

SA, UK in bilateral talks

South Africa and British authorities are today holding bilateral talks in Cape Town which will see the two countries establishing a business council to facilitate trade and economic activities.



(Image: GOIS)

Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, and her counterpart William Hague of the United Kingdom, will co-chair the 10th session under the theme "Job creation focusing on youth employment" - which according to the ministry is in support of the national priorities of South Africa.

At the forum, the two countries will have an opportunity to reflect on the development cooperation programme, as well as the visa regime that is applicable.

South Africa continues to push for a return to a visa-free travel status for citizens and businesses visiting the UK.

In 2009, a visa regime was introduced in South Africa, Swaziland and Lesotho after the UK complained about the ease with which foreigners acquired passports fraudulently.

However, the UK seems impressed by the strides that government has taken in improving the passport security features and clapping down of corrupt officials at Home Affairs.

A Youth Empowerment Dialogue will also be held on the margins of the forum, according to Dirco.

Coordinating cooperation

Established in 1997 the forum, which is held every two years, coordinates cooperation between the two countries.

"At this Forum, a Joint Strategy was adopted by both countries that encompass a five-year programme of action covering the period 2011-2015.

"The Strategy commits both countries to collaborating on a broad range of areas at the national, regional and international level. Accordingly, the 2013 Bilateral Forum is a mid-term review of the Strategy," says the Department of International Relations and Cooperation.

The United Kingdom is an important trade and investment partner for South Africa.

"It is a priority for South Africa to maintain the current level of economic relations and to continue attracting investment in niche areas."

It is also a significant source of long-haul tourists from Europe with close to 440,000 British tourists visiting South Africa in 2012.

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