

UBUNTU NEWSFLASH



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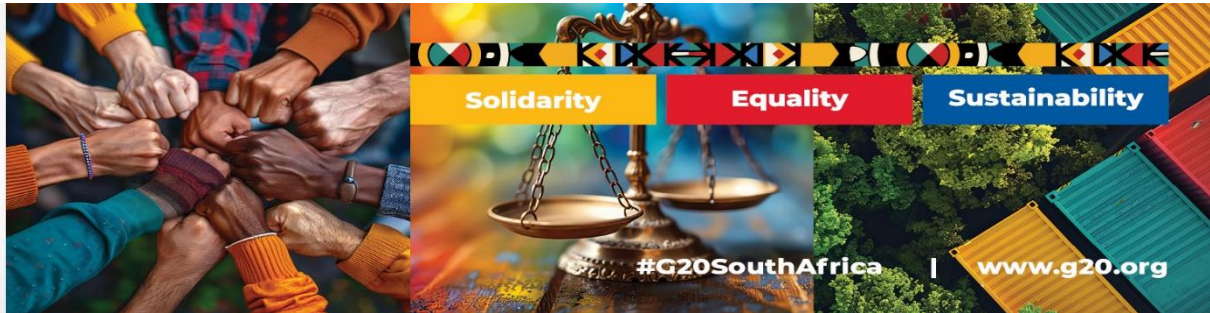
WEEKLY ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION

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PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA TO UNDERTAKE WORKING VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

President Cyril Ramaphosa will embark on a Working Visit to the United States of America (USA) from 19 to 22 May 2025.

On Wednesday, 21 May 2025, President Cyril Ramaphosa will meet with President Donald Trump at the White House in Washington DC to discuss bilateral, regional and global issues of interest.

The President's visit to the US provides a platform to reset the strategic relationship between the two countries.

– Source: www.thepresidency.gov.za



PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA CONCLUDES WORKING VISIT TO REPUBLIC OF CÔTE D’IVOIRE

President Cyril Ramaphosa has concluded his Working Visit to the Republic of Côte d’Ivoire. The President was accompanied by Minister of Mineral and Petroleum Resources Gwede Mantashe, Minister of Electricity and Energy Dr Kgosientsho Ramokgopa, and Deputy Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition Zuko Godlimpi.



“President Cyril Ramaphosa held a bilateral meeting with His Excellency Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d’Ivoire, to discuss matters of mutual interest. The two leaders committed to strengthening bilateral ties and to increasing trade between their countries.

“President Ramaphosa also used the Africa CEO Forum as a platform to promote Pan-African trade through the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and align key themes of South Africa’s G20 presidency with issues of interest for the African continent,” The Presidency said.

During the forum, the President participated in a panel discussion with his counterparts from Mauritania and Rwanda.

“[The] Presidential Panel discussion explored better coordinated efforts to spearhead Africa’s development.

“The Africa CEO Forum is the leading platform for CEOs of the largest continental and multinational companies, investors, heads of state and government, ministers, and representatives of financial institutions.

“Since its launch, the event has served as the place of high-level business meetings where new innovations are showcased and business ideas are exchanged,” The Presidency said.

The 14th edition of the forum is expected to be held in South Africa in 2027. – Source: SAnews.gov.za

AFRICA CEO FORUM: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR “AFRICA-FOCUSED TRADE AND INVESTMENT”

President Cyril Ramaphosa says his Working Visit to Côte d’Ivoire this week to attend the Africa CEO Forum was an opportunity to deepen investment and trade with the rest of the continent.

The President was addressing the nation through his weekly newsletter on Monday, 12 May 2025.

The forum—which expected to host some 3 000 delegates—serves as a platform for multinational CEOs on the continent, investors and government leaders to gather and conduct high-level meetings on innovation and business ideas.

“South Africa is greatly encouraged by a new wave of continental business expansion. We are forging ahead to deepen investment and trade with the rest of the continent in a manner that contributes to shared prosperity for all Africa’s people,” he said.

The President said South Africa’s intra-continental trading has a long-standing history and that the Africa Continental Free Trade Area would provide a “predictable and conducive environment for business to thrive across borders”.

“Since the advent of democracy in 1994, our government has implemented several initiatives to promote trade and investment elsewhere on the continent, including partnerships and trade agreements.

“We are witnessing the benefits of these efforts. The latest trade statistics, published by the South African Revenue Service, point to increased exports to countries in the region, like Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, and Namibia, as well as with the rest of Africa.

“We are determined to use the longstanding presence of South African companies on our continent to expand trade and investment with fellow African nations,” he said.

President Ramaphosa noted that the current global “upheavals” in the global economy present an opportunity for an Africa-focused trade and investment policy.

Furthermore, he emphasised the country's commitment to “play a leading role in Africa’s economic integration”.



“South African business must be at the forefront of the transformation of African industry. As government, we are committed to provide the necessary supportive policy and regulatory frameworks.

“By equal measure, we will be making the case for African firms to invest in South Africa. We have a diverse economy with highly developed industrial sectors. We have established industries in mining, agriculture, manufacturing, financial and professional services, IT and others.

“South Africa is a leader in digital innovation on the continent and one of the leading incubators of tech start-ups. The World Intellectual Property Organisation ranks South Africa second among economies in sub-Saharan Africa in the Global Innovation Index,” he said.

On the business front, President Ramaphosa relayed that South Africa's structural reform process is aimed at producing an economy that supports business development and attracts investment.

“The structural reform process began under the sixth administration and continued under the Government of National Unity. It aims to position South Africa as a premier trade and investment destination.

