

Presidency gears up for Obama visit

The Presidency says it's all systems go for the historic visit of US President Barack Obama to South Africa.



Obama and his family arrive in South Africa tonight as part of the US President's three-nation African tour.

Several crucial issues affecting Washington and Pretoria are expected to be discussed when Obama meets Zuma at the Union Buildings tomorrow.

It is Obama's second visit to South Africa, but his first as US President. Talks at the Union Buildings are expected to cover strengthening the status of bilateral relations, trade and investments, education, health, development assistance as well as security and development cooperation in Africa.

"South Africa values its warm and mutually beneficial relationship with the United States immensely. This is a significant visit which will take political, economic and people to people relations between the two countries to a higher level, while also enhancing cooperation between US and the African continent at large," said a statement from the Presidency.

The United States is a major trade, investment, tourism and technology partner for South Africa. There are 600 US companies in South Africa employing more than 150,000 local people.

This week, the Department of International Relations and Cooperation said the visit would further strengthen US-SA dialogue in areas including health, education, agriculture, law enforcement, trade, investment, energy, nuclear security and non-proliferation, and regional security.

Solidarity appreciated

The Presidency noted that the visit also takes place just a few months before South Africa celebrates 20 years of freedom.

"South Africa greatly appreciates the solidarity provided by the Anti-Apartheid Movement in the United States during the struggle for liberation.

"The historic visit also coincides with the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Organisation of African Unity and presents an opportunity to showcase progress since the establishment of the African Union and to discuss cooperation on matters of socio-economic development as well as peace and security in the continent."

President Zuma will be accompanied by the Ministers of International Relations and Cooperation, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, State Security Dr Siyabonga Cwele, Health Dr Aaron Motsoaledi and Economic Development Ebrahim Patel.

On Wednesday, Trade and Industry Minister Rob Davies said Obama's visit would not only help strengthen ties between the two countries but would also serve as an important showcase for the economy.

"The reality is that Africa is turning around ... We are looking at partnerships that will strengthen our economy," Davies said, adding that for this to happen, South Africa had to focus on integrating African countries into the global economy through infrastructure development on the continent.

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