



SPEAKING NOTES FOR EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON
DR SUNSHINE MYENDE

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING SIGNING
BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE GENERAL CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA
7 NAIVASHA, JHB

30 JULY 2026

**SPEAKING NOTES BY THE EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON OF THE NYDA ON THE
OCCASION OF THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE MOU SIGNING – *Opening and
Welcome Remarks | ±5 minutes***

30 July 2026

Programme Director;

*Mr Zhuang Binwu, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Belt and Road
Initiative General Chamber of Commerce for Southern Africa;*

Our Chief Executive Officer, Mr Ndumiso Kubekha-Hadebe;

Members of the Board of Directors of the National Youth Development Agency;

Members of the Belt and Road Initiative General Chamber of Commerce delegation;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen.

Good morning.

It is both an honour and a privilege to welcome you to the National Youth Development Agency as we gather to mark the beginning of what we believe will be a meaningful and strategic partnership between the National Youth Development Agency and the Belt and Road Initiative General Chamber of Commerce for Southern Africa.

On behalf of the 5th Board of Directors of the National Youth Development Agency, I extend our sincere appreciation to our distinguished guests from the People's Republic of China, our stakeholders and partners for joining us today. Your presence affirms a shared belief that when nations work together with purpose, they create opportunities that extend far beyond borders and generations.



The National Youth Development Agency

was established to champion the socio-economic development of young people by integrating them into the mainstream economy through entrepreneurship, skills development, employment opportunities and sustainable livelihoods. For the 5th Board of Directors, this mandate is not simply a legislative obligation, it is our defining responsibility.

We have committed ourselves to building a credible, responsive and activist Agency that places young people at the centre of South Africa's economic transformation. We believe that the future of our country will not be determined only by economic policies, but by whether our young people are equipped with the skills, opportunities and confidence to participate meaningfully in building that future.

Nearly half of South Africa's working-age population is made up of young people between the ages of 15 and 34. Yet approximately 4.7 million young South Africans remain unemployed, while almost one in every two young people is not in employment, education or training.

This year, as South Africa commemorates 50 years since the historic Soweto Uprising of 1976, we are reminded that every generation is called upon to confront the defining challenge of its time. The young people of 1976 fought courageously for political freedom, dignity and the right to shape their own future. Our responsibility, fifty years later, is to ensure that political freedom is accompanied by economic opportunity. The defining struggle of our generation is against youth unemployment, poverty and exclusion, and history will judge us by how boldly we respond to that challenge.

This Memorandum of Understanding represents a shared commitment to creating opportunities through entrepreneurship, investment, technology transfer, trade, industrial development, innovation and skills development. It reflects our shared determination to ensure that young people are not merely beneficiaries of economic growth, but active participants and drivers of it.

This partnership also speaks directly to the priorities of the 5th Board of Directors. We have consistently maintained that the NYDA must be more than an agency that responds to need. We must become a strategic enabler that connects young people to investment, enterprise development, markets, technology and global opportunities.

We are particularly encouraged that this partnership contemplates investment promotion, manufacturing, technology transfer, enterprise support and skills development. These are precisely the interventions that strengthen economies,



stimulate industrialisation and create sustainable employment opportunities for future generations.

As a country, we also have a responsibility to restore the dignity and importance of artisanship. No nation has ever industrialised without skilled artisans. Every road we travel, every bridge we cross, every school, hospital, factory and piece of infrastructure that advances our nation has been designed, built and maintained by artisans. They are the builders of nations.

For the NYDA, investing in artisans is about building South Africa's productive capacity. It is about equipping young people with practical and technical skills that will enable them to manufacture, innovate, construct, maintain and compete in an increasingly sophisticated global economy.

International relations must never exist for diplomacy alone. They must create pathways for investment, technology transfer, skills exchange and innovation that ultimately benefit South African young people. They must strengthen our industries, unlock opportunities for our entrepreneurs, empower our artisans and position our youth to compete confidently within Africa and across the global economy.

To our esteemed partners from the Belt and Road Initiative General Chamber of Commerce, thank you for recognising the potential of South Africa's young people and for choosing to partner with the National Youth Development Agency. We look forward to building a relationship founded on mutual respect, shared prosperity and a common commitment to developing the next generation of entrepreneurs, innovators, artisans and leaders.

As we sign this Memorandum today, let us remember that its success will be measured by the young artisan who acquires a new trade, by the graduate who secures meaningful employment, by the entrepreneur who builds a thriving business, by the innovator who gains access to new markets and investment. And by the young South African whose future is transformed because institutions chose partnership over isolation.

If this partnership succeeds in creating opportunities that contribute to reducing youth unemployment, strengthening youth entrepreneurship, building our industrial capabilities and restoring hope to our young people, then we can confidently say that it has fulfilled its purpose.

Because the success of the 5th Board of Directors will not be measured by the number of agreements we conclude. It will be measured by the lives we change.

I thank you.

