

# Namibia eases business travel, encourages cross-border trade and investment

To encourage more cross-border trade and investment, Namibia is improving its business environment by easing multiple-entry visa requirements for South African businesses. Namibian President Hage G. Geingob told South African businesses delegates that his government planned to remove visa restrictions hampering business travel to Namibia by South Africans.



Hage G. Geingob, president, Republic of Namibia addressed South African business last week at the launch of the South African Launch of the Invest in Namibia International Conference taking place in Windhoek next month.

“We are undertaking a number of ease of business reforms. Soon, all South African business people will be able to get multiple entry visas, and visas will be issued at the airport. Ultimately, the aim is for visa requirements to be abolished.” This move was in line with the government’s Harambee Prosperity Plan to reduce poverty and unemployment and accelerate development and industrialisation to uplift all Namibians.

The Namibian President was speaking at the official launch of the Invest in Namibia International Investment Conference to be held in Windhoek next month. The launch of the Invest in Namibia International Conference in South Africa drew hundreds of potential investors seeking opportunities for investment and business partnerships with Namibia.

Noting that the country had achieved peace and stability and recorded consistent improvement on all fronts, Geingob said: “We are now entering the second phase of the struggle – creating an environment conducive to inclusive economic growth.” This, he said, could only be achieved in win-win partnerships with neighbouring African countries such as South Africa.

## Partners in trade

The Namibian authorities launching the investment conference noted that Namibia, with a GDP growth rate of 4.4%, rapid urbanisation, political stability and sound macroeconomic management, offered solid investment opportunities for businesses based in South Africa. Trade between South Africa and Namibia has increased steadily in recent years, topping R61 billion in exports from South Africa to Namibia and R11.4 billion from Namibia to South Africa last year.

South Africa is both Namibia's top export and top import destination, with the country's main exports including diamonds, livestock, meat, fish, salt, refined zinc, copper cathodes, and metal ores – including uranium. Its main imports include vehicles and parts, agricultural and industrial equipment, furniture and household machines and ICT products.

Among the new investment opportunities now available in Namibia are a marble and granite processing plant, hardwood charcoal packaging plant, the development of a new conference centre, a tourism facility, a low-cost building system and a truck stop for the Port of Walvis Bay.

President Geingob said Namibia hoped to correct the imbalance in import and export volumes to develop greater manufacturing capacity within Namibia, for export across the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region.



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## Opportunities for further investment

Tarah Shaanika, CEO of the Namibia Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said while South Africa and Namibia were already close trading partners, there were opportunities for further investment growth across multiple sectors. "Namibia has a track record for predictable policy changes and an accessible and consultative leadership, which is very good for business," he said. "Namibia is also working very hard to grow our skills base, with a focus on vocational training in consultation with business."

He said potential investors commonly considered Namibia's relatively small population when looking at investment possibilities, but that this should not be a primary concern. "Size doesn't matter in our case. Namibia has become a transport and logistics hub for the entire region, as we have the infrastructure to move goods with ease."

Namibia's ports, rail and road infrastructures connect the country with an expanding market of nearly 250 million consumers across the SADC region.

Gabriel Sinimbo, permanent secretary in the Namibian Ministry of Industrialisation, Trade and SME Development, noted that Namibia also offered a range of incentives for investors in manufacturing capacity development, including building and transportation allowances, training incentives, cash grants and export promotion allowances.

## Intra-African trade

Namibian Finance Minister Calle Schlettwein added: "Only through increased intra-African trade and investment can our potential to bring about prosperity be realised. There is a fresh breeze blowing, but that fresh breeze must be sustained and fuelled by continued peace and stability, by continued and improved transparency, by maintaining macroeconomic

stability, by improving our competitiveness, maintaining and improving our sophisticated financial services sector, by a better environment in which to do business, and through better governance.

All that we do must end in shared prosperity: more jobs, better wealth distribution and deeper economic integration cross-border. Namibia is asking the business community to invest but is not doing so empty handed. We offer an excellent basket of incentives and fantastic prospects for good returns that can be repatriated freely.”

Jeff Radebe, Minister in the Presidency of the Republic of South Africa, said Namibia and South Africa had 71 agreements and Memoranda of Understanding in place across a broad spectrum of areas. “We acknowledge Namibia’s continued importance as a major trading partner of South Africa,” he said.

Pointing out that intra-African trade stood at only 13%, with immense scope for growth, Gauteng Premier David Makhura urged business to turn national agreements into concrete plans to grow trade and investment across the SADC region. “We would like our cities, municipalities, and firms to do more to translate national agreements into action. Gauteng stands ready to make its own contribution and seize the opportunities presented by our continent’s economic growth. We have the skills and resources to contribute to the industrialisation of Namibia and the entire SADC region,” he said.

*The 2016 Invest in Namibia International Investment Conference will take place in Windhoek from 8 – 9 November, under the theme ‘Promoting Investment for Inclusive Growth and Industrialisation’. The event will present investment opportunities in the areas of Energy, Agriculture, Low-Cost Housing, Tourism, Manufacturing and Infrastructure Development. The High Commissioner, H.E. Veicco K. Nghiwete will lead a delegation of South African businesses and investors to Namibia.*

*Businesses and investors interested in being part of the South African delegation are advised to contact the Commercial Office at the High Commission for the Republic of Namibia. at Tel: (012) 342 3060 or email: [comcounsellor@namibia.org.za](mailto:comcounsellor@namibia.org.za)*

*Mrs Bonaventura Hinda, Commercial Counsellor at the High Commission will facilitate business-to-business meetings with Namibian companies/institutions during the upcoming conference.*

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