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FREE STATE GOVERNMENT CONCLUDES STRATEGIC OUTWARD MISSION TO THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

The Free State Provincial Government Delegation has successfully concluded its strategic outward investment and trade mission to the People's Republic of China, led by Premier MaQueen Letsoha-Mathae. The mission formed part of the province's broader commitment to building strong international relations and partnerships that advance economic growth, industrialisation, innovation, skills development, tourism, and job creation for the people of the Free State.

The mission also included the Premier's participation at the 3rd High-Quality Development of Transnational Operation Forum, held under the banner of the 8th Western China International Fair for Investment and Trade (WCIFIT), one of China's leading international platforms for trade, investment promotion, and global economic cooperation, wherein she made compelling remarks on the future of global trade.

The outward mission took the provincial delegation through various strategic regions and cities in China, where engagements focused on investment attraction, industrial development, infrastructure expansion, agriculture, tourism development, manufacturing, logistics, innovation, and the strategic Maluti-a-Phofung Special Economic Zone (MAPSEZ) opportunities, particularly its development as a catalyst for individual growth and regional trade.

The mission allowed the Free State Government to study and engage in how China has successfully utilised strategic planning, industrialisation, infrastructure investment, and technology-driven development to transform local economies and improve the livelihoods of its people. These engagements were particularly important as the Free State seeks to accelerate economic transformation by leveraging its own strengths in agriculture, logistics, mining, tourism, manufacturing, and renewable energy development.

Premier Letsoha-Mathae indicated that the mission directly responds to commitments made during both the State of the Province Address (SOPA) and the Provincial Budget Vote Speech, wherein the provincial government committed itself to forging strategic

international partnerships capable of unlocking economic opportunities, attracting investment, facilitating innovation and skills transfer, and improving the lives of communities across the province.

The Premier emphasised that government remains deliberate in positioning the Free State as a competitive investment destination and a gateway for trade and industrial development within South Africa and the broader African continent, with MAPSEZ playing a central role in the Province's long-term industrialisation and export-driven growth strategy.

Among the important engagements undertaken during the mission was a strategic meeting with Shenzhen YJC Technology Co. Discussions centred around potential investment opportunities linked to the MAPSEZ, which the government continues to position as a strategic industrial hub capable of attracting manufacturing investment, enhancing logistics capacity, supporting export growth, and creating sustainable employment opportunities in the eastern corridor of the Province.

The company has, in principle, expressed a strong interest in establishing a manufacturing plant within the MAPSEZ precinct after assessing available land and infrastructure opportunities in the area. While no formal agreement has yet been signed, the government has welcomed the positive discussions and reaffirmed that all potential agreements will be subjected to the necessary legal and governance processes before any formal commitments are concluded.

The Free State Government believes that should the envisaged investment materialise successfully, it has the potential to significantly contribute towards economic revitalisation, industrial expansion, employment creation, and socio-economic transformation within Maluti-a-Phofung and the broader Free State Province.

The provincial government further noted that the mission has opened doors for future cooperation in areas including:

- infrastructure development,
- industrialisation and manufacturing,
- agriculture and agro-processing,
- tourism promotion,
- renewable energy,
- skills development and technology transfer,
- logistics and trade facilitation,
- and youth and women's economic empowerment.

Government remains encouraged by the growing interest shown by international partners in the Free State Province and reiterates its commitment to ensuring that all engagements pursued through international cooperation ultimately translate into meaningful opportunities and improved livelihoods for the people of the province.

The Free State Provincial Government will continue engaging all relevant stakeholders as discussions and cooperation processes unfold.

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