



PROCEEDINGS REPORT

1st Zimbabwe-China Business Roundtable Discussion

THEME

Strengthening Zimbabwe-China
Business Cooperation

Organized by SARDC & CZEC

Golden Peacock Villa Hotel, Harare,
Zimbabwe ~~ 11 June 2025



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
2. INTRODUCTION	3
3. PROCEEDINGS	3
- Opening Remarks	
- Presentations	
4. KEY ISSUES AND CONCERNS	6
- Summary of Key Issues Raised by the Chinese Business Community	
- Responses and Clarifications from Zimbabwean Government Officials	
5. OUTCOMES AND ACTION POINTS	8
6. CONCLUSION	8
7. APPENDICES	9
- Agenda and Programme	
- List of participants	
- Presentations and supporting documents	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The First Zimbabwe-China Business Roundtable Discussion, held on June 11, 2025, in Harare, brought together over 100 Chinese enterprises and key Zimbabwean authorities, including the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), Zimbabwe Investment Development Agency (ZIDA), Department of Immigration, and Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Industry and Commerce. The attendance of these authorities underscored the government's commitment to addressing the concerns of Chinese investors and promoting a conducive business environment.

The roundtable discussion focused on promoting dialogue, mutual understanding, and collaboration between Chinese businesses and Zimbabwean stakeholders. Key issues discussed included safety and security concerns, immigration procedures and permits, licence amendment costs, unclear policies, and regulatory frameworks. The Chinese Business Community raised concerns about extortion and fraudulent claims by some police officers, difficulties in obtaining permits and licences, and high costs associated with licence renewal and amendment.

The Zimbabwean authorities provided clarifications and responses to the concerns raised, and follow-up actions were agreed upon to address these issues. These include clarifying international driver's licence procedures, investigating reported police harassment and corruption cases, and plans underway to streamline licensing and permit applications.

The roundtable discussion highlighted the importance of creating a conducive business environment that supports sustainable development and investment. The government of Zimbabwe reaffirmed its commitment to promoting transparency, accountability, and investor confidence. The Chinese Business Community appreciated the efforts made by the Zimbabwean government to address their concerns and expressed confidence that the issues raised would be addressed.

Key Takeaways:

- Strengthening business cooperation and investment between Zimbabwe and China;
- Addressing safety and security concerns and promoting investor confidence;
- Streamlining immigration procedures and permit applications;
- Improving transparency and accountability in licensing and permit processes;
- Enhancing collaboration between Chinese businesses and Zimbabwean stakeholders.

The Southern African Research and Documentation Centre (SARDC) and the China-Zimbabwe Exchange (CZEC), in collaboration with the Embassy of the People's Republic of China, will continue to host more Business Roundtable events. These events aim to foster a culture of dialogue and responsiveness in addressing complex issues facing investors in Zimbabwe, promoting a conducive business environment and sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe and China have strong bilateral relations that have been growing over a long period. In 2018, this relationship was elevated to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Cooperation, marking a significant milestone in the two countries' diplomatic ties. This partnership has opened up opportunities for economic cooperation, trade, and investment between the two nations. To further strengthen business collaboration and deepen mutual understanding, the China Zimbabwe Exchange Centre (CZEC) and the SARDC Institute for China Africa Studies in Southern Africa are organizing a series of roundtable discussions.

The First Zimbabwe-China Roundtable Discussion, held in Harare on 11 June 2025, is part of this initiative, aiming to promote closer cooperation through a conducive business environment that supports sustainable development and mutual benefit. The specific objectives of this initiative are to:

- Promote dialogue and mutual understanding between Chinese enterprises and Zimbabwean authorities on economic affairs, culture, laws, and regulations; and
- Establish a sustained engagement platform for interaction and collaboration between Chinese businesses and key Zimbabwean stakeholders.

The roundtable discussion was attended by representatives from various government agencies, including the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), the Department of Immigration, the Zimbabwe Investment and Development Agency (ZIDA), and Parliament of Zimbabwe, who interfaced with over 100 representatives of the Chinese Business Community in Zimbabwe.

This report provides a comprehensive overview of the roundtable discussion, covering key issues discussed, concerns raised, and follow-up actions agreed upon. The report is structured into six sections: an Executive Summary that provides a brief overview of the roundtable discussion and its outcomes; an Introduction that outlines the background on Zimbabwe-China relations and the objectives of the roundtable discussion; the Proceedings section that details the discussions and presentations; the Key Issues and Concerns section that summarizes the issues raised by the Chinese Business Community and responses from Zimbabwean government officials; the Outcomes and Action Points section that outlines the follow-up actions agreed upon; and a Conclusion that recaps the roundtable discussion and its significance for Zimbabwe-China business cooperation.

