

Statement at a banquet in honour of President Zemin of the Republic of China

25 April 2000

Your Excellency President Jiang Zemin and Madame Wang Yeping,
Distinguished Vice Premier and State Councillor,
Ministers and Deputy Ministers and other members of the delegation from the People's Republic of China,
Your Excellencies Ambassadors, High Commissioners and members of the diplomatic corps,
Fellow South Africans,
Friends, Comrades, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It gives me great pleasure indeed to welcome President Jiang Zemin and his distinguished delegation to the city of Pretoria and to South Africa.

We know you have travelled a long way to come here. We thank you most sincerely for the honour you have bestowed on us by visiting our country, once more confirming your commitment to forge strong ties of friendship and solidarity with our people. Together we have already travelled a long journey.

Many in my generation remember the days when as young activists of our liberation movement we learnt from magazines such as *China Reconstructs* of how you had fought for your own liberation and how you were working to build a new life for the great Chinese people.

By watching such epic films as *The East is Red* we strengthened our resolve not to allow any obstacle to stand in the way of our own struggle to liberate ourselves.

Many veterans of our struggle remember fondly the time they spent in China when you responded positively to our request to prepare the armed cadres we required for our own struggle to free ourselves.

Like yours ours was not, as Nelson Mandela put it, an easy walk to freedom. Nevertheless that freedom came as it had to.

I would like to take this opportunity of the presence among us of so distinguished a representative of the Chinese people as President Jiang Zemin formally to convey our thanks for everything that China did to ensure that we too gain our liberation. Today, Mr President, our countries and peoples are united by a common resolve to build a better life for themselves. We are at one in the commitment to ensure that we build that better life in conditions of freedom and peace.

We are committed also to contribute what we can to ensure a more equitable international political and economic order which addresses the just aspirations of the billions of people who belong to the developing countries of our common universe.

We are determined, Mr President, to work with the People's Republic of China to achieve this objective while simultaneously contributing to the strengthening of South-South Cooperation. I am convinced that the Pretoria Declaration we sign today will form the necessary foundation to guide our work in this regard and further to strengthen and enhance our already close, constructive partnership.

I am also confident, Mr President, that all the agreements we have concluded will bring tangible benefits to the people of China and South Africa.

In the last two years since the establishment of diplomatic relations, our two countries have established a wide range of substantive relations and the bilateral agreements we signed today will give further concrete meaning to the relationship we are building between our two countries and peoples.

As you know Mr President, in addition to these, South Africa and China have also signed agreements on Trade Co-operation, Science and Technology and on the Promotion and Protection of Investments.

Among other things, these agreements will help us to promote further cooperation between us in trade and investment, scientific and technical exchanges and better access to each other's rich cultural heritage.

We look forward to the China-Africa Co-operation Forum Ministerial Conference which you will be hosting in October of this year.

We believe that this initiative represents a major building block of the mutually beneficial partnership between Africa and China, a partnership that will help all of us in Africa as we continue the difficult struggle for the success of the African Renaissance.

Once more, Mr President, I am privileged to extend to you and your distinguished delegation a warm welcome and our sincere wish that the days you will spend with us will be as happy and memorable as the days we ourselves have spent in China.

I would now like to request that we all rise to drink a toast to His Excellency, President Jiang Zemin and to friendship between the peoples of China and South Africa.

I thank you.