

## **Statement at the Official Launch of the Binational Commission in China**

Beijing, 10 December 2001

Your Excellency, President Jiang Zemin  
Ministers of the People's Republic of China  
Distinguished Diplomats  
Government ministers and officials from South Africa  
Members of the Business Delegations  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

We have crossed the long stretch of an ocean to be here with you today and in so doing have retraced a journey that must first have been taken by both our ancestors more than a thousand years ago. Our memories and our written histories tell us only of the recent past, mainly of the twentieth century, but we recognise that long before Europeans ever set foot in Africa, a rich and prosperous trade existed between the two continents of Africa and Asia.

Perhaps in many ways our meeting here in Beijing at the very first gathering of the Binational Commission is a renewal of that relationship first established in ancient times and later re-established and forged in the struggle for freedom from colonial rule and further strengthened in the present period of our modernisation.

The road that South Africa has taken to her liberation and the new democracy established in 1994 was as a result not only of the efforts of the people of South Africa, but also due to our brothers and sisters in the wider world and in the People's Republic of China. You rightly believed that the struggle of the South African people was yours and accordingly adopted and fully supported us without any hesitation.

President Zemin, you too travelled great distances to be with us in April last year and I believe that together as China and South Africa we shall walk even greater distances in the future in our mutual quest for the sustained development and prosperity.

It is in this context of firm commitment and enduring friendship that we have come together to discuss matters of mutual importance and to enhance our partnership in various ways through common understanding of what our priorities are, what is to be done and how implementation is to take place.

Clearly, we have made a good start in 2000 with the signing of the Pretoria Declaration, which, I believe, should now stand as a blueprint for our bilateral relationship and provide a basis for our multilateral discussions.

Our political relations can only go from strength to strength. We welcome the strengthening of your relationship with the African continent as outlined in the Beijing Declaration and the Programme for China-Africa Co-operation in Economic and Social Development after the Sino-African Ministerial conference in Beijing last year. In our view, much progress has already been made in the implementation of some of the commitments coming out of this conference.

South Africa believes that China can play a crucial role in the area of economic co-operation with Africa and are therefore confident that China will give full support to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and partner us in the realisation of the dreams of African renewal and the overall economic recovery of our continent. The consolidation of the New Partnership and your constructive contribution in this regard will clearly assist Africa on the road to socio-economic recovery.

Of importance, is the strengthening of our national economic relationship and I am sure that during our stay here we will explore ways and means of continuing and increasing our investments in each other's

economies in a manner that improves our trade relations and ensures greater volumes of imports and exports from both our countries.

Since the early nineties bilateral trade has expanded more than ten-fold to the extent that South Africa is now China's largest trading partner in Africa. At the same time, it is evident that there is room for improvement in our trade relations. Already, we have identified the need for closer co-operation in a number of areas including mining, telecommunication and manufacturing.

Mr. President, I am pleased that on this state visit we have also included a meeting of our respective business delegations. Clearly, they will take advantage of this occasion to strengthen links, explore further the opportunities that exist and work out mechanisms to create even better conditions for more profitable relationship on both sides.

During our engagements we will continue the discussions on the important areas of science, education and culture. As we reach new and unforeseen levels of development in an increasingly globalised and competitive international environment, the new people of this new world, of China and of South Africa, must build national and international identities of who we are and at all times remain true to the ideals of sincere friendship, peace and mutual understanding.

Together we should strengthen our collaboration in working to improve the lives of the poor and underdeveloped and ensure that the billions of our people who are suffering also experience a better and prosperous life.

It is within this national and international context that I am confident we shall work hard together for a better world that shall overcome the divides between rich and poor.

We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your well-deserved accession to the World Trade Organisation and believe that you will play a major role in this important body.

We visit China in the midst of winter cold and snow, but we believe that through this necessary process of working together, we shall cause the rays of the sun to shine on our hearts and radiate on our faces because of our success.

I thank you.