PROCEEDINGS

Opening Remarks

Munetsi Madakufamba, SARDC Executive Director, welcomed participants to the roundtable. He emphasized the importance of dialogue and mutual understanding between Chinese enterprises and Zimbabwean authorities in promoting sustainable development and mutual benefit.

The Executive Director highlighted the significance of Chinese investment in Zimbabwe, citing how it has been impactful and transformative, with China emerging as a major player in the country's economic landscape. He identified the key characteristics that set Chinese investments apart from others, including their speed of implementation, size, impact, and transformative nature. Highlighting new opportunities, he noted the importance of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) Action Plan and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in providing a strategic framework for cooperation between China and Africa.

The SARDC Executive Director emphasized the need to create a favourable investment climate that attracts more Chinese investment and promotes sustainable development in Zimbabwe. Describing capital as migratory, timid but also enterprising, Madakufamba said it is the responsibility of the host nation to provide stability to retain investment. Emphasis was placed on improving Zimbabwe's investment climate by reforming regulations, ensuring transparency, and building investor trust. Institutions such as ZIDA, Immigration, and ZRP were urged to play a proactive role in assuring the safety and long-term partnership of Chinese investment in Zimbabwe.

Zhuolin Song, the Chinese Business Community representative, commended the partnership between CZEC and SARDC, expressing appreciation for their efforts in organizing an event that fosters shared insights and tangible outcomes. This event highlights the collaborative spirit between Chinese enterprises and Zimbabwean authorities, aiming to strengthen business ties and promote sustainable development. Song emphasized the potential for meaningful dialogue to translate into actionable results that benefit both parties. His remarks underscored the importance of such initiatives in enhancing Zimbabwe-China business cooperation.

Presentations

The programme featured speakers from various agencies, including Felistas Chikandiwa from Zimbabwe Investment and Development Agency (ZIDA) on enhancing investment efficiency and transparency, Evidence Ruziwa from Department of Immigration on procedures and permits from the department, and Commissioner Abigail Moyo from Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) on safety and crime. Hon. Clemence Chiduwa from Parliament of Zimbabwe delivered reflections from a legislative perspective. Counsellor Huang Minghai from the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Zimbabwe gave closing remarks, emphasising the need for mutual understanding through dialogue. The presentations covered various topics, including:

Safety and Security and compliance with the law: The ZRP emphasized the importance of supporting investor confidence by safeguarding investment and trade activities, preventing security concerns, and promoting peaceful co-existence between Zimbabwean citizens and foreign investors. The ZRP highlighted key areas of concern, including compliance with laws and regulations, and specific issues such as unregulated use of firearms, illegal mining, and environmental degradation. The ZRP also highlighted concerns about wildlife crimes, toxic chemical disposal, money laundering, and importation of counterfeit goods.

Immigration Procedures and Permits: The Department of Immigration's mandate includes traveller clearance, issuing permits and visas, and accreditation of diplomats. The department outlined procedures and requirements for work permits, residence permits, and other relevant documentation for foreign investors and employees:

- **Visa Requirements:** Chinese nationals fall under Category B, eligible for a 30-day visa upon arrival, extendable under certain circumstances.
- **Permit Types:** The Department issues various permits, including Temporary Employment Permits (TEP), Investor Residence Permits, and Dependants' Permits.
- **Permit Requirements:** TEPs require demonstrating a genuine skills gap, advertising locally, appointing an understudy, and presenting comprehensive documents. Investor Residence Permits require proof of substantial investment, business proposals, and compliance with national licensing and tax obligations.
- **Non-Compliance:** Permit cancellation may result from insincere investments, lack of banking evidence, or other non-compliance issues.
- **Digitization:** The Department has introduced the Online Border Management System (OBMS) for online applications.

Strengthening Business Cooperation and Investment: ZIDA presentation highlighted its efforts in enhancing investment efficiency and transparency. ZIDA's mandate includes investment promotion, facilitation, and protection, and it provides a comprehensive investor journey, including inquiries, licensing, establishment support, and aftercare services. The agency has introduced several initiatives, including the One Stop Investment Service Centre (OSISC) and the Do-It-Yourself (DIY) Investor Portal, which has reduced licensing turnaround times from 21 to 5 days. China remains Zimbabwe's leading source of licensed investors between 2022 and 2025.

