

INSIGHTS

If you want to get a grasp of the global character of Huawei, you should meet Abraham Liu, who is Huawei's Chief Representative to the EU Institutions. A newcomer to Brussels, Abraham has accumulated a vast array of professional experience while serving Huawei throughout Africa and East Asia/Oceania.

"From 2002 onwards, I was based in South Africa and travelled across the whole continent from there. Then, in 2004 Huawei sent me to Kinshasa to set up the company's operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and also in the Republic of the Congo. I started from scratch, and it was a complex environment", recalls Abraham while overlooking Parc Léopold and the European Parliament from the Huawei EU Brussels Office. "On 8 April 2004, the day I arrived in Kinshasa, civil war broke out: rebellion soldiers seized the main radio station and proclaimed that the government had been overthrown".

Despite numerous challenges, Abraham managed to get Huawei's operations in Kinshasa off the ground. Soon, Huawei was supplying telecom equipment to local companies. "It is the spirit of Huawei to send young and eager people to new markets and thus force them to grow. It was not easy to gain footholds in African countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Language is one barrier we had to overcome", recalls Abraham: despite having studied English back in China, many young Huawei managers had to learn to speak audibly in practice – just as most Europeans would struggle in the beginning were they confronted with the need to speak Chinese abroad for business development purposes. "In the early days, we wrote down key sentences on paper, and, when discussing with our African partners, we read our messages as audibly as possible – as we know today, it was a successful way to overcome the initial communication barriers".

As a truly global company, Huawei now operates in 170 countries and territories all across the globe. This entails the need to adapt to local custom and to respect all local and regional regulations. "Working in

different locations enlightens you and makes you grow", points out Abraham.

After nearly five years in Kinshasa, in 2009 Abraham moved further east in Africa to Kenya's capital Nairobi where for two years he was responsible for Huawei's South East Africa operations. Then the end of 2011 marked yet another new chapter in his Huawei career that took him even further east, to the modern metropolis of Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia. "Malaysia boasts cultural, religious and ethnic diversity: Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Confucianism and Taoism coexist. The Malay, Chinese and Indian communities live peacefully together". This cultural diversity results in cultural richness and also great local food – in fact Malaysia would be the perfect country to work and live in were it not for the constantly high temperatures, Abraham recalls: "The tropical climate means you spend most of your time in an air-conditioned environment. It is hot all through the year and each month gets plenty of sunshine. This is different from Brussels, where we have a marked contrast between the sunnier and the greyer months".

While in Kuala Lumpur, Abraham from 2012 to 2014 was responsible for Huawei's operations in the entire South East Asia – Oceania region. "This involved a lot of travel and I visited many faraway places in the Pacific in which Huawei operates". Subsequently, Abraham served as CEO of Huawei Malaysia.

With this global outlook, Abraham has now embarked on his latest chapter with Huawei: Chief Representative to the EU Institutions and Vice-President for the European Region: "I'm honoured and excited to be now contributing towards strengthening the ties between Huawei and Europe. Huawei is a responsible tech company with large investments in Europe. We are here to stay. Europe is a great civilisational project. In today's world, Huawei and the EU are natural partners to responsibly shape humanity's greatest contemporary quest: digital transformation."

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