“We are working to make our economy more competitive by reducing the cost of doing business, improving our infrastructure and investing in skills development. We are reforming our visa regime to attract skills and promote tourism in South Africa,” the President said. – Source: SAnews.gov.za

DEPUTY PRESIDENT MASHATILE EXPLORES TOURISM'S POTENTIAL TO BOOST AFRICA'S ECONOMY



Africa’s Travel Indaba 2025 officially kicked off on 13 May 2025, with Deputy President Paul Mashatile using the platform to highlight the continent’s vast, untapped tourism potential.

Speaking at the opening ceremony in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, Deputy President Mashatile highlighted Africa’s rich cultural heritage and economic opportunities in the tourism sector.

According to the Deputy President, tourism is projected to contribute 10.4% to Africa’s gross domestic product (GDP) by 2030, currently standing at 6.8%.

However, according to the Deputy President, South Africa alone sees tourism contributing 8.9% to its GDP and supporting 1.6 million jobs, with plans to expand this to over two million jobs by 2030.

Africa’s Travel Indaba is an iconic African leisure trade show, owned by South African Tourism, with the specific objective of creating market access for a vast array of African leisure tourism products.

The three-day event, held during Africa Month, celebrates the continent’s unity and potential, with a focus on promoting inter-African travel and breaking down barriers.

“This month, we are reminded to forge unity and strengthen the bonds of solidarity and cooperation among the African states. This is a call we must never forsake until we witness a more integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa.”

Key themes include sustainable tourism, regional integration, and leveraging the upcoming Group of 20 (G20) Leaders’ Summit to showcase the continent’s global economic significance.

He also stressed the importance of intra-African trade, infrastructure development, and digital transformation to boost tourism and reflected on late President Nelson Mandela’s speech at the Indaba International Tourism Workshop, emphasising the commitment to boosting Africa’s tourism industry.

The Deputy President also highlighted the contributions of African leaders like Jomo Kenyatta, Julius Nyerere, and Thomas Sankara in achieving political independence and transforming the continent.

“Due to their contributions in achieving political independence, Africa is now welcoming many tourists to explore its beauty, marvels, hospitality, and culture. Many travellers are drawn to uncover the roots that shaped these remarkable men and women of our continent, and for this, we should be proud.”

He believes that Africa’s attractions and influx of tourists also mean that the continent is an important part of the world’s economy, politics, growth, and humanity.

“Despite being separated by man-made borders, the humanity of the African people permeates the veins of all African countries.

“Our unity is cemented by social cohesion.”

He is of the view that this is a reminder of how unique Africans are, created with love, compassion, and care that are inextricably linked to their identities.

“Our humanity makes us stand out in the world’s melting pot of cultures, traditions, and heritage.”

He acknowledged the challenges Africa faces, including political strife, poverty, unemployment, and inequality, which have led to widespread misery and violence.

However, he took the time to call for collective action to confront these challenges and uncover enduring solutions, stressing the role of tourism as a significant economic engine and catalyst for social change.

The Indaba serves as a platform for African nations to collaborate, showcase their attractions, and develop strategies for inclusive tourism growth that benefits local communities, women, youth, and people with disabilities.

With the theme *Unlimited Africa*, the conference aims to position the continent at the centre of global economic conversations and tourism development.

According to the Deputy President, Africa needs to invest more in skills development and digital transformation for the tourism sector to thrive.

“We must foster innovation and sustainable practices to ensure long-term economic growth. Let us celebrate the bond that unites Africa, honouring the vibrant cultures, breathtaking landscapes, and the incredible people that make this continent shine with brilliance.

“Let us demonstrate to the world that Africa is ready for business.” – Source: SAnews.gov.za

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SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT URGES “DE-ESCALATION” IN INDIA-PAKISTAN TENSIONS

The South African government has called for a de-escalation in the brewing tensions between India and Pakistan.

This, according to Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Ronald Lamola, who delivered remarks at the Solidarity Conference on Women, Peace and Security held in Tshwane on Friday, 9 May 2025.

The India-Pakistan tensions—which have seen both sides launching attacks—stem from a terrorist attack, which killed some 26 people in an India-controlled part of Kashmir, last month.

“The South African government expresses concern over the escalating tensions between India and Pakistan. We call for de-escalation and restraint.

“All efforts should be taken to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure while ensuring that there are concerted efforts from both parties to negotiate a peaceful settlement to the rising conflict,” Minister Lamola said.

On the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, Minister Lamola said the war has “become a flashpoint of global tensions”, with economic consequences that reach beyond Europe’s borders.

“This includes disruptions to global food supply chains and energy markets. South Africa has always contended that once a ceasefire is in place, everything must be discussed and that we need to continue to call for a ceasefire and that peace must be found on the negotiation table by both parties with the help of the international communities,” he said.

Turning to the Israel-Hamas conflict currently playing itself out in Gaza, Minister Lamola said the war “poses a grave threat not only to local peace but also to broader regional stability”.

“It is a conflict that reverberates across international diplomatic corridors. It’s a conflict that is unfolding in the full glare of the world.

“South Africa’s decision to bring a case against Israel to the International Court of Justice was not taken lightly. It was grounded in the belief that pursuing justice is never without cost, that truth often challenges entrenched power and that moral leadership requires the courage to confront global injustice,” he said.

The Minister reiterated the South African government’s foreign policy grounded in elements including non-alignment, respect for international law, commitment to multilateralism, diplomacy and peaceful negotiations.

“In summary, we are anti-war. We are a peace-loving nation. These values are rooted in our own history of struggle against injustice and reflect our aspirations to contribute to a fairer and more peaceful international order.

“In a polarised world, South Africa has maintained open diplomatic channels. South Africa has long supported the peace process that aligns with its foreign policy principles of promoting peace, stability and development on the continent with a vision to build a better South Africa and better world,” Minister Lamola said. – Source: SAnews.gov.za

MINISTER LAMOLA CALLS FOR ACTION ON WOMEN'S HEAVY BURDEN OF CONFLICT AND WAR

Women disproportionately shoulder the heaviest burdens during times of regional conflict and rising geopolitical divisions—a stark reality underscored by Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Ronald Lamola.

