**MINISTRY**

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION**

 **REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

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**731. Mrs T P Msane (EFF) to ask the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation:**

How has she found China’s Belt and Road Initiative will benefit the African continent?

**NW733E**

**REPLY**

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a project and a vision of the People’s Republic of China, initiated with the intention to re-connect Asian, European and African countries along the concept of the ancient Silk Route and new Maritime Silk Road to promote mutually beneficial international cooperation.

Realising the potential benefit of this initiative to the African Continent, the African Union (AU) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with China in this regard on 27 January 2015. The MoU focused on plans to connect all 54 African countries through transportation networks and infra-structural projects, including modern highways, airports, and high-speed railways.

The BRI, in respect to Africa’s common developmental agenda, is seen as an important vehicle to realise some of the following Continental priorities:

* Industrialisation;
* Infrastructure development (which includes ICT);
* The development of Special Economic Zones and industrial parks;
* Development of the energy sector;
* Building the Oceans Economy;
* Securing development finance; and
* Human resource and skills development.

Furthermore, the BRI will assist the Continent in bringing the programmes for African development to fruition, as it is in sync with NEPAD’s developmental architecture, in which the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) is also aimed at developing regional and continental infrastructure, policies and implementation strategies.

Most importantly, there is congruence between the spirit of the BRI and the seven aspirations of Agenda 2063, i.e. to bridge the divide between people through economic development and social cooperation. As Africa is at the centre of South Africa’s Foreign Policy, the BRI would serve to enhance continued cooperation and development on the Continent towards a better Africa - and world – which remain the key foreign policy focus of South Africa. Some examples of BRI projects in Africa include the Nairobi-Mombasa railway link; and Ethiopian infrastructural developments (through the utilization of industrial parks, investment and employment has grown considerably). The BRI provides further opportunity to support regional integration and the development of regional value chains.