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**SPEAKING NOTES FOR THE CHINESE NEW YEAR, 18 JANUARY 2023**

**Programme Director**

**His Exellency, Ambassador Chen Xiadong**

**Madame Zhang Bin**

**Former President Motlanthe**

**Cabinet colleagues**

**Our police commissioner, General Masemola**

**Ladies and gentlemen**

It is an honour to be a part of this esteemed occasion celebrating the Chinese New Year. As we bid farewell to 2022, the Year of the Tiger, we are firm in our resolve to further strengthen business and political ties between China and South Africa.

In November last year, your acting Consul General in Cape Town, His Excellency Tang Chang’an, indicated that China was ready to strengthen cooperation with South Africa in new sectors such as 5G, digital economy, high tech, e-commerce, smart cities and clean energy. So, as we welcome 2023, the Year of the Rabbit in China – let us also make this the year of new opportunities, to benefit and safeguard the interests of citizens of both our countries and ensure that we achieve common prosperity.

We appreciate China’s willingness to support our country in exploring its modernisation, deepen cooperation in trade, investment, energy and other fields. In turn, we support Chinese enterprises investing and start businesses in South Africa, and the expansion of imports of quality products.

The past three years have been about building resilience and preparing for the return to growth. We are both excited and relieved that China is emerging out of COVID 19 intact and ready to turbo charge the growth of its economy. This is an opportunity for us. We may now finally look forward to a post pandemic era of rebuilding and creating new opportunities.

Global geopolitical ramifications are being felt far and wide. If anything, these have taught us that through collaboration, we can remain stronger and continue to grow our economies, for the benefit our current and future generations.

I’m mentioning our future generations because, our young people are always hungry and ready for new opportunities. They are the ones that will take our countries forward. Finally, I am aware that this is not a day for serious speeches. It’s a time to celebrate.

So allow me the opportunity to say – Happy New Year.

I thank you