The Minister was speaking at the Solidarity Conference on Women, Peace and Security, held in Tshwane, on Friday, 9 May 2025.

Minister Lamola said the world is currently in a rapidly evolving geopolitical environment “defined by rising global competition, changing alliances, contested international norms, economic volatility and escalating geopolitical tensions”.

“These deepening geopolitical divisions are fuelling mistrust and threatening to undo hard-won progress in addressing global challenges such as poverty, armed conflicts, climate change, pandemics, nuclear proliferation, and the rights and well-being of women and children.





“In the midst of these constantly changing global dynamics, the world currently faces more than 50 ongoing armed conflicts spanning a wide range of regions and scales. In these conflicts, no region is spared. These conflicts have caused millions of deaths, the displacement of refugees, human rights violations, and infrastructure destruction.

“In all of this, women bear the heaviest burden as carers, as survivors, and as protectors of families and communities. But some women are also actively fighting in the field, side by side with men,” the Minister said.

According to United Nations Women, more than 600 million women and girls lived within 50km of conflict zones in 2023—a rise of some 50% in the past decade.

The international body also reports that the proportion of women killed in conflict doubled in 2023, and more than 3 500 cases of conflict-related sexual violence were recorded.

Minister Lamola said despite the circumstances, women are leaders in their own right and called on the international community to “also listen, learn and follow their lead”.

“But women are not only victims. African women are leaders, mediators, healers and architects of peace. From the townships of South Africa to the highlands of Ethiopia and from the marketplace of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the refugee camps of Sudan, women are doing the daily, often invisible work of conflict resolution, mending broken social fabric, advocating for justice and demanding a seat at decision-making processes.

“African women are pioneering local peace processes, creating community resilience programmes, leading truth and reconciliation efforts and holding armed actors accountable,” he said.

The Minister noted that although much has been done to foster women’s inclusion in security structures in Africa, “women are not easily found at peace negotiation tables”.

“We cannot talk about Africa’s future without talking about the safety and dignity of African women.

“We cannot dream of unity while half the population is still denied a voice in decisions that shape our collective destiny, and we cannot build peace without those who have always been its most consistent guardians—our mothers, sisters, daughters, and grandmothers,” Minister Lamola said. – Source: SAnews.gov.za

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LAUNCH OF OFFICIAL G20 SONG

Branch: Public Diplomacy (Team G20 South Africa) is proud to introduce the official G20 song.

Titled *Africa’s Call*, the song, performed by local South African artist Ndu Shezi with WAV Choir, was officially released for streaming on Friday, 9 May 2025, on various digital platforms. South Africa assumed presidency of the Group of Twenty (G20) from 1 December 2024 until 30 November 2025, and it is the first time that this premier global group is led and hosted by an African country. Presiding under the theme *Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability*, South Africa further extends its message of hope and spirit of Ubuntu to the world through song. *Africa’s Call* is now available for streaming on various digital platforms.



WATCH THE VIDEO

The song intends to create more awareness for South Africa's G20 Presidency through a cultural angle, thereby reaching a broader audience, both domestically and internationally. It is also an extension of our G20 presidency's key messaging.

You may access it on your available devices via streaming platforms, including:

- Apple Music
- Spotify
- YouTube/YouTube Music

Africa's Call—sharing the spirit of Ubuntu through South Africa's G20 Presidency.

– Source: www.dirco.gov.za

ACADEMICS AND BROADER SOCIETY URGED TO SHAPE G20 AGENDA

A new initiative launched by the University of South Africa (UNISA) at the institution's Muckleneuk campus in Pretoria on 14 May 2025 is aimed at shaping the agenda of South Africa's Group of Twenty (G20) presidency through a diversity of voices from communities across the country.



UNISA's Principal and Vice Chancellor, Professor Puleng LenkaBula, told participants at the inaugural G20 Town Hall Engagement that the theme chosen by South Africa for its G20 leadership—Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability—resonates with the challenges facing the world today.

“The issue of sustainability cannot be overemphasised. All of us sitting here have somewhat been affected by the climatic changes, ecological degradation, and sometimes the delayed implementation systems on how these could be addressed,” said Prof. LenkaBula.

UNISA, one of the largest distance learning higher education institutions in the world with a presence beyond South Africa's borders, including in Ethiopia, Eritrea, the United Kingdom, and the United States, was hoping to contribute to thought leadership through the G20 Town Hall Engagement programme, which is to be rolled out to other provinces.

Prof. LenkaBula said the G20 town hall initiative was aimed at mobilising the participation of communities and soliciting their views on “the great questions of our times”, citing as examples the prevailing geopolitical atmosphere characterised by tensions, trade wars and competition.

Elaborating on the issue of solidarity, Prof. LenkaBula said this called for an emphasis on the interconnectedness of the world and the need for collective action. Equally important, she said, is addressing “systemic disparities, promoting social justice on the global scale” and halting violence, wars, discrimination—all of which “alienate others”.

Masotsha Mnguni, G20 project co-ordinator in the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), said since the start of its presidency of the G20 in December 2024, South Africa has hosted a total of 53 meetings across the two G20 tracks, the Sherpa and Finance Tracks.

At the beginning of its presidency, South Africa announced that it planned to host a total of 130 meetings, which will culminate in the G20 Leaders' Summit. The summit is scheduled to take place in Johannesburg on 22 and 23 November 2025.

Mnguni reminded participants that South Africa had identified four priorities for its presidency of the G20. These are:

- Strengthening disaster resilience and response
- Ensuring debt sustainability for low-income countries
- Mobilising finance for a just energy transition
- Harnessing critical minerals for inclusive growth and sustainable development.

