

***OPENING REMARKS FOR SAIIA CONFERENCE ON  
10 YEAR COMMEMORATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN - CHINA RELATIONS.  
By Mr. Fred Phaswana***

Good morning Ladies and Gentleman, welcome to the conference. I would like to welcome in particular the honorable Mr. Ji Peiding, Former Vice Foreign Minister of China, Member of the Standing Committee of the Tenth National People's Congress and Vice Chairman of Foreign Affairs Committee, NPC, the honorable Dr. Rob Davies, South Africa's Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry; Ambassador Zhong Jianhua, Your Excellencies other members of the diplomatic core; members of SAIIA, dear friends and colleagues.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this conference which recognizes the 10 years of formal diplomatic relations between the Republic of South Africa and the People's Republic of China for an all-important dialogue on how the deep and close links developed between China and South Africa over the last decade can be harnessed to benefit Africa. This conference is jointly hosted by the South African Institute of International Affairs and the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in South Africa.

On behalf of the South African Institute of International Affairs, I would first like to convey our deep sorrow and sympathy over the terrible tragedy that has struck China in the last week. We have been moved by the bravery and fortitude of the people of China, as well as the commitment and generosity of spirit displayed by the leaders, government and people working together to address the aftermath of the earthquake.

The last 30 years have witnessed tremendous strides made by China. Departing from a state-controlled economy China has become a highly sophisticated state-driven entrepreneurial nation. Since the late 1970's over 400 million people have been lifted out of poverty – the fastest fall in the poverty level ever witnessed in world history. Its GDP has grown to over \$1.3 trillion from only \$106 billion in 1970. Dramatic changes in agriculture, industry, education, and health care have propelled China to become a vital player on the global stage.

During the same period South Africa has undergone its own changes: the 1980's were particularly dark for our country, but in the last 15 years with the onset of democratisation South Africa has begun to grapple with both its historical legacy of apartheid and the socio-economic challenges - from high levels of unemployment, and the HIV/AIDS epidemic to the inadequate provision of basic public services, and the need to continue reforming our education system.

Both China and South Africa are pivotal in their regions, playing an active role globally. Both can greatly contribute to promoting stability and prosperity in Africa. The potential for cooperation globally and on the continent is great: from promoting the welfare of developing countries of the South, and seeking debt relief for impoverished nations, to the restructuring of key multilateral institutions like the WTO and the World Bank.

The last ten years have already witnessed considerable achievements in Sino-South African relations. With two-way trade rising to US\$9.86 billion in 2006, investment

reaching new heights with the ICBC announcement in 2007 that it was purchasing 20% of Standard Bank (A US\$5.46 billion investment, the largest ever from China into Africa) and diplomatic collaboration continuing on a solid footing, the bilateral relationship holds great potential as a driver of growth on the African continent.

In recognition of this decade of friendship, the conference over the next two days brings together Chinese and African academics and practitioners from the policy and business community to assess China's engagement with Africa and particularly how South African and Chinese co-operation can strengthen Africa's development and stability.

This collaborative effort between SAIIA and the Chinese Embassy aims to provide an opportunity to reflect on this relationship and to look into what the future focus should be in dealing with the huge socio-economic difficulties that our continent and indeed South Africa faces.

Our countries have much to learn from each other and events like these hope to contribute to mutual understanding and the challenges that we face but also the opportunities that an increased engagement on the continent provide. There are several questions that will be discussed over the next two days highlighting the need to create stable and secure societies on the path to reconstruction and sustainable development. This conference promises to be informative and engaging, providing participants with concrete insights into how Africa may benefit from the burgeoning South African-Chinese relations.

Ladies and Gentleman, we are greatly honoured to have two keynote speakers of such calibre today that will provide us with a good introduction to the themes of this conference.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the South African Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry, Dr. Rob Davies, and former Vice Foreign Minister of China, Member of the Standing Committee of the Tenth National People's Congress and Vice Chairman of Foreign Affairs Committee, NPC, Mr. Ji Peiding.

Minister Davies, both a recognised scholar and a veteran of South African politics, was elected a member of parliament in 1994, undertook policy research for the ANC and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) between 1990 and 1994, was a member of the Joint Parliamentary Assembly Bureau and ACP Co-Vice President of Human Rights from 2003 to 2005. Dr Rob Davies is also a member of the Central Committee and Political Bureau of the SACP, and is a Member of the Eminent Persons Group put in place by the Global Coalition for Africa (2003)

I'd now like to call on the honourable Deputy Minister, Dr. Rob Davies :

Hand over to Minister Davies..... (keynote address)

The honourable former Vice Minister Ji Peiding's extensive knowledge of Africa began in the late 1980's as a diplomat in Zimbabwe. From 1990 to 1993 he held the post of Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the Republic of Namibia, after which he was nominated Director-General, Department of African Affairs of the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 1995 Mr. Ji was appointed Assistant Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and from 1998 to 2003 was the Vice Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Since then he has been a Member of the Standing Committee of the Tenth National People's Congress We welcome you once again to South Africa.

Hand over to Minister Ji Peiding..... (keynote address)

Q & A