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Department:  
Small Business Development  
**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

## **ADDRESS BY MINISTER STELLA TEMBISA NDABENI**

### **PAKISTAN–SOUTH AFRICA TRADE SUMMIT**

**12 AUGUST 2025**

His Excellency Mr Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, Federal Minister for Investment, Islamic Republic of Pakistan

His Excellency Mr. Mallk Muhammad Farooq – High Commissioner of Pakistan to South Africa

Deputy Minister Hendricks

Executives from the GGDA Group

Officials from the Pakistan and South African Governments

Representatives of the Pakistan SADC Chamber Trade Federation

Business representatives from Pakistan and South Africa

Ladies and gentlemen

I am deeply honoured to address you today at the Pakistan-South Africa Trade Summit here in the vibrant city of Johannesburg. This gathering bringing together government representatives and business leaders from South Africa, Pakistan, and across Africa, signals our mutual resolve to forge deeper economic partnerships and uplift businesses, especially our small and medium-sized enterprises.

We meet a few months before Johannesburg hosts the G20 Summit later this year. This will be the first time the G20 is hosted on African soil, a landmark moment that places Africa at the centre of global economic discussions. Hosting the summit here highlights the continent's growing importance in the global economy and provides a unique opportunity to showcase African priorities on a world stage.

Last month, the Department of Small Business Development proudly hosted the StartUp20 and the Global SME Ministerial meeting, bringing together government

leaders, business innovators, and key stakeholders from more than 60 countries to champion the issues faced by African MSMEs and entrepreneurs.

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are the bedrock of Africa's economy, contributing over 80% of employment and a significant portion of GDP across the continent. In South Africa alone, MSMEs account for approximately 60% of jobs and contribute around 40% to the GDP.

Yet, their participation in regional and global value chains remains limited due to structural barriers such as limited access to finance, poor infrastructure, lack of business development services, fragmented markets, and regulatory complexities.

We are currently navigating a complex global landscape marked by geopolitical volatility, economic nationalism, and rising protectionism. It is crucial that African countries stand united to negotiate trade deals aligned with broader ambitions of value addition and industrialization.

South Africa and Pakistan have long stood in solidarity, historically, politically, and culturally. Through platforms such as the G77 plus China, the Commonwealth, and the Non-Aligned Movement, our nations have collectively voiced the aspirations of the Global South. Our peoples share more than policy; we share stories, melodies, flavours, and a love for cricket that transcends borders.

Economically, our partnership continues to evolve. Today, South Africa remains Pakistan's largest trading partner on the African continent.

South African exports to Pakistan include resource-driven goods, textiles, pharmaceuticals, and auto components.

We believe there is scope to increase exports around Agriculture and livestock (Halal market); ICT, Power and energy; and manufacturing.

South Africa with its population of 63 million people, a projected 2027 GDP of \$410 billion, and per capita income of \$6377 is an important market for Pakistan. We are



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the most advanced and diversified country on the African continent with world-class infrastructure, financial, legal and telecommunications sectors. Half of all multinationals located on the continent are found in SA. We are positioning ourselves as a continental hub for innovation, tech and fintech. We are the gateway to the African market of more than 1 billion consumers, and a rapidly growing middle class. Africa, by virtue of its youthful population, is the home of future global consumption demand. We are unlocking that through the AfCFTA, and we also have regional trade agreements through the South African Customs Union.

We have a clear country investment strategy that aims to increase levels of fixed investment from 15% of GDP to 30% of GDP by 2030.

There are many investment possibilities for Pakistan firms, in infrastructure, in the green economy including renewables and green hydrogen, in advanced manufacturing in our SEZs, in industrial hemp and other agro-processing, and in tech and digital services.

We have investment bodies you can interact with like InvestSA who are here today. Like with all foreign investments, we have regulations which must be complied with, as a country that is governed by the rule of law. Our investment promotion agencies will help you navigate these.

Like South Africa, we understand that Pakistan is building a more business-friendly environment and advancing regulatory reforms to establish Pakistan as an attractive investment destination.

Both of our countries are open for business, and we must encourage business-to-business partnerships through platforms such as this.

We must ensure small business participates and benefits from these partnerships.

As a country, we are driving reforms to remove barriers that hinder MSME competitiveness and export readiness. Our focus areas include:



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- Strengthening access to affordable finance
- Improving regulatory and compliance systems
- Providing market access and trade facilitation support
- Enhancing skills development, digital tools, and innovation capacities
- Building industrial and trade infrastructure, especially in townships, rural areas, and informal sectors.

As a department, we have an exporter development support programme that enables access through targeted export readiness initiatives, equipping MSMEs with skills and support, and facilitating cross-border trade fairs and regional trade missions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today we stand at the intersection of potential and purpose. The Trade Summit is more than a ceremonial exchange - it is a call to action. Let us commit to transforming conversations into projects, proposals into pipelines, and ideas into shared prosperity. Let us forge a future where our MSMEs are not spectators in global trade but active architects of their economic destinies.

This summit supports the growing momentum for economic collaboration between Pakistan and Africa, contributing to regional development and diversification of trade and investment portfolios on both sides.

At the heart of this collaboration must be strengthened trade and investment between Pakistan and Africa, and stronger Business to Business and Government to Government collaboration.

The collaboration must translate into improved market access for MSMEs from both countries into each other's markets – in sectors including agriculture and agro-processing, tourism, manufacturing, ICT, and services.

The collaboration must involve sharing lessons and technical exchanges both at the level of government-to-government and business-to-business around how we are



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addressing infrastructure, regulatory, and financing constraints, and how we are enabling innovation-led startups.

Our entrepreneurs are crying out for economic opportunities, and we cannot let them down.

Programme Director, as I conclude, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the organisers, the Pakistan–SADC Chamber Trade Federation and the Randburg Chamber of Commerce and Industry, for convening this meeting.

I look forward to the productive engagements ahead and the strengthened economic ties that will follow.

Thank you.