Panel member, UNISA's Ambassador-in-Residence and veteran diplomat, Ambassador Nosipho Mxakato-Diseko, said the focus on critical minerals recognises prevailing trends in technological advancements and global trade. She urged South Africa to use its position as president of the G20 to drive the narrative on critical minerals towards promoting Africa's interests.

Ambassador Mxakato-Diseko served as co-chair, together with the European Union's Director-General for Energy, Ditte Juul Jørgensen, of the UN Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals. The panel was appointed by UN Secretary-General António Guterres in April 2024, tasked with developing "a set of global common and voluntary principles to safeguard environmental and social standards and embed justice in the energy transition". – Source: Nelson Kgwete, G20 media team, www.dirco.gov.za

SOUTH AFRICA ENGAGES USA ON RESETTLEMENT CONCERNS

The Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) has engaged its United States of America (USA) counterparts on the resettlement of South Africans claiming refugee status in that country.

This follows reports that the US is preparing to fly at least 50 Afrikaner South Africans to the US as early as this coming week.

In a statement, DIRCO revealed that Deputy Minister Alvin Botes on Friday, 9 May 2025, held a cordial discussion and raised concern with US Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau in this regard.

DIRCO noted the internationally recognised definition of refugees, as set out in the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol.

"The Convention defines a refugee as someone with a 'well-founded fear of persecution' based on race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.

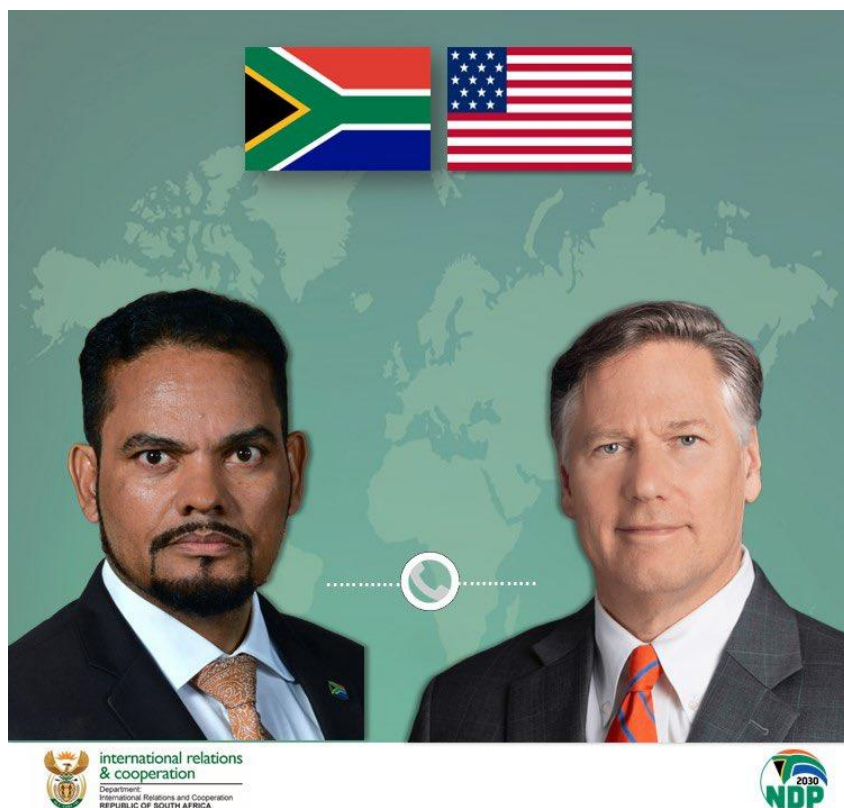
"South Africa acknowledges that the determination of refugee status requires a factual assessment in light of the prevailing circumstances, having due regard for both subjective and objective factors," the statement read.

The department maintained that "allegations of discrimination are unfounded" in this particular regard.

"The South African Police Service (SAPS) statistics on farm-related crimes do not support allegations of violent crime targeted at farmers generally or any particular race. There are sufficient structures available within South Africa to address concerns of discrimination.

"Moreover, even if there are allegations of discrimination, it is our view that these do not meet the threshold of persecution required under domestic and international refugee law," DIRCO said.

The department said it was "most regrettable" that it appears that the resettlement, under the guise of being "refugees", is "entirely politically motivated and designed to question South Africa's constitutional democracy".



“[South Africa is] a country which has in fact suffered true persecution under apartheid rule and has worked tirelessly to prevent such levels of discrimination from ever occurring again, including through the entrenchment of rights in our Constitution, which is enforced vigorously through our judicial system.

“In addition, it is not clear how the principle of non-refoulement will be applied in relation to these citizens once they are resettled,” DIRCO said.

South Africa’s Constitution strictly prohibits any form of discrimination, directly or indirectly, against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language, and birth.

“Through progressive judgements from the South African courts, particularly the Constitutional Court, our State has demonstrated a principled commitment to protect minorities and vulnerable groups. This shows the extent to which South Africa is working towards a country in which every citizen is free and protected,” the department said.

Through diplomatic channels, DIRCO has requested the following information:

- The status of persons that will be departing, whether as asylum seekers, refugees or ordinary citizens, and
- Assurances as to whether the persons have been appropriately vetted by competent South African authorities to ensure that they do not have any outstanding criminal cases pending against them, amongst others.

“While South Africa challenges the US’ assessments of alleged refugee status, it will not block citizens who seek to depart the country from doing so, as it also observes their right of freedom of movement and freedom of choice, specifically the right to leave the country, as contained in section 21(2) of the Constitution.

“However, it is essential that in doing so, South Africa ensures that it is compliant with other domestic laws and prescripts.

“The Government of South Africa remains dedicated to constructive dialogue with the USA, anchored in mutual respect for sovereignty, the rule of law, and a shared commitment to deepening mutually beneficial bilateral partnership,” the statement concluded. – Source: www.dirco.gov.za

UN UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR DISARMAMENT AFFAIRS, IZUMI NAKAMITSU, VISITS SOUTH AFRICA

United Nations (UN) Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, visited South Africa from 14 to 17 May 2025.

