Kaija**- Editor New Vision, Uganda,
5. **Mr. Sauli Gilliard**- Online Content Coordinator, TSN Digital TZ
6. **Prof. Zhou Qing'an**- Associate Dean, at Tsinghua University



Ms. Susan Karago, Council Member at the MCK, highlighted that there is a very important need of collaborations, sponsorships, and training for journalists. Where journalists can produce content for any platform to perfection. She stated that, if we are to have a converged media it needs to start from our institutions. Where we are producing journalists, who can write and produce content for all platforms. She noted that one of the things that comes with convergence is the mind shift. Where the mindset of traditional media of owning content needs to change and embrace convergence to ensure there is collective gain.

Harrison Misiko, Assistant News Editor, Daily Nation, highlighted that convergence of the media has expanded the reach of exclusive stories, from the way it's consumed, sourced, and packaged. He stated that it has been of great advantage implementing convergence of the media, despite various challenges that have been experienced in the process.

In his opening statement, Robin Njogu, Managing Editor at RMS, noted that convergence of the media has offered quality control, it has been cost saving and brought about new business opportunities. However, he observed that some of the biggest obstacles of convergence integration has been legacy attitudes and working practices.

Prof. Zhou Qing'an, Associate Dean, at Tsinghua University cited that traditional media has a very important function of building social trust. He noted that traditional media taught journalists how to tell stories to the society and the great need to maintain professionalism. In his closing statement he emphasized that we need to combine the professionalism, expertise, and high technology in the convergence of the media.

According to Barbra Kaija, Editor New Vision, Uganda, the challenges brought about by integration of convergence are daunting in Uganda. These include internet speeds which are low and high costs that affect the audiences. She stated that digital strategy was a challenge in terms of implementing digital models. In her closing remarks she highlighted that, at micro-level the China-Africa Media Cooperation can help solve some problems we are experiencing in Africa.

PANEL 3:

MEDIA REGULATION IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT: Journalism ethics in a digital era

MODERATOR: Beatrice Marshall-CGTN

PANELISTS:

1. **Mr. Ochieng Rapuro**- Editor-in-Chief Standard Group
2. **Dr. Levi Obonyo**
3. **Ms. Rachel Ombaka**- Editor for Citizen TV
4. **Prof. Zhang Yanqiu**- Africa Communication Research Center, Communication University of China
5. **Mr. Ikenna Emewu**- Editor-in-Chief of the Africa Economy Magazine-Nigeria



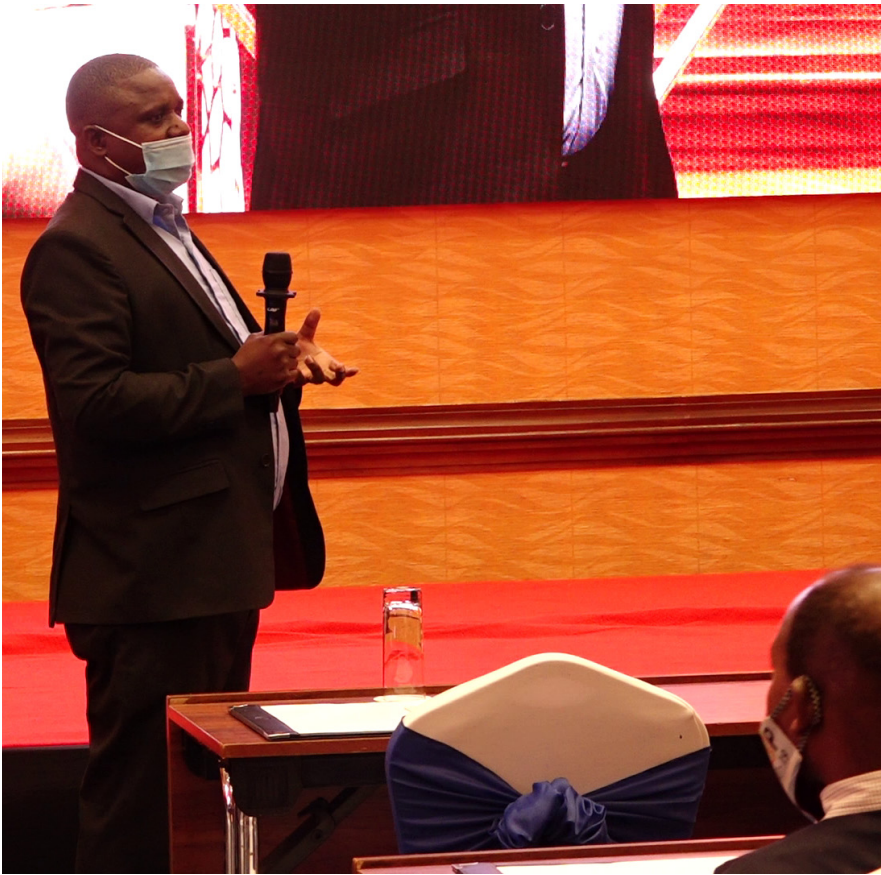
The third panel of discussion focused on media regulation in a changing landscape and journalism ethics in the digital era. Ms. Rachel Ombaka, Editor for Citizen TV, s website, opened the session by stating some of the challenges being faced by producers, reporters, and editors. In her introductory statements she highlighted that one of the challenges facing the digital space is the need for immediacy. Prompting journalists to post stories without verification.

