

**RESPONSE BY COUNCILLOR RETIEF ODENDAAL
THE HONOURABLE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF THE NELSON MANDELA BAY
MUNICIPALITY
TO: FIRST AUTOMOTIVE WORKS (FAW) 10 000 UNIT ROLL-OFF CELEBRATION
THURSDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 2022, FAW COEGA SEZ, AT 18H30**

Master of Ceremonies:

- *The Honourable Minister of Trade & Industry: Mr Ebrahim Patel (Virtual)*
- *The Honourable Premier EC: Mr Lubabalo Oscar Mabuyane*
- *The Honourable MEC: Mr Mlungisi Mvoko*
- *Councillor Luxolo Namette: MMC EDTA*
- *His Excellency Mr Xiaodong Chen: Chinese Ambassador to RSA (Virtual)*
- *Mr Changan Tang: Consular-General*
- *Mr Li Yongyun: CEO FAW South Africa*
- *Mr Kwezi Tiya: CEO of Coega IDZ*
- *Captains of Industry*
- *Distinguished Guests*
- *Members of the Media*
- *Ladies and Gentlemen*
- *All Protocol Observed*

Good Evening!

1. In 2012 we welcomed the announcement and signing by FAW South Africa, and unbelievably here we are today celebrating the milestone of the 10 000th unit roll-off at the Gqeberha plant of this massive investment.
2. This is indeed a magnificent achievement over such a short period and a significant turnkey investment for South Africa and one of the biggest manufacturing investments by a Chinese entity in South Africa at the time.
3. So, we are here this evening to share in the appreciation, excitement, and celebration of the FAW South Africa, for its unwavering commitment to the growth and development of the Nelson Mandela Bay. We are indeed pleased to have you in our city and thank you for making such a huge impact and contribution to the aspirations and sustainable development of the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro and its people.
4. So let us continue this positive path of cooperation and make this partnership between FAW and the NMB an even more vibrant force through meaningful interaction that will nurture our relationship to ensure it continues to be a catalyst that holds benefit for all our people. This cooperation naturally reinforces our relationship and provides an impetus to the way in which China and South Africa address the social and economic imperatives that confront both our countries.
5. This evening we reaffirm our total commitment to our partnership. A partnership we hope that will persevere for generations to come and see our peoples share in the knowledge of cooperation. With our mutual commitment, it is clear that our city, bonded by our partnership with FAW, will emerge even stronger and more determined to widen the net of cooperation. Hence, we are convinced that new chapters to our partnership will continue to emerge.

6. There can be no question that China and South Africa enjoy a very special relationship, one which continuous to hold significant promise for the growth of economic relations and co-operation in key areas. China is therefore a key contributor in the advancement of our common strategy and ongoing ties that hold great promise for both our countries and cities. Since the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and SA, the relationship between the two countries had developed rapidly.
7. We have both yielded abundant cooperation outcomes which benefitted our people magnificently. FAW has recognized the development potential of the NMB, values its infrastructure and investment services and lay emphasis on listing South Africa as one of the top priorities in its expansion of the global market and the African market.
8. And since its introduction, 29 years ago, FAW Trucks has always been committed to SA and its people. This was backed up by your decision in 2012 to invest locally and open the manufacturing plant in Coega IDZ, and at the time, one of the largest investments by a Chinese company in SA.
9. FAW South Africa, has done well to ensure economic and social benefit from its operations by integrating with the local communities and performing its social responsibilities. The NMBM will continue to nurture and support the development of the FAW plant and provide assistance in accordance with by- laws and regulations necessary to guarantee optimum production and operation.
10. The FAW Trucks manufacturing facility is a substantial employer in the NMB, providing large amounts of employment to residents of the local community, both in its own facility as well as within those of local suppliers on which it relies.
11. Remarkably, in the first quarter of 2021, the Chinese brand took top spot in the heavy commercial segment of the SA market for the first time, and to date, they continue to maintain a strong foothold in the market by continuously outselling several more established brands. Congratulations!
12. The FAW Trucks manufacturing facility has gone from strength to strength, as is evident from its 10 000th locally assembled unit rolled-off at the Coega assembly line. May you continue to enjoy exponential growth through your offering of quality commercial truck manufacturing and products that are able to cater to the unique usage requirements of South Africa and Africa markets.
13. The FAW investment we believe is a recognition of that resilience of emerging economies like ours and an acknowledgement that new coalitions and mechanisms can help address longstanding development challenges, especially in South Africa and Africa.
14. The role of the Coega Development Corporation in this regard has been indispensable because the decision by FAW was prompted by Coega's location, the proximity to the port of Ngqura, logistical solutions on offer, and the availability of skills in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan area and support mechanisms offered by the Coega Development Corporation.
15. The decision by FAW to build the plant at the Coega IDZ is hugely significant because it is the biggest manufacturing investment by a Chinese entity in South Africa to date. The plant, built on 400 000 square meters is expected to produce 5000 trucks annually, as well as light commercial vehicles and passenger cars.

16. FAW is indeed a company for the times and just what the South African market demands in terms of affordability, competitive pricing without compromising quality in any way because of its policy of simplifying the mechanics of its vehicles through simple and reliable mechanical systems.
17. Once again allow me to express our thanks and appreciation to the First Automotive Works (FAW) and the China-Africa Fund for their unwavering support to the growth and development of the Nelson Mandela Bay economy and the greater Eastern Cape region.
18. In conclusion, in the NMBM, we remain conscious of the magnitude of the demand for infrastructure development and that we have just begun in our journey towards concrete accelerated development impact. And for this reason, we will continue to seek new innovative channels and partnerships for sustainable development.

We thank you.