- **Licence Amendment Costs and Procedures:** ZIDA presented on licence amendment procedures and costs, highlighting the need for transparency and efficiency.
- **Investor Grievance Response Mechanism:** ZIDA explained on the investor grievance response mechanism, highlighting the importance of addressing investor concerns and providing support. ZIDA also provides continuous investor support through monitoring and evaluation frameworks, digital reporting tools, and regular site visits, while playing a legal and advocacy role in improving the investment environment and protecting investments through international agreements.

The Role of Parliament: Hon. Clemence Chiduwa, Chairperson of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Industry and Commerce, highlighted Parliament's three core functions: legislative, representative, and oversight. He emphasized Parliament's role in ensuring broad stakeholder representation and oversight in the implementation of economic partnerships between Zimbabwe and China. He noted that Parliament functions through 39 committees, including the Portfolio Committee on Economic Partnerships, which plays a vital role in monitoring the implementation of agreements and assessing their impact on economic activity.

- **Key Areas of Cooperation:** Hon. Chiduwa reiterated the key areas of cooperation between Zimbabwe and China, including infrastructure development, special economic zones, agriculture, environmental and social responsibility, financial alignment, and technology transfer. He also noted that Zimbabwe has 17 sectors reserved for local

empowerment and indigenisation, with Parliament committed to enforcing adherence to these policies in all foreign and local investment arrangements in the country.

Promoting Mutual Understanding Through Dialogue: Counsellor Huang Minghai, Embassy of the People's Republic of China, emphasized the importance of promoting mutual understanding through open dialogue. He commended the organisers of the event for promoting dialogue and open communication between the Chinese Business Community and the Zimbabwean Government. He expressed confidence that the issues raised would be addressed and noted that the Embassy was in close communication with different departments of the Government of Zimbabwe to address issues faced by Chinese enterprises.

The presentations and discussions provided a platform for Chinese businesses and Zimbabwean authorities to engage on key issues and challenges affecting business cooperation. The Zimbabwean authorities provided clarifications and responses to concerns raised, and follow-up actions were agreed upon to address these issues.

KEY ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Summary of Key Issues Raised by the Chinese Business Community

The Chinese Business Community in Zimbabwe raised several concerns regarding the business environment in the country. Some of the key issues include:

- ***Safety and Security Concerns:*** Allegations of extortion and fraudulent claims by some police officers, harassment of Chinese nationals, and discriminatory behaviour at airports and border posts.
- ***Extortion and Fraudulent Claims:*** Concerns about abuse of office by some police officers, demanding bribes, and fabricating business disputes.
- ***Reporting System:*** Concerns about language barriers, fear of retaliation, and need for a clear and accessible system for complaints by foreign nationals.
- ***Traffic and Documentation Issues:*** Concerns about international driver's licenses, and whether these can be used in Zimbabwe, and the process required when converting into local licenses.
- ***Immigration Procedures and Permits:*** Delays or denial of permits, difficulties in obtaining certification from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, and requirements for visa fees while waiting for residence permit extensions.
- ***Licence Amendment Costs and Procedures:*** The Chinese Business Community raised concerns about the high costs associated with licence renewal and amendment, citing unclear policies on licence requirements. Specifically, they noted that the regular renewal fee is US\$3,000 if done before or within three months of expiry, and US\$5,000 for late renewals. Furthermore, businesses that have been operating in Zimbabwe for over 10 to 20 years find the recurring renewal process too costly, as they are required to renew their licences repeatedly despite their long-standing presence in the country.
- ***Unclear Policies and Regulatory Frameworks:*** Lack of transparency in immigration procedures, poor access to updated information, and unclear policy on which documents are required for which process.

- **Language Barriers:** Challenges in reporting cases or engaging with the police due to language barriers, and difficulties in filling out immigration application forms.
- **Victimisation by Police:** Concerns that Chinese nationals are being targeted by police at roadblocks and during transportation of imported goods from borders.
- **Family Reunification:** Difficulty in bringing elderly parents into Zimbabwe for family reunification.