Her Office, the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (ODA), is responsible for all matters pertaining to weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and arms control, conventional arms, outer space, ICT security, and new and emerging technologies in relation to weapons.

The UNODA plays a vital role in supporting the UN system in matters related to weapons of mass destruction (WMD) disarmament, non-proliferation, the right of states to use sensitive technologies for peaceful purposes and arms control. The ODA is also responsible for the UN regional disarmament centres, such as the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC) in Lome. It services the Conference on Disarmament (CD) through the UN Office in Geneva and the UN Disarmament Commission in New York. The ODA acts as the Secretariat for the UN First Committee on disarmament and international security, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), the CD, and the UN Disarmament Commission, among other multilateral agreements and processes in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

The Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) and the South African Institute for International Affairs (SAIIA) hosted the Under-Secretary-General at OR Tambo Building on 14 May 2025 for an interactive engagement with South African academia and civil society.



The Under-Secretary-General’s commitment to the multilateral system demonstrates the value she places on member states’ substantive contributions to the UN. Ms Nakamitsu’s visit to South Africa underlines the country’s commitment to its obligations under the NPT, TPNW, CWC, BWC, the CD, the UNDC and the First Committee of the UN General Assembly, and its readiness to support other states on the continent. South Africa is a responsible user and promoter of peaceful nuclear technologies and we welcome the Under-Secretary-General’s visit. – Source: www.dirco.gov.za

MINISTER JOHN STEENHUISEN APPLAUDS THE FIRST SEASON SHIPMENT OF SOUTH AFRICAN AVOCADOS TO CHINA

The Minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen, has conveyed his deep satisfaction with the South African avocado industry's active pursuit of international markets, which is evidenced by the season's first shipment reaching Shanghai, China.



One of Minister Steenhuisen's priorities is to improve market access for South African agriculture. Since market access is essential for the profitability and sustainability of the agricultural sector, it is therefore of utmost importance that the Department of Agriculture plays a key role in expanding existing markets and opening new markets for South African agricultural products. The expansion of markets stimulates the demand for South African products, and this demand, in turn, drives economic growth and job creation across the sector.

"This 'early bird shipment' to China is a testament to the hard work, innovation, and strategic foresight within our avocado industry.

"South Africa is positioned as a major player in the global avocado market thanks to the investment made by businesses like ZZ2 in cutting-edge packhouses and nurseries, Core Fruit's well-established expertise in exports, and Mission Produce's global reach," Minister Steenhuisen said.

The Minister further highlighted South African producers' strategic advantages, which include a shorter shipping time to China compared to major competitors like Peru. This logistical edge, coupled with ZZ2's early production timing, allows South African avocados to access the Chinese market during a period of lower supply.

In August 2023, South Africa and China concluded a phytosanitary agreement that saw the first arrival of 21 tonnes South African avocados, from Westfalia Fruits, in Shanghai on 8 October 2024. With the 2024 shipment, South Africa became the third African nation to enter the Chinese market, following in the footsteps of Kenya. – Source: www.gov.za

G20 PRESIDENCY: AFRICA IS READY

South Africa's Presidency of the Group of Twenty (G20) is a "defining moment" not only for the country but for the entire African continent.

This, according to Tourism Minister Patricia de Lille, who was delivering remarks during the opening of the second G20 Tourism Working Group (TWG) meeting held in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, on Sunday, 11 May 2025.

"South Africa's very proud to host the G20 for the first time on African soil. It's a defining moment for South Africa and for the rest of the continent because the G20 nations represent 85% of the global economy, 75% of international trade and 67% of the world's population.



“In partnership with the African Union (AU), we will provide a vital voice in global discussions, especially concerning issues affecting developing nations on the continent. Now, we do not take this responsibility lightly because we need to highlight Africa’s developmental agenda and promote equity in global governance,” she said.

Minister de Lille highlighted that South Africa’s theme for its presidency, *Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability*, is aligned with the AU’s Agenda 2063, which is Africa’s blueprint and master plan for transforming the continent into the global powerhouse of the future.

“South Africa’s G20 presidency highlights our commitment to tourism, innovation, and investment and also enhancing air connectivity and developing inclusive and sustainable tourism practises.

“So far and for the rest of the year, we will be hosting more than 130 G20-related meetings across our country, providing unparalleled opportunities to showcase our country, our venues, our facilities, [and the] business collaboration because all of this in the end contributes to job creation and also driving investment.

“This G20 Summit, to us, is more than just an event. It is a statement that Africa is ready to take its rightful place in the global economic leadership. It also demonstrates our proven ability to host safe, world-class events on this scale in our country,” the Minister said.

Tourism Working Group

The Minister reminded meeting delegates of the key deliverables for the working group during their deliberations.

These include:

- people-centred artificial intelligence (AI) and innovation to enhance travel and tourism start-ups and SMMEs;
- tourism financing and investment to enhance equality and promote sustainable development;
- air connectivity for seamless travel; and
- enhanced resilience for inclusive and sustainable tourism development.

“The TWG also serves as a forum for the growth and development of sustainable tourism by promoting dialogue, and the exchange of knowledge and best practices among the G20 members. Let us learn from each other.

“There’s not always a need to reinvent the wheel. Let us look at the tried and tested methods, solutions and experience that we find amongst the G20 member states because sometimes we tend to do things, starting anew. Let us learn from those best practices.

“And so, as the G20 TWG, we must deliver on an action plan. I really look forward to your in-depth discussions for the work of the G20 to reach consensus on what needs to be done and what we need to achieve,” she said.

In September this year, South Africa will host the G20 Ministers’ Meeting.

Minister de Lille said one of the main objectives of the meeting will be to discuss how to position tourism as a driver of economic, social and environmental change.

