

Ambassador Zhang started his tour of duty in Kampala in 2021.

BY ELIZABETH KAMURUNGI

President Museveni has applauded the outgoing Chinese Ambassador to Uganda, Mr Zhang Lizhong, for his service to the nation and reiterated Uganda's commitment to mutually beneficial relations with the Asian nation.

Speaking from his home in Kisozi, Gomba, where Ambassador Zhang led a Chinese delegation for a courtesy call, the President congratulated the diplomat upon completing his tour of duty in Uganda.

Ambassador Zhang, who started his tour of duty in Kampala in 2021, has served for four years and seven months and will return to Beijing at the end of January.

"I wish you well in your next assignment," Mr Museveni said.

He emphasised the government's commitment to strengthening cooperation on trade, industrialisation, and support interests beneficial to the two countries.

"We have been supporting Chinese interests for a long time, and we shall continue to do so," he noted.

Uganda and China have boosted six decades of long-standing relations that both President Museveni and Ambassador Zhang say are at their best in history. The bilateral relations between the two countries were elevated to a "comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership" during the 2024 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) held in Beijing. Consequently, a select Ugandan goods enjoy tariff-free entry into China.

President Museveni said this decision will greatly support the country's trade and wealth creation efforts.

"I am happy to note that Uganda's exports to China have increased to \$138 million (Shs474b), although this is still not enough and we should be able to do

Chinese envoy lauded over strong Kampala-Beijing ties



Outgoing Chinese Ambassador to Uganda Zhang Lizhong, his wife Lin Yaqun, and Mr Vincent Bagiire, the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, raise a toast at a reception in Kampala on Tuesday. PHOTO/COURTESY

much more," he said.

China has also become a key development partner, making huge investments in infrastructure, energy, and manufacturing, as well as an alternative to the Bretton Woods institutions for much-needed financing and borrowing. Kampala has on multiple occasions applauded Beijing for bilateral relations based on mutual benefit and respect.

Speaking at a farewell reception in his honour in Kampala on Tuesday, Mr Vincent Bagiire, the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

raised a toast to the diplomat "whose tenure has been marked by mutual respect, development, and dedicated service."

Driving key projects

Mr Bagiire applauded the diplomat for overseeing key projects that have transformed Uganda.

"Your tenure coincided with a period in which cooperation between Uganda has been increasingly tangible and very development-oriented. Many of us have observed firsthand the visible impact of the Chinese-led projects that have

greatly transformed both the physical and industrial infrastructure in Uganda," he said.

He cited, among others, the Kampala-Entebbe Express Highway that has enhanced connectivity between the capital and Entebbe, industrial parks in Kapeka and in Mbale, which create employment opportunities, and produce goods hitherto imported previously used to import as a country.

Holding back tears, Mr Zhang spoke of how he had fallen in love with Uganda and her people, sentiments immortalised by his wife, Ms Lin Yaqun, in paint-

BACKGROUND

Ambassador Zhang, who settled in the country at the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic, also spearheaded interventions by Beijing to support Uganda's response, including the donations of vaccines. He has also been applauded for encouraging more Chinese investors to invest in the country and sustaining cooperation in education and health.

ings shown at the event.

"I'd hope that I can stay longer in Uganda. Personally, I like Uganda very much," he said, and appreciated the government of Uganda, fellow members of diplomatic missions, and Chinese nationals who enabled him to achieve crucial milestones.

Joy and gratitude

"I'm honoured to have served as Chinese Ambassador to Uganda during four historic years in which China-Uganda relations made a major leap forward. These have been years of climbing step by step and building high together. It is my honour to witness the unprecedented deepening of strategic mutual trust between China and Uganda, as we stood together in upholding international justice," he said.

Mr Bagiire reiterated Uganda's commitment to building stronger bilateral cooperation with China, across industrialisation, energy sufficiency, technology transfer, digital development, trade facilitation, education, health, skills transfer and other fields.