

# Signing of MoU – Student Exchange Programme

## Speech- MEC Martha Bartlett

Hunan Province, People's Republic of China

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Your Excellency;

Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to, on behalf of the Northern Cape Provincial Government, address this auspicious occasion. I would therefore like to thank the People's Republic of China and the Hunan Province for inviting us.

Our undertaking here is to consolidate our public sector relations, which are influenced by our common agenda of advancing development in our Province to eradicate poverty, unemployment and inequality, with the People's Republic of China and the Hunan Province in particular.

**Your Excellency, Ladies and gentlemen. Allow me to highlight the salient features of the Northern Cape's Economy, investment and trade opportunities:**

The Northern Cape is a landmass and, resource-wise, a giant in its own right, with an annual GDP of close to R80 billion. The current population of the Northern Cape is 1.214 million people who occupy 33% of the South African landmass. The province is located in the western part of South Africa and borders in the North West, with Namibia. The province is vast, with many remote areas that are relatively unspoiled and wild. With its variety of natural assets, it is generally regarded as a rural province.

The 0-4 and 5-9 age cohorts represent the largest percentage of the provincial population. Those under the age of 35, account for 64% (773 040) of the provincial population, implying that the provincial population is predominantly youth. On the other hand, the elderly account for 6.6% (80 307) of the provincial population.

The working age population (cohorts 15-64) accounts for 63.9 % (776 020) of the entire provincial population, which may be viewed as good news from the work force perspective.

However, the upward trajectory of provincial unemployment spells a developmental challenge and puts pressure on the province to resolve the momentum in job creation and the growing work force.

The fight against unemployment, job creation and economic growth is our central challenge as we want to have sustainable jobs for all our people. For this reason, we constantly seek to propel the economy of our Province into one which is innovative, inclusive and labour absorbing. Through our partnership with the People's Republic of China and the Hunan Province, we are raising the skills base of especially our youth to respond effectively to the social needs of our communities.

During July 2016, both provinces signed off on an implementation or action plan with specific timelines in terms of the outcomes of the agreements signed between the Northern Cape and Hunan Province.

The National Department of Higher Education and Training and the Ministry of China Commerce of the Peoples Republic of China drafted and signed an Action

Plan on the Five - Ten Year Strategic Programme for Co-operation in human resource development.

As part of the implementation programme for the period 2015 - 2024, China is offering South African students 2000 education / training opportunities, with degrees or diplomas, and 30 000 government scholarships, as well as 200 African scholars and 500 African youths to study in China.

During October 2016, Hunan Department of Education hosted an Educational Training Session in Changsha and invited and hosted officials from the Northern Cape Department of Education and the Sol Plaatje University to participate in the session where discussions centred around co-operation between Hunan Education Department and Northern Cape Education Department in terms of the broader national agreements that were signed between China and South Africa.

The Sol Plaatje University in Kimberley will generate enormous educational benefits, both nationally and globally. The year 2017 marked a historic milestone for the Sol Plaatje University. Its first B.Ed Degree

graduates successfully completed their studies at the end of the academic year. We have placed 35 B.Ed Degree graduates and they are permanently employed at schools in the Province.

I am pleased to announce that the new intake of B.Ed Degree students at the Sol Plaatje University as from 2018 is 116 bursary students, and they are funded by the Northern Cape Department of Education and the National Funza Lushaka Bursary Scheme.

An ancient Chinese philosopher and writer, known as the reputed author of the Tao Te Ching said: “Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish and he will eat for a lifetime”.

Today, we are giving effect to these profound words, as a Memorandum of Understanding will be signed as a commitment towards the education sector through a Student Exchange Programme.

This programme will mutually benefit the Northern Cape and Hunan Provinces immensely. South African students will come to China to study in world-class universities that provide them the opportunity to develop

a cross-cultural skillset which will equip them to deal with the globalised economy and China's growing role in it.

In South Africa, our education policy aims to promote personal development and life-long learning capabilities. Education helps to unleash people's potential and should enhance their virtues as well as competitiveness. Our education system nurtures not only confident people who can think independently and critically, be self-directed and strive for excellence, but also concerned citizens who take an active part in bettering their lives and the lives of those around them.

It was Nelson Mandela who said: "No country can really develop unless its citizens are educated". We cannot grow and develop a strong and vibrant economy without an education system that produces productive human capital.

The Northern Cape Provincial Government remains committed to pursue and achieve its goal of Vision 2030 of improving Basic Education.

The National Development Plan (NDP) sets targets of a higher pass rate in matric with a greater focus on subjects such as mathematics and science; it identifies the problem of too many young people dropping out before completing their matric; and it sets goals for improving the quality of teaching in schools to ensure that our young people obtain the best education possible.

We must thus join hands and create a solid educational foundation for the future of our children/youth. Access to quality basic and higher education are fundamental in the cultivation of a better life for our future leaders of South Africa and China.

The value of international partnerships such as this is immediate. The longer-term impact on people's health and well-being are significant, as the development of new technologies, products and services that drive the economy and create jobs, are the key to our shared global prosperity and quality of life.

Education and economic growth cannot be separated from one another. South Africa and specifically the Northern Cape Province with its rich natural resources have the potential to grow and develop a strong and sustainable export economy for international trade.

The Province is rapidly advancing into a knowledge, technology and value addition based economy. The key enablers towards this are the following groundbreaking projects which are also in the interest of the Southern African Development Cooperation (SADC):

- Square Kilometre Array: This is an international investment in the Northern Cape, but has a SADC footprint.
- Sol Plaatje University: The University is situated in Kimberley but serves the whole of SADC and its curriculum is based on the socio-economic needs of the region. For instance, it includes education, business management and nursing.
- Kimberley International Diamond and Jewelry Academy: This academy prepares local students to form part of the renowned global industry and thus



prepares a local skills pool to benefit from our resources.

- Uppington Special Economic Zone: This special economic zone will via incentives and cluster investors offer the region a manufacturing platform that will make manufacturers globally competitive. This will include solar components, aeronautical industries, agro-processing, medicinal purposes, etc.
- Kathu Industrial Park: This investment will focus on supplies and manufacture in the mining industry.
- Renewable energy: Generating electricity and home and industrial based solution manufacturing.
- Algae research and production plant
- Agri-parks to consolidate and beneficiate production thereby enabling rural and small scale farmers
- Tourism: An extensive route development, business tourism development programs and events i.e. Bloodhound Land speed record.
- Other high impact projects:
  - De Aar Rail Cargo Hub
  - Boegoebaai Deep Port Harbour

- Sishen Saldanha expansion
- Hotazel Coega Expansion
- Orange River Dam

In conclusion, in this globalised era, people who are able to adjust to a different environment, embrace changes and celebrate diversity are more capable of rising to the challenges ahead. As the Chinese saying goes, "You can learn more by travelling a thousand miles than by reading a thousand books." The Student Exchange Programme allows students to travel and meet people from different cultural, religious and socio-economic backgrounds, and develop a greater understanding of diversity in the process.

They will also learn to cultivate positive relationships with others, appreciate a broader range of perspectives, and acquire the knowledge and skills for participating in our multicultural societies. By applying what they have learnt, they can not only shape a better future for their own, but for the community, the country, and the world.

Ours is an ideal that strives toward the provision of requisite foundational knowledge and skills that will enable all people in the Province to meaningfully participate in the mainstream economy, including the development and growth thereof.

I thank you!