“[The meeting will also] explore the potential for tourism and travel to support the economic recovery of many countries as well as long-term transformation to a green economy.

“We must also better articulate and communicate the economic and developmental case for tourism, and [lift] the mainstream travel and tourism sector voice in the global agenda by building a more effective voice for the sector.

“We must also mobilise a collective effort among us to build a sensible tourism policy framework that will help influence at country-level and international, economic and development policies,” she said.

The Minister urged the delegates to come up with solutions that will propel the sector.

“When we meet again later in September, I really want us to not only say that this is the first time that we are hosting the G20 on African soil. I want us also to say and acknowledge that having had the event here, we were able to come up with solutions that are moving the tourism sector forward,” Minister de Lille said. – Source: SAnews.gov.za

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HOW SOUTH AFRICA’S CONSERVATION EFFORTS CAN THRIVE WITH INDIAN PARTNERSHIP

South Africa's conservation legacy is globally renowned, celebrated for its breathtaking biodiversity and species found nowhere else on Earth. Yet beneath this pride lies a harsh truth: our conservation model is under strain.

A recent report by the Sustainable Landscape Finance Coalition revealed that South Africa faces a 64% funding shortfall in biodiversity conservation. SANParks alone operates with an annual deficit nearing a quarter of a billion rand.

These are not just statistics; they represent underpaid rangers, stalled community land restitution efforts, and vulnerable species crying for care. It is clear: if we are to safeguard our natural heritage, we must welcome bold, international partnerships—especially those rooted in scientific integrity, shared values, and long-term vision.



One of the most promising opportunities lies with India—and specifically, a pioneering conservation initiative called the Greens Zoological Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre, an affiliate of Vantara.

A partner with proven impact

Vantara is a groundbreaking conservation facility in Gujarat, India, spanning over 3000 acres and caring for more than 2 000 animals across 43 species. Its elephant care unit is the largest in the world, complete with an on-site hospital, a fleet of 75 custom-engineered ambulances, and a blend of modern and traditional veterinary care.

But Vantara's significance lies not just in its scale. It lies in its results. Its collaboration with the Association for the Conservation of Threatened Parrots (ACTP) led to the reintroduction of 41 Spix's Macaws into the wild in Brazil, an achievement once thought impossible.

This kind of strategic, science-led success is exactly what South Africa can benefit from. Encouragingly, the South African government has already engaged with Vantara, laying the groundwork for deeper, more strategic cooperation.

Science, scale and shared purpose

India boasts impressive credentials in animal conservation, backed by a rich biodiversity and a deep cultural reverence for wildlife. The country is home to nearly 4000 research institutions and employs over 165 000 scientists, compared to just under 20 000 in South Africa.

This disparity is not a threat; it is an opportunity. Imagine the impact of co-led research hubs, shared data ecosystems, and jointly managed conservation corridors.

With flagship initiatives like Project Tiger, launched in 1973, India has emerged as a global leader in big cat conservation and is now home to over 70% of the world's wild tiger population. Building on this legacy, India recently launched the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)—a visionary effort to unite countries for the conservation of the world's seven big cats: tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard, puma, jaguar, and cheetah.

South Africa, home to iconic species like the lion and cheetah, has been invited to join the IBCA. This partnership offers not just prestige but a platform for global cooperation in science, conservation training, and habitat restoration. India's robust legal framework, including the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, and a vast network of protected areas, further reinforces its leadership in this space.

India's track record in community-based conservation also offers replicable models where local people are not passive bystanders but active partners in protection.

A call for collaborative conservation

Conservation in the 21st century cannot rely solely on national budgets or siloed expertise. It requires trust, transparency, and true partnership. South Africa should not only welcome institutions like Vantara —we should help shape the future of conservation alongside them.

We cannot afford to delay the urgent work of protecting our ecosystems. The future of our planet's most precious species depends on bold, innovative, and international partnerships. The time for collaborative conservation is now. – Source: www.bizcommunity.com (By Dr Nomfundo N.V. Mnisi)

MICROFILM GIVES A GLIMPSE INTO THE MIND OF A MAMBA

A microfilm is spotlighting the Black Mambas, a fierce group of women who work in the Kruger to protect our wildlife.

The Black Mambas, an all-female anti-poaching unit formed in 2013, have been a longstanding source of inspiration to their communities. These fearless women have defied initial scepticism, operating without firearms to protect wildlife, and have successfully saved numerous animals from the deadly snares of poachers.

Some of their team have gone on to earn incredible acknowledgements, like Sergeant Nkateko Letti Mzimba, who won the conservation “Oscar” for Best Field Ranger in Africa, while the team as a whole have supported countless efforts of good for conservation, from their daily doings as rangers to educational awareness for the next generation.



The microfilm by Wisani Ngwenya puts two Black Mambas into the spotlight: Leitha Mkhabela (Black Mambas Supervisor) and Malongani Naledi (a Crime Prevention Unit Sergeant).

In a short but impactful clip, the two women share what led them to the Black Mambas, what challenges they face and an insight into their brave mindsets.

As Leitha shares, the greater mission of the Mambas is to make the Greater Kruger a harder place for poachers to poach. She was inspired to join the unit after learning of its male-dominated underpinnings and wanted to be one of the trailblazing women protecting animals.



Malongani was drawn to the Mambas because of the rhinos. She didn’t just want to be any hero but rather one who protects the precious species.

Of course, this is a field of challenges. It’s dangerous, demanding and not for the fainthearted. The Mambas shared that consistent challenges range from elephants chasing them to finding animals trapped in snares. But, as both explain, they are trained for it all.

What was incredible to watch was the passion both Mambas spoke with and the humility. These are women who are contributing to a better future for our wildlife every day—through their hands-on work for wildlife, the education initiatives via the Bush Babies Programme and by inspiring more women to break the glass ceiling. Yet, they were remarkably humble in the way that all good leaders are. Indeed, not all heroes wear capes; some (in this case) wear camouflage.

