



SPEAKING NOTES FOR EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON
DR SUNSHINE MYENDE

**CHINA CONOMIC AND TRADE EXCHANGE
CONFERENCE, SANDTON**

20 JULY 2026



SPEAKING NOTES BY THE EXECUTIVE

CHAIRPERSON OF THE NYDA ON THE OCCASION OF THE CHINA

ECEONOMIC AND TRADE EXCHANGE CONFERENCE – *Remarks | ±10 minutes*

20 July 2026

Programme Director;

The Board of Directors of the Bank of China;

Representatives of the Shenzhen Chamber of Commerce;

Government representatives from the People's Republic of China and the Republic of South Africa;

Leaders of business and industry;

The Chief Executive Officer of the National Youth Development Agency;

Distinguished Guests;

Good afternoon.

It is a privilege to join you today at this important gathering, and I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the Bank of China and the Shenzhen Chamber of Commerce for convening a forum that brings together leaders from government, business and finance to shape a shared economic future.

Gatherings such as these remind us that the strength of international partnerships is not measured only by the agreements we sign or the investments we announce. Their true value lies in the opportunities they create, the communities they uplift and the futures they transform.

This afternoon, we meet not merely as representatives of our respective institutions, but as custodians of a relationship that has continued to deepen over nearly three decades.

The diplomatic relations between the Republic of South Africa and the People's Republic of China, formally established on 1 January 1998, marked the beginning of a partnership founded on mutual respect, solidarity and a shared commitment to development. Since then, our cooperation has expanded significantly across trade,



infrastructure, technology, education and investment, demonstrating what is possible when nations choose collaboration over competition and partnership over isolation.

Yet, while economics often dominates discussions of international relations, history consistently reminds us that enduring partnerships are ultimately built by people.

Governments across the world have increasingly recognised that people-to-people diplomacy is the foundation upon which lasting peace, stability and prosperity are built. When societies learn from one another, exchange ideas, embrace innovation and celebrate their diversity, they strengthen not only diplomatic relations but also the resilience of their economies.

Today's forum is therefore much more than an investment conference. It is an opportunity to deepen trust. To strengthen cooperation. And to build partnerships capable of delivering inclusive and sustainable growth for generations to come.

The longstanding contribution of the Chinese community to South Africa's economic and social development stands as living testimony to what can be achieved when relationships are nurtured over time and underpinned by mutual benefit.

Distinguished guests,

As the leadership of the National Youth Development Agency, we have the privilege of representing an institution whose singular mission is to unlock the potential of South Africa's young people.

Every day we engage young entrepreneurs who possess innovative ideas but lack access to markets. We meet graduates who have qualifications but no employment. We encounter young people whose resilience has never been matched by opportunity. These young South Africans are not asking for charity. They are asking for a fair opportunity to participate meaningfully in the economy.

Our responsibility is to build partnerships that convert possibility into opportunity and opportunity into prosperity. South Africa continues to confront one of the highest levels of inequality in the world, while approximately 58.4 per cent of our young people remain unemployed.

Behind this statistic are millions of individual stories. Stories of ambition. Stories of perseverance. Stories of innovation waiting to be unlocked. For us, this statistic is not merely an economic indicator. It is a call to action.



Because every unemployed young person represents untapped productivity. Every aspiring entrepreneur represents a business yet to be established. Every skilled graduate represents innovation waiting to strengthen our economy.

Distinguished guests,

Investment is often measured in rands, dollars and renminbi. But its greatest value is measured in lives changed. Every factory established creates livelihoods. Every technology transferred builds new capabilities. Every enterprise financed restores dignity. Every partnership formed creates hope.

This is why economic diplomacy must also become human diplomacy. If our bilateral relations do not improve the lives of ordinary people, particularly young people, then we have not yet realised the full promise of our partnership.

It is precisely because of this shared vision that South Africa continues to regard the People's Republic of China as one of our most important strategic trading and development partners.

The National Youth Development Agency sees tremendous potential in strengthening partnerships with the distinguished South African and Chinese companies represented here today.

We are not simply looking for investors. We are looking for partners. Partners who believe that young people are not beneficiaries of economic growth but architects of it. Partners who understand that investing in youth is among the safest long-term investments any nation can make. Partners prepared to build industries that create jobs, support entrepreneurship, transfer skills, advance innovation and strengthen local economies.

Today, I extend an open invitation to every business leader gathered in this room. Let us move beyond dialogue. Let us move beyond goodwill. Let us identify practical projects, mobilise investment and establish partnerships that place young people at the centre of industrialisation and inclusive economic growth.

The National Youth Development Agency stands ready to work alongside government, financial institutions and the private sector to transform these conversations into measurable outcomes.

Over the past year, we have made significant progress in strengthening relations with organisations such as the China Youth Federation. Earlier this year, the NYDA



facilitated an official visit to China by a delegation of South African influencers and opinion leaders.

Their experience reaffirmed our conviction that the future of South Africa-China relations must increasingly be driven by innovation, youth collaboration, entrepreneurship and the exchange of ideas.

It also reinforced the importance of deepening cooperation within the BRICS family of nations, while creating practical investment opportunities that allow young people in both countries to learn together, innovate together and prosper together.

As we look ahead, I believe there is enormous potential for collaboration in rural development, food security, enterprise development, skills development, innovation and the growth of small, medium and micro enterprises.

These are not simply sectors of our economy. They are pathways through which millions of young people can participate meaningfully in shaping the future of both our nations.

Distinguished guests,

The decisions we make today will shape the opportunities available tomorrow. Years from now, history will not ask how many speeches were delivered in this room. It will ask whether our conversations became investments. Whether those investments became businesses. Whether those businesses became jobs. Whether those jobs restored dignity to young people.

And whether our partnership succeeded in creating a generation that believes opportunity is not determined by circumstance, but by collaboration, innovation and shared purpose.

The future of South Africa-China relations will not be defined solely by the strength of our economies. It will be defined by the strength of our commitment to creating opportunities for the next generation.

On behalf of the National Youth Development Agency, I reaffirm our commitment to working alongside government, business and our Chinese counterparts to build a partnership that is bold in its ambition, practical in its implementation and transformative in its impact.

Let this forum not simply be remembered as another dialogue on investment. Let it be remembered as the moment when leaders from two nations chose to invest not only in economies, but in people. Not only in markets, but in futures. And not only in prosperity, but in the limitless potential of young people.



I thank you.