

China's unparalleled success in growth

700 million citizens lifted out of poverty, thanks to reforms and opening up to rest of world

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THERE is no other country in the world today that can say it has lifted 700 million of its citizens out of poverty – other than China.

South Africans were reminded of China's unparalleled success in development and poverty eradication on the occasion of the 68th anniversary of the founding of the Peoples' Republic of China yesterday.

China's new ambassador to South Africa Lin Songtian owes much of China's success to its commitment since 1978 to reform, and China's opening up to the rest of the world.

"China has made remarkable achievements in our development never before recorded.

"The GDP of China has soared from \$18.9 billion (R253bn) in 1949 to \$11.2 trillion in 2016," Lin told a massive audience at the Chinese embassy in Pretoria.

Lin stated that China had been a victim of seclusion and isolation. "After the founding of the New China, due to the foreign blockade and a highly planned economy, China was cut off from the rest of the world and her economic and social development stagnated and lagged behind."

But China's opening up brought about huge dividends. China has now become the world's second largest economy, second largest overseas investor, the world's largest manufacturer, largest trading power, largest tourism market and the country with the biggest foreign exchange reserve.

In essence, China has become a major engine to drive economic growth, contributing 31.6% to world economic growth, which exceeds the contribution of all developed countries combined.

What is truly inspirational for developing countries is the fact that China has committed itself to the ambitious goal of eradicating poverty by 2020. The Communist Party of China will chart a new course for China's future development at its upcoming 19th National Congress to be held in Beijing in a few weeks.

What makes China and South Africa such like-minded partners is that both countries have remained committed to an independent foreign policy of peace and a path of peace-



Ambassador Lin Songtian during the 68th National Day of the People's Republic of China celebrations at his country's embassy in Pretoria.

PICTURES: JACQUES NAUDE/ANA

ful development.

"China contributes more troops to UN peacekeeping missions than any other permanent member of the UN Security Council," Lin said. "Currently, over 2 500 Chinese troops are carrying out peacekeeping operations in 10 UN missions across the world. In 2016, China contributed \$844 million to UN peacekeeping costs, just second to the US, accounting for 10.2% of the total budget."

China's positive contribution to global affairs is all the more evident given the proposal by President Xi Jinping for greater multilateral

co-operation – where nations plan and build together in a new era of international relations based on win-win co-operation. This unifying spirit is all the more critical in the face of rising conservatism and isolationism across the world.

Minister of Public Works Nkosinathi Nhleko spoke at the event on behalf of the government, saying: "South Africa commends China's leadership and vision at the recent 9th Brics Summit in Xiamen."

He reminded guests of an ancient Chinese proverb which says, "If people are of one heart, even yellow earth can become gold."



Traditional dancers performing at the 68th National Day of the People's Republic of China celebrations.