“Being a Black Mamba, it means I’m unique and I’m beautiful. And I’m a woman; I’m a mother. I have a little girl, and she shares with me the love or motherhood with the animals, so that makes me a mother of the Earth.”—Leitha Mkhabela. – Source: www.goodthingsguy.com

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SOUTH AFRICA’S LUXURY TRAIN RANKS AMONG THE WORLD’S BEST

South Africa’s Rovos Rail has been recognised as the fourth-best luxury train journey globally in 2025, according to a study by Japan Rail Pass. This accolade highlights the train’s commitment to providing an opulent and immersive travel experience that resonates with modern luxury travellers seeking cultural richness and sustainable adventures.

A journey through time: The legacy of Rovos Rail

Established in 1989 by entrepreneur Rohan Vos, Rovos Rail has transformed vintage rail travel into a symbol of elegance and nostalgia. Operating from Capital Park Station in Pretoria, the company meticulously restores historical carriages, some dating back to 1911, blending Edwardian charm with contemporary comforts.

The train offers various routes across Southern Africa, including journeys from Pretoria to Cape Town, Victoria Falls, and even as far as Dar es Salaam. Each voyage is designed to showcase the continent’s diverse landscapes and rich heritage.

Onboard elegance: suites and amenities

Rovos Rail's accommodations are the epitome of luxury, featuring three suite categories:



- Pullman Suites: Compact yet comfortable, these suites include a sofa that converts into a double bed and an en-suite bathroom with a shower.
- Deluxe Suites: Offering more space, these suites feature a lounge area, double bed, and en-suite bathroom with a shower.
- Royal Suites: Occupying half a carriage, these opulent suites boast a private lounge, Victorian-style bathtub, and en-suite bathroom.

The train's public areas include elegant dining cars, a lounge, a smoking lounge, and an observation car with an open-air balcony, allowing guests to soak in the panoramic views of the African landscape.

Culinary delights and timeless ambiance

Dining aboard Rovos Rail is a formal affair, with guests dressing elegantly for multi-course meals served in ornate dining cars. The cuisine emphasises fresh, local ingredients, complemented by a selection of South African wines.

In keeping with the train's vintage ambiance, there are no televisions or radios onboard, encouraging guests to unwind and engage with the journey and fellow travellers.

Embracing the renaissance of luxury train travel

The recognition of Rovos Rail as one of the world's premier luxury train journeys underscores a broader trend in travel preferences. Modern luxury travellers are increasingly seeking experiences that offer cultural immersion, adventure, and a connection to history, rather than traditional opulence. Rovos Rail's commitment to these values positions it as a leader in the renaissance of luxury train travel. – Source: www.capetownetc.com

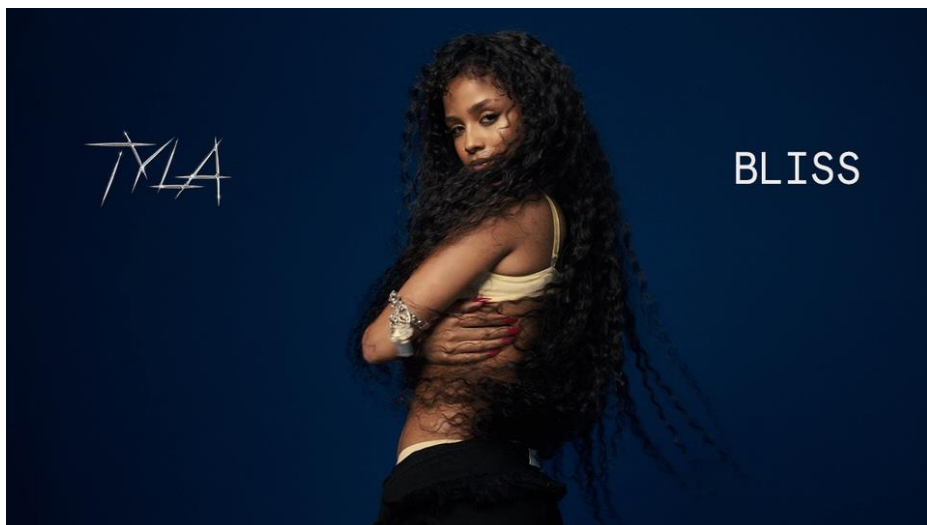
SOUTH AFRICA'S TYLA RELEASES *BLISS*

There's something special about watching one of our own take on the world and win. Tyla, South Africa's global music sensation, has just dropped her brand-new single "Bliss" and fans across the globe are already calling it a masterpiece. After teasing the track during her show-stopping performance at Coachella last month, the full version of "Bliss" finally landed, and it's everything we hoped it would be.



Tyla, who has quickly become one of the most exciting voices in music today, continues to blend her roots with modern global sounds in a way that only she can. Known for her genre-defying mix of pop, R&B, and amapiano (which fans affectionately call popiano), Tyla has carved out a lane that feels refreshingly her own, and with *Bliss*, she's only pushing the boundaries further.

The track was produced by Nolan Lambroza, Dylan Wiggins, and NovaWav, and is layered with a hypnotic Afrofusion beat that wraps around Tyla's breathy vocals like a dream. Drawing from the nostalgic rhythms of old-school R&B while embracing futuristic pop flair, *Bliss* is the kind of song you put on and just let play again and again.



In her own words, Tyla describes this new chapter as an evolution.

“I’ve changed a lot in a short amount of time because I was kind of forced to—with how fast I had to adapt to everything. I don’t think it’s going to be the same energy at all, especially with what I’ve started making. It’s different, but also still Tyla.”