Responses and Clarifications from Zimbabwean Government Officials

In response to these concerns, Zimbabwean government officials provided the following clarifications and assurances:

- **Safety and Security Concerns:** The ZRP encouraged the Chinese business community to report incidents for thorough investigations. The ZRP also provided contact details of senior officers to report cases of harassment and corruption.
- **Victimisation by Police:** The ZRP assured the Chinese business community that they will investigate reported cases of police harassment and take disciplinary action where misconduct is proven.
- **Acknowledging Rogue Officers:** ZRP acknowledged the existence of rogue police officers and encouraged reporting of incidents for thorough investigations and disciplinary action.
- **Reporting Mechanisms:** ZRP shared contact details of senior officers and emphasized the multi-tier complaint system.
- **Clarification on Procedures:** ZRP confirmed the legality of international driver's licenses and pledged to seek clarification on conversion procedures and vehicle registration processes from Central Vehicle Registry (CVR) Department.
- **Investigating Unwarranted Searches:** ZRP acknowledged selective searches and pledged to investigate reported unwarranted searches.
- **Immigration Procedures and Permits:** Immigration clarified that each case is handled individually and that applicants must maintain legal status through valid visas while their permit applications are being processed. The Department also encouraged the use of official communication platforms for access to updated information.
- **Licence Amendment Costs and Procedures:** ZIDA explained that licence fees are statutory and that they have no power to change them. However, ZIDA can advocate for changes to the relevant authorities.
- **Unclear Policies and Regulatory Frameworks:** ZIDA is developing a Portal that offers a single window platform that will provide all necessary information on requirements and agencies on one platform. The platform is expected to be functional by the end of July.
- **Language Barriers:** The Department of Immigration clarified that immigration application forms have been translated into Chinese for ease of use, and that there is no fee demanded for completing immigration application forms.
- **Family Reunification:** The Department of Immigration explained that family reunification is possible but not guaranteed, and that dependent permits undergo the same vetting process as other applications.

OUTCOMES AND ACTION POINTS

The Zimbabwean government and Chinese Business Community agreed on several follow-up actions to address the concerns raised during the roundtable discussion. These actions include:

- **Clarification on the CVR one-year residency policy for licence conversion:** ZRP will follow up with the CVR on the clarification of the vehicle registration processes for foreigners.
- **Investigation of specific reported police harassment and corruption cases:** The ZRP will investigate reported cases of police harassment and corruption and take disciplinary action where misconduct is proven.
- **Addressing the issue of unethical selective searching at the airport and border posts:** The ZRP will investigate reported cases of unethical selective searching and take action to prevent such incidents in the future.
- **Launching of a Single Window Platform:** ZIDA will launch a Single Window Platform that will provide all necessary information on requirements and agencies on one platform, expected to be functional by the end of July.

CONCLUSION

The 1st Zimbabwe-China Roundtable Discussion was a significant step towards strengthening business cooperation between the two nations. The discussion provided a platform for Chinese businesses and Zimbabwean authorities to engage on key issues and challenges affecting business cooperation, and follow-up actions were agreed upon to address these issues. The roundtable discussion demonstrated the commitment of both parties to promote mutual understanding, transparency, and accountability in their business dealings.

The roundtable discussion comes as a significant platform that has potential to foster a conducive business environment that supports sustainable development and mutual benefit. Addressing the concerns raised by the Chinese Business Community is a critical step for the government of Zimbabwe to create a favourable investment climate that attracts more Chinese investment and promotes economic growth.

Future directions for Zimbabwe-China business cooperation include the implementation of the follow-up actions proposed during the roundtable discussion. These actions include the clarification of international driver's licence procedures, investigation of reported police harassment and corruption cases, and the launching of a Single Window Platform to provide all necessary information on requirements and agencies on one platform. The government of Zimbabwe and the Chinese Business Community, with facilitation from SARDC and CZEC, will continue to work together to address issues and concerns raised during the roundtable discussion, with the goal of strengthening business cooperation and promoting sustainable development.

The roundtable discussion also highlighted the importance of promoting mutual understanding through open dialogue. The Embassy of the People's Republic of China emphasized the significance of dialogue and communication in addressing issues faced by Chinese enterprises in Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwean government and Chinese Business Community are committed to maintaining open lines of communication and working together to address challenges and opportunities in their business cooperation.

The Zimbabwe-China Roundtable Discussion marked a significant step towards strengthening business cooperation between the two countries. Continued dialogue and cooperation will foster a conducive business environment that supports sustainable development and mutual benefit. The organizers plan to host more events of this nature in the coming months.



Panelists having a discussion