Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Abuja

Press Release

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NIGERIA TAKES THE LEAD AS AFRICA POSITIONS TO HARNESS CHINA'S ZERO-TARIFF POLICY FOR INDUSTRIAL TRANSFORMATION

The Federal Government of Nigeria says Africa must use China's new zero-tariff policy to move from exporting raw materials to exporting value, with Nigeria positioning itself as the continent's manufacturing and investment hub. This was the consensus at an International Seminar on "China's Zero-Tariff Treatment for African Countries and Its Implications for Structural Economic Transformation of Africa" held at the Shehu Yar'Adua Conference Centre, Abuja.

In his opening remarks, the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Dunoma Umar Ahmed, PhD, said the policy presents a strategic opportunity, but its real benefit depends on Africa's productive capacity. For Nigeria, the central question is not simply how much Africa can export to China, but what Africa will produce, how it will produce it, and how much value will be retained within African economies.

He noted that under the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, Nigeria is shifting away from dependence on unprocessed commodities. Our natural resources must become the starting point—not the end point—of economic activity. We seek investors who will build factories, develop industries, transfer technology, train our young people, strengthen local businesses and create sustainable employment. He added that Nigeria is well placed to lead Africa's industrial push, leveraging its large market, AfCFTA membership, entrepreneurial population and abundant resources to attract investments that establish manufacturing and regional value chains.

Speaking at the seminar, Chinese Ambassador to Nigeria, H.E. Yu Dunhai, said the zero-tariff policy took effect on May 1, 2026 and is already delivering results. He disclosed that Nigeria-China trade reached $18 billion in H1 2026, a 35% year-on-year increase. Chinese imports from Nigeria surged 80% to $2.3 billion, with monthly growth exceeding 40% in May and June. He stated that since it took effect, we have seen immediate and concrete results because tariff eliminations are reducing costs, trade volumes are expanding, and local businesses are leveraging zero tariffs to invest in domestic processing and move up the value chain.

The Ambassador therefore proposed four priorities to maximize impact: improving product quality and supply chain stability, expanding local processing, aligning trade with long-term investment, and strengthening policy outreach for Nigerian SMEs. Ambassador Yu affirmed that China is ready to finalize an Agreement on Economic Partnership for Shared Development* with Nigeria and to support joint industrial parks, technology transfer and training.

Earlier in his welcome remarks, Mr. Charles Onunaiju, Director of the Center for China Studies, said the zero-tariff treatment, now covering 100% of tariff lines for 53 African countries, is "not a finished line but only a starting point." He noted that Africa must overcome internal constraints and unlock regional value chains through AfCFTA to fully benefit from the initiative. With an obvious sense of collective relief spanning 53 countries and one shared open door, the 'Made in Africa' brand is finally shifting into high gear. Mr. Onunaiju added that the seminar brought together manufacturers, farmers, exporters, customs, and financial institutions to give practical effect to the opportunity.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed Nigeria's readiness to work with China, African countries and development partners to translate market access into manufacturing capacity, trade into industrial growth, and natural resources into lasting prosperity.

Signed:

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