

REMARKS BY THE MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING, DR NOBUHLE NKABANE, MP ON THE OCCASION OF THE CHINA-AFRICA-UNESCO HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE ON COOPERATION IN EDUCATION AND CULTURAL HERITAGE PROTECTION, 06 SEPTEMBER 2024 IN BEIJING, CHINA

Moderator, Ms Stefania Giannini, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education,
Your Excellency, Minister of Education of the People's Republic of China, Minister Huai Jinpeng,

Fellow Ministers of Education from the African continent and other invited countries,
UNESCO representatives present today,

Distinguished delegates and experts, ladies and gentlemen

It is my great honour to address *China-Africa-UNESCO High-Level Dialogue on Cooperation in Education and Cultural Heritage Protection*. This Dialogue is convened at an opportune moment as the African continent commemorates education as the AU theme of the Year for 2024.

The AU theme is titled: “**Educate an African fit for the 21st Century: Building Resilient Education Systems for Increased Access to Inclusive, Lifelong, Quality, and Relevant Learning in Africa**”. This initiative has provided our continent with a unique opportunity to reflect on the journey that we have travelled towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goal for Education and AU Agenda 2063 Aspirations “The Africa We Want”.

Digital education transformation is aligned to the theme of this year's Forum on China-Africa Cooperation which is “**Joining Hands to advance Modernisation and Build a High-Level China-Africa Community with a Shared Future**”. Digital skills will become a game changer in the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

The Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) remains Africa's domestication of the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4. As CESA is coming to an end in 2025, we must examine our successes and failures in achieving the CESA strategic objectives which include harnessing the capacity of ICT to improve access, quality and management of education and training systems.

The South African Government working with private partners from China have implemented the ICT training to more than 74 post school education and training institutions in South Africa. The initiative includes training of trainers and lecturers in post-school education and training institutions. We have recently concluded the Cooperation Framework between the Department of Higher Education and Training in South Africa, Huawei Technologies Africa and the Shenzhen Institute of Information Technology from China. This cooperation will pilot TVET curriculum transformation which will ultimately provide ICT skills to all TVET colleges in South Africa.

ICT is key in the realization of the objective to expand access to education. In South Africa we have recognized the need to expand the shape and size of the post school education and training system to meet the ever-growing demand from the basic education sector.

The building of new higher education institutions should take into consideration the need to modernize the ICT infrastructure. South Africa is working with progressive international partners to discuss meaningful ways to expand digital education cooperation in key multilateral structures such as FOCAC, BRICS and G20.

As a country we recently presented the National Open-Learning System (NOLS) to the G20 Education Working Group in Brazil, sharing our strategic approach towards the Fourth Industrial Revolution and ensuring that learning materials and resources are easily accessible to students in higher education institutions within the G20 countries as it is the case in BRICS countries. We would like to expand the footprint of this open-learning system to reach more students and lecturers back home, in the SADC region, our continent and the rest of the developing world. In this regard, we will work with the Peoples Republic of China and all Africa to open the doors of learning and culture for all.

Ladies and gentlemen, South Africa sponsored the UNESCO Resolution on Transforming Mentalities. A programme for the mobilisation of all men against gender-based violence and femicide. This UNESCO resolution was adopted during the 219th Session of the UNESCO Executive Board held in March 2024 in France. An important component of this work is about rolling out a soft skills programme for lifelong learning and development. We implore all countries in the African continent and beyond to support the implementation of this resolution.

Thank you.