

Hillary Clinton in SA to strengthen relations

US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham-Clinton, who is on a four-day visit to South Africa, has a packed itinerary.

Clinton is on an official visit to the country to consolidate existing bilateral political and economic relations between South Africa and the US.

The Secretary of State kicks off her day by meeting a business delegation and senior government officials as she attends the annual US-South Africa Strategic Dialogue meeting, at the Department of International Relations and Cooperation headquarters - OR Tambo Building - in Pretoria.

She will then have talks with International Relations and Cooperation Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, where they will discuss a "range of issues of mutual interest" before holding a joint press conference in the afternoon.

Clinton will then pay a courtesy call on newly-elected Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, at the Presidential Guesthouse.

Dlamini Zuma is the first woman leader and candidate of the Southern region to occupy the position of the AU Commission chairpersonship in the 49 years since the inception of the OAU and the 10 years of the African Union.

Yesterday, Clinton met her friend and former President Nelson Mandela at his village home in Qunu for a private lunch.

Official pictures sent out by the Nelson Mandela Foundation showed Mandela - wearing a grey cardigan and sitting on a wingback chair, flanked by his wife Graca and Clinton - smiling for the camera.

Clinton's husband and former US President Bill Clinton last month visited Mandela for his 94th birthday.

Meanwhile, the inaugural South Africa-United States business summit kicked off on Monday with a call for enhanced economic cooperation between the two countries.

The summit, which coincides with Clinton's visit, featured remarks from business executives and senior US and South African government officials.

Speaking at the summit, Public Enterprises Minister Malusi Gigaba called on the US to invest in South Africa.

"We would like to work with you to make direct investments into the South African economy and to develop South African companies to become part of your global supply chains," Gigaba said.

"We do not want you only to buy from South African companies for the South African market, we want to see these companies exporting into the regional and global market through your supply chain."

A business delegation of approximately 10 US companies took part in the summit, which is part of a trade mission that also includes Pretoria and Cape Town.

"The mission showcases our commitment to highlighting investment opportunities in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in infrastructure," the US State Department said in a statement.

"The US government is committed to assist and facilitate trade and investment through its existing programmes and advocacy both in the United States and through its embassies and missions in South Africa and throughout sub-Saharan Africa," the department said.

South Africa is the leading market in Africa for American goods, and the US is both an important export market and a source of foreign direct investment for South Africa.

South African exports to the US were valued at about US\$8m in 2010 compared with about US\$6m in 2009, and about US\$10m in 2008. Imports to South Africa from the US were valued about US\$6m in 2010 and about US\$9m US dollars in 2008.

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