From Johannesburg to the biggest stages in the world, Tyla continues to fly our flag high with style, grace and fierce talent. And *Bliss* is another reminder that the future of music has a proudly South African soundtrack. – Source: www.goodthingsguy.com

SOUTH AFRICA SHINES AT WORLD ATHLETICS RELAYS CHAMPIONSHIP WITH DOUBLE GOLD AND RECORDS

There was double gold and records for South Africa at the World Athletics Relay Championship in Guangzhou, China, on Sunday, 11 May 2025, after the men’s 4X100m and 4X400m teams blazed to victory, while the women’s 4X400m team claimed bronze.



WATCH THE VIDEO

The South African men’s 4x100m quartet—Bayanda Walaza, Sinesipho Dambile, Bradley Nkoana and Akani Simbine—scorched around the track in a world-leading 37.61 seconds to claim gold.

Walaza, the under-20 world 100m and 200m champion, got the team off to the perfect start, while Dambile and Nkoana ensured they were in second at the final change.

All eyes were then on the in-form Simbine, the fastest man over 100m this year. And the back-to-back Diamond League winner didn’t disappoint. He hauled in Brandon Hicklin of the United States (US) with a burst of pace off the bend that has become his trademark to turn Olympic silver into gold.

The US was second, in 37.66, and Canada was third.

The South African team had set the fastest time of their first-round heat, of 37.84 seconds, and lowered that in the final. They were just 0.04 seconds outside the South African record of 37.57, which the national squad achieved when they earned silver at last year’s Olympic Games in Paris.

The men’s 4x400m team were equally superb, with Gardeo Isaacs, Udemé Okon, Leendert Koekemoer, and Zakithi Nene storming to gold in 2:57.50.

They ripped 0.62 off the South African record of 2:58.12 set by Nene, Isaacs, Lythe Pillay, and Antonie Nortje when they finished fifth at the Paris Olympics. Behind them, the next-best team was Belgium, who completed the four laps in 2:58.19 to take the second spot on the podium.

In the women’s 4x400m final, the quartet of Shirley Nekhubui, Miranda Coetzee, Precious Molepo, and Zeney Geldenhuys clocked 3:24.84 to grab the bronze medal. They shattered the national mark of 3:28.01 set by Nekhubui, Molepo, Geldenhuys and Hannah van Niekerk in the heats the day before.

Ahead of them, Spain won gold in 3:24.13, and the US earned the silver medal in 3:24.72. The South African mixed 4x400m team of Van Niekerk, Mthi Mthimkulu, Jada van Staden and Tumisang Shezi took fifth place in 3:16.29.

All four South African squads reached the finals of their events with solid performances in the heats on Saturday and thus qualified automatically for the World Athletics Championships to be held in Tokyo in September.

"We are besides ourselves with joy. Ecstatic is probably the best way to describe our emotions. We entered for four events and we succeeded in three," said James Moloi, the President of Athletics South Africa.

"When the team left here, they were in high spirits and looked good at the three-day pre-departure camp in Johannesburg. They've met the mandate of targeting the podium in each event.

"You win some and you lose some, and fortune favoured the more prepared.

"We are very grateful and proud of our athletes, our coaches and all members of management for the good work.

The triumphant SA team returned home on Tuesday, 13 May 2025. – Source: www.iol.co.za

RYAN SANDES COMPLETES TOUGHEST RACE YET, EARNING SECOND PLACE

Sandes is celebrating finishing second at the Cocodona 250 in 61 hours, 21 minutes, and 4 seconds; he traversed over 402km, making it his most challenging race yet.

The Red Bull ultra-endurance athlete completed one of the most gruelling races in the global trail, which took place from 4 to 8 May 2025 in Arizona, United States of America. It spanned 402 km and over 11 000 metres of elevation gain, pushing even the most seasoned athletes to the limit. The route includes climbs equivalent to ascending Everest 1.25 times.

Sandes finished second overall with a time of 61 hours, 21 minutes, and 4 seconds, marking one of the most impressive performances of his career.



Speaking on the epic accomplishments, Sandes shared some insights into how he pushed through the challenges and what it felt like coming in second.

"This was my first 250-miler, so I focused on looking after myself throughout—rotating gear, eating properly, and not rushing aid stations. Even in the final 100km, I took my time to reset before the last steep climbs. My only real goal was to finish strong."

Historically, more than 50% of competitors drop out of the race, unable to finish. The gruelling race tests not only physical endurance but mental strength, too. Facing challenges on the trail adds to the setbacks runners can experience; weather is a major contributor, and for Sandes, lack of sleep took a significant toll on his race as well.

"The weather caught us off guard. Rain, snow, thick mud. It felt like running with ankle weights. I had a moment of hypothermia on the second night and thought my race was over. But I pushed through by running hard to warm up. I only had about 30 minutes of actual sleep the entire race—the fatigue was brutal."

"Honestly, the mental fatigue was the hardest part. You slow down a lot when you're that tired, and it becomes dangerous. I think in future, I'll approach that differently. Sleep becomes more important than you realise because once you hit a certain fatigue level, your performance drops significantly."

With the elevation of this race being so high, it required Sandes to take a different approach to his training and prep.

“My prep for this race was probably the biggest I’ve ever done—three solid months of high mileage and consistency, which gave me a lot of confidence heading in. The course is brutal, with loads of climbing and some fast, flat sections, though we didn’t get as much heat this year as expected.

“I do track my heart rate on my Garmin, but to be honest, I mostly run by feel. I believe in staying in tune with your body—knowing when to push, when to fuel, and when to ease off. I aim for a certain carb intake per hour, but I also adjust based on how I’m feeling. That’s what I love about a race like this—it’s such a big, ever-changing puzzle, and you’re constantly figuring it out as you go. I enjoyed that part.”

Sandes has been flying the South African flag high throughout his career and has pushed himself to the limit not only to win but also to finish races, which have been his greatest challenges. The Cocodona 250 was a first and an epic challenge to complete. Getting to the end, in second place