



human settlements

Department:
Human Settlements
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MINISTERIAL SPEAKING NOTES

ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION IN AFRICA SOUTH AFRICA INVESTMENT CONFERENCE (SAIC 2026) 31 MARCH 2026

1. Opening statement: Positioning SAIC

Programme Director

Distinguished delegates

Esteemed panellists

Ladies and gentlemen

The South Africa Investment Conference is not only about attracting investment into South Africa; it is fundamentally about positioning South Africa as a gateway to Africa and as a platform for shared continental growth and opportunity.

The strong international participation we are witnessing at this Conference is a clear affirmation of growing global confidence in South Africa, not only as an investment destination, but as a credible partner and strategic convenor for African investment.

Moderator Question

“From your perspective, what is the single most compelling reason why investors should view South Africa, and Africa more broadly, as a destination of choice at this moment?”

2. The SAIC as an instrument of Economic Diplomacy

Since its inception, the SAIC has been a deliberate instrument of economic diplomacy, one that translates diplomatic engagement into tangible investment commitments, partnerships, and implementation outcomes.

Our message to the global investment community remains clear and consistent:

South Africa is open. South Africa is ready. And South Africa is available to lead in partnering for Africa's development.

Moderator Questions

"How do we move beyond traditional diplomacy to ensure that engagements such as SAIC consistently translate into bankable projects and measurable investment outcomes?"

"What role should partnerships between governments and the private sector play in strengthening economic diplomacy across the continent?"

3. South Africa as a Gateway to Africa

Investors increasingly recognise South Africa as a strategic entry point into African markets, underpinned by strong institutions, advanced infrastructure, sophisticated financial systems, and a stable regulatory environment.

Through platforms such as SAIC, we are intentionally positioning South Africa not as a competitor within the continent, but as an enabler of regional and continental value chains, unlocking scale, efficiency and shared growth.

Moderator Questions

"What differentiates South Africa as a gateway to the continent in an increasingly competitive global investment landscape?"

"How can South Africa more effectively leverage its institutional and financial strengths to unlock regional value chains across Africa?"

4. Advancing Continental Economic Cooperation

Economic success in Africa will not be achieved through fragmentation, but through integration, scale and shared prosperity.

In this regard, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) remains central. It offers a single market, predictable regulatory frameworks, and expanded opportunities for both investors and African producers.

SAIC reinforces these objectives by aligning investment flows with export-led industrialisation and the expansion of intra-African trade.

Moderator Questions

“What practical steps are required to accelerate the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area in a way that unlocks real investment flows?”

“How do we ensure that regional integration translates into tangible opportunities for both investors and local industries?”

5. Priority areas for Africa-focused Investment

Through the SAIC platform, we are actively promoting Africa-wide cooperation across key sectors that are critical to unlocking growth:

- Infrastructure and logistics: to strengthen regional connectivity and unlock trade corridors
- Energy and the Just Energy Transition: as a shared continental opportunity for sustainable growth and resilience
- Manufacturing and industrialisation: to deepen regional value chains and support job creation
- Agro-processing and food security: to drive inclusive growth and strengthen resilience across the continent
- The digital economy: enabling new forms of cross-border trade, innovation, and service delivery

Moderator Questions

“Across the priority sectors identified, which do you believe present the most immediate, scalable investment opportunities, and why?”

“How can cross-border collaboration be strengthened to ensure these sectors drive inclusive and sustainable growth across the continent?”

6. From Commitments to Implementation

As we move forward, this phase of the investment drive must be characterised by delivery, not declarations.

Our credibility as an economic partner will increasingly be defined by our ability to translate pledges into projects, and projects into tangible development outcomes.

Economic diplomacy, therefore, must ultimately be measured by its impact on the ground, both within South Africa and across the African continent.

Moderator Questions

“What are the key barriers that continue to delay the transition from investment commitments to implementation, and how can these be addressed decisively?”

“How do we strengthen accountability mechanisms to ensure that investment pledges translate into real projects and jobs?”

7. Implications for Government and Development Sectors

This places a clear responsibility on government and key development sectors, including infrastructure, housing, and human settlements, to play an enabling role by:

- Positioning catalytic projects within regional value chains
- Supporting industrialisation and innovation, including through initiatives such as Innovative Building Technologies (IBTs)
- Ensuring that investment contributes to the development of sustainable, inclusive, and resilient African cities and communities

Moderator Questions

“What role should government play in de-risking investment and crowding in private sector participation at scale?”

“How can sectors such as infrastructure and human settlements be better positioned to support regional industrialisation and innovation?”

8. Closing Remarks

The South Africa Investment Conference demonstrates that economic diplomacy and economic cooperation in Africa are inseparable.

By working together, government, business, and our African partners, we can ensure that investment becomes a driver of shared prosperity, deeper regional integration, and long-term stability across the continent.

Moderator Questions

“If there is one bold reform or intervention that could unlock significantly greater investment across Africa, what would it be?”

“What gives you confidence that Africa is positioned to achieve sustainable, long-term investment growth?”