

## **South Africa and China Celebrate 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Diplomatic Ties at Beijing's Fabled Diaoyutai State Guesthouse**

**Beijing, PRC, 18 January, 2018** -The 20th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the Republic of South Africa and People's Republic of China was celebrated in Beijing today at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse, China's fabled official venue for hosting heads of state.

The reception was hosted by the Embassy of the Republic of South Africa in China, and the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC).

Attended by prominent dignitaries, diplomats, government officials and business leaders, the celebration marked the milestone year of the diplomatic relationship established between South Africa and China on January 1, 1998.

"Our relations have since continued to grow from strength-to-strength, blossoming at all levels from trade and investment to education, science and research, arts and culture, media and journalism, and close political ties," said South African Ambassador H.E. Ms Dolana Msimang.

"Our solid ties not only provide a platform for continuing diplomatic engagement with one of our most important trade partners, but are also the key to broader engagement between our two countries, strengthening relations on every front –."

Ambassador Msimang further remarked that the milestone was especially memorable, coinciding with the centennial anniversary of the life and legacy of the 'father of modern South Africa', Nelson Mandela.

"South Africa and China have never been closer, and our commitment is to forge even warmer ties into the future," added Mr. Tshepiso Malele, Acting Head of China for Brand South Africa, the government agency managing South Africa's nation brand reputation.

"This unique, warm relationship is underlined by the fact that China is now our largest trade partner, while South Africa is one of China's major import sources, and fourth largest investment destination."

China's support was also integral to South Africa joining the BRICS group of co-operating global economies – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

South Africa also has the largest Chinese community in Africa, since immigration in the 1870s gold and diamond rushes, with significant settlement since the end of apartheid in 1994 raising the Chinese population to an estimated 300,000-400,000. "I'm happy to say the Chinese South African community is actively contributing to the local economy," added Mr. Malele.

China has also become one of South Africa's core tourism markets, with visitor numbers booming by a remarkable 38 per cent in 2016 to nearly 117, 144 – or nearly 10,000 a month. Chinese visitor spending is meanwhile predicted to reach US\$100 million this year, making the country a major contributor to the tourism industry which supports one in every ten jobs in South Africa.

To encourage Chinese visitors, visa facilitation centres have also extended to 9 Chinese cities, with 2 more planned for this year, while direct Beijing-Johannesburg flights have established closer air links than ever before.

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## **Notes to the Editor**

### **About Brand South Africa**

Brand South Africa is the official marketing agency of South Africa, with a mandate to build the country's brand reputation, in order to improve its global competitiveness. Its aim is also to build pride and patriotism among South Africans, in order to contribute to social cohesion and nation brand ambassadorship.

For more information about Brand South Africa, please visit [www.brandsouthafrica.com](http://www.brandsouthafrica.com)

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