She further emphasized that when it comes to global journalism ethics, there is a great need to look at the audience in terms of the effect content creates. With regards to ethics in the new media space, she observed that there were fact-checking organizations coming up and partnering with media houses in fighting fake news.

From her observation, she noted that there is a need to balance, commercialization and informing the public. Adding that this is the reason why bloggers have a lot of audience because of headlines that are clickbait, while media struggles because it prioritizes fact-checking. In her closing statement she emphasized on the need to consult and learn from our mistakes. Also learning from China and embracing digital media going forward.

According to Mr. Levi Obonyo a hybrid system is needed to regulate the media and the boundaries it operates in. Posing the question that, to what extent can the society be able to educate the population to consume the content in which it receives in these platforms. Stating that self-regulation will have the challenge of implementation. He observed that, as a society we need to re-institute media information literacy programs. That will build the capacity of individuals to be able to consume content with the better sense of concern and finding a common space in which we can all operate and ensure society is given sober content.

Prof.Zhang Yanqiu, Director, Africa Communication Research Center, Communication University of China, in her opening statement noted that African media relies on very limited resources. Posing a need for us to increase our understanding of media ethics, journalistic practices, and regulation. She stated that the new media should empower traditional media and make it digitalize. In her closing remarks she said it is important to understand each other's journalistic practices. She cited that China media system is constructive journalism in the sense that, it bridges the national agenda and social stability. While African media is watchdog



journalism, that focuses more on criticizing. Stating that it is important for us to revisit the roles and see new approaches for constructive Journalism.

In his introductory statement, Ochieng Rapuro, Editor-in-Chief Standard Group, emphasized that the media exists as an instrument of public good. Therefore, there is need to protect the public good that the media promotes. He noted that, new challenges brought about by new media may require new regimes of regulation. In his statement, he captured things that needed to be looked into as a result of convergence of the media. His point of emphasis was on the integrity of information coming out of digital media, maintaining rights of media houses from being breached by other users and safety. He emphasized that the media that we want focuses on the ordinary man's circumstances.

Mr. Ikenna Emewu, Editor-in-Chief of the Africa Economy Magazine introduced the audience to the triple ethic policy, to assist journalists to counter rogue information. He narrated that journalists should be Fair, Fast and Factual. By being fair journalists assists in countering the wrong reports and are fast to tell if the report is wrong. He added that journalists should be factual and tell the audience actual details and information.

He further stated that, time will regulate new media, because if we allow the government to regulate new media it will suppress the entire media. In his observation, he noted that, China journalism is about agenda setting and using the media to impact on government agenda and development. While in Africa, the media reports exactly what the society is about. He noted that, we cannot adopt Chinese media style because we have different systems. However, we can learn from each other.

Mr. Victor Bwire, Director, Media Development and Strategy at the Media Council of Kenya in his closing remarks appreciated the participants for making the event a success. He promised that lesson learned from the forum will be beneficial to the growth of the media industry and that more discussion on the topic should be held on media convergence and sustainability.

The Director further noted that the FOCAC action plan is purposed to promote China-Africa cooperation in the field of media, including setting up a China-Africa media network, explore models for long-term cooperation, provide technical support and capacity building especially for the digitization of radio and TV, China to hold training and capacity building seminars for African countries' media officials and journalists, China to provide technical support and personnel training for the digitization of radio and TV and the development of the industry in Africa and the two sides will explore models for long-term cooperation, continue to participate in film and TV festivals and exhibitions held by the other side, and encourage joint production of documentaries, films and TV programs.

In addition, he said the two continents will carry out cooperation on the publication of books in commonly used African languages and organize Chinese publishing houses to participate in major African international book fairs among other things.

With the current changing media operating environment and efforts for media including in Kenya to tap the advantages of using the digital space as a viability option, what lessons can experts in the industry share and exchange for the benefit of the media in Africa and what can Governments do to assist media to exploit the advantages that come with digitization?

In conclusion he added that with most African countries having completed the digital migration especially for TV, there any chances of allowing radio to undertake digital migration, and what will be expected.



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