



## MARIE-ROGER BILOA

CEO, Africa International Media Group

Welcome to the panel discussion dedicated to Africa in the global context, but touching particularly on its relationship to Asian countries as well as international security issues. Let me welcome Mr Youssef Amrani, Lynda Chalker, Nathalie Delapalme, Elisabeth Guigou and Wu Jianmin. Nowadays, conversations about Africa no longer tend simply to vilify it as hopeless, but instead highly praise its economic progress and golden business opportunities. African countries are experiencing a paradigm shift away from a paternalistic kind of foreign aid, with Africans perceived merely as passive recipients, into a development model based on a downright market economy through trade and investment. Foreign countries, as a result, are no longer gatekeepers but are called upon to become partners on a win-win basis.

The figures, as a matter of fact, are impressive; I will share only two sets with you. Regarding demographics, by the middle of this century, Africa is expected to be home to two billion inhabitants, which leads to another interesting figure: by 2050, 80% of the global population will live in Asia and Africa, with a tiny difference, however: three-quarters of those with a middle income will dwell in Asia, not in Africa. The second point is like a mantra, you hear it everywhere if you believe in statistics; seven of the 10 fastest-growing economies are in Africa, with growth rates of up to 7% a year.

The third point only serves as an example. Mobile phone penetration is evaluated at 70%, and perhaps this carries more real meaning, as it has significant impacts on education, agriculture, health, etc. Whatever we think of statistics, the truth is that technology is changing the face of Africa. For instance, visiting Nairobi in Kenya, we see massive infrastructure projects. There are Asian construction companies building roads and power plants. Many African businesses are coming online every day. There is an emerging middle class which will form a bedrock of consumption in multiple African economies going forward. Overall, the future belongs to Africa, especially with improved governance.

Now for the strong parallel: the blossoming relationship between the African and Asian continents has frequently been highlighted, and the recent boom in investment and trade between these continents epitomises the explosion of South-South trade, driven by the burgeoning middle class in Asia's emerging economic giants, whose appetite for Africa's commodities is growing. Similarly, rising economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa has also increased the demand for Asian manufactured goods.

Therefore, in the long run, China, India, Malaysia and South Korea have also become major players. The Government, together with the African Union, hosted the third Korea-African Forum two years ago, with some 400 participants; 440 delegates came from Africa, including the late President of Zambia, Michael Sata. The delegates came from 18 countries, and they adopted the Seoul Declaration in 2012 and the Action Plan for 2013-2015. The next forum will take place next year. The topics included some of the topics we will touch on today, including trade and investment, peace and security, and development.

Korea has actively stepped up its presence, and now has around 30 embassies in Africa. Besides renowned global brands like Samsung and Kia, Korea enjoys a well-established tradition of international diplomacy. There is no need to mention Ban Ki-moon, but as an African who closely followed post-electoral conflict in Cote d'Ivoire, I would like to pay tribute to Choi Young-jin, who was here this morning, because he settled a very tricky case in Cote d'Ivoire, and it took him a lot of courage.

Therefore, it takes a lot of courage to deal with Africa, and I am glad to give the floor to an eminent figure of Chinese international relations. Mr. Wu Jianmin is the Executive Vice Chairman of the China Institute for Innovation and Development Strategy, a member of the foreign policy advisory committee of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, and was Ambassador to France. Chinese industrialisation, unfolding at an unprecedented speed, is driving a ravenous demand for raw materials and new markets in Africa. What makes the China-Africa story remarkable is that, for the first time,



since the end of colonial rule, a major power sees Africa not as a charity case and a landscape of endless need but as an exceptional strategic and business opportunity. Has China copped on to something that eludes so many governments and companies in the West?