REMARKS BY PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE COROBRIK KWASTINA FACILITY, DRIEFONTEIN, GAUTENG, 4 MAY 2022

Programme Director,

Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition, Mr Ebrahim Patel,

Premier of Gauteng, Mr David Makhura,

Executive Mayor of Merafong Municipality, Ms Nozuko Best,

Chairman of Corobrik, Mr Peter du Trevou,

Chief Executive Officer of Corobrik, Mr Nick Booth,

Chief Operations Officer, Mr Dirk Meyer,

Directors and Staff of Corobrik,

Representatives of organised labour,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am truly delighted to be here today.

At the 4th South Africa Investment Conference in March this year I said that we want to see investment commitments fast being turned into projects.

We want to see foundations being sunk, to hear the sound of bricks being laid and seeing cranes dotting the skyline.

We want to see factories being built and production lines being expanded.

We want to see people being employed and skills being developed.

And here today at Kwastina we are seeing the fulfilment of such investment commitments.

Here today, we are seeing the results of the R800 million investment pledged by Corobrik at the 2019 South Africa Investment Conference.

This facility is indeed impressive.

I am told it is the largest brickmaking project in the world outside of China.

It joins Corobrik’s extensive operations in the country, which include 13 clay brick plants and 14 kilns.

This investment is an example of the productive partnerships that have been forged between business and government to grow our economy and create jobs.

Since its founding in 1902, Corobrik has been a household name in South Africa.

The company is known for being a pioneer in the manufacture and supply of material for the commercial and household construction industry.

In support of our national investment drive, the investment Corobrik made in 2019 has now increased to R1 billion, as the company made an additional R200 million investment to expand its concrete operations in KwaZulu-Natal.

The manufacturing sector is one of the priority industries in our economy and continues to play a pivotal role in the creation of employment opportunities.

The construction of Kwastina created temporary employment opportunities for 1,000 people.

Of particular significance is that 30 people from the surrounding community participated as bricklayers after receiving training on this project.

At a time when the COVID-19 pandemic has had such a detrimental impact on livelihoods and income security, I wish to commend Corobrik for being a reliable employer of some 2,500 people at your various facilities across the country.

Great companies are built by investing in people, and we are greatly encouraged by Corobrik’s efforts to empower its workers.

I am told all Corobrik employees are shareholders in the business through the Staff Trust, in which 26% of the company’s share capital resides.

This staff shareholding has fostered a common interest in the well-being and continued performance of the company, all the while providing a stable employment environment.

I wish to commend you for investing in the next generation through a bursary scheme for children of staff, your Building Training Centres and your sponsorship of the Corobrik Architectural Student of the Year Programme.

I am particularly pleased to hear about your efforts to reduce the company’s carbon footprint.

I understand that Kwastina will generate 20 per cent of its electricity needs from renewable resources and there are plans to reduce natural gas consumption for the kilns by at least two-thirds.

Corobrik has also embraced the Fourth Industrial Revolution, by pursuing new technology that will enhance human-machine interaction for efficient production.

The new fully-automated production line acquired by the company means that new skills will be developed.

It is significant that Kwastina – with a production capacity of 100 million bricks per annum – will allow the company to broaden its export market to countries such as Botswana, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

In the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area, Corobrik has the potential to double its footprint and use the plentiful economic opportunities on the continent to create more job opportunities for sustainable growth.

Infrastructure is the flywheel of economic growth and development.

Infrastructure projects are vital to our economic recovery due to its multiplier effect throughout the economy and throughout society.

Two years ago, Cabinet approved the Infrastructure Investment Plan, which is made up of 62 projects from all three spheres of government, state owned entities and the private sector.

Government’s public infrastructure expenditure programme will provide an impetus for growth in the sale of Corobrik products.

Corobrik continues to play a key role in government’s infrastructure initiatives through the construction of public institutions such as the Nelson Mandela University Faculty of Law, the uMkhumbane Cultural and Heritage Museum, the North West University Vaal Administration Building, the Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital and the Sol Plaatje University.

As we proceed with the implementation of our infrastructure plan, the demand for building materials will grow substantially.

It is our intention that as much of these materials as is possible should be sourced locally.

Corobrik’s investment has made an important contribution to our ambitious investment drive of R1.2 trillion over five years.

Importantly, it has made a significant contribution to our efforts to extract greater value from our natural resources, by making its bricks from raw materials extracted from South African soil.

This is an important part of government’s efforts to support localisation, supplier and enterprise development, as well as empowerment.

Corobrik is making a vital contribution – in a very literal sense – to rebuilding South Africa’s economy

We look forward to having continuous engagements with Corobrik and other companies in the manufacturing and infrastructure sectors to unlock further opportunities and economic value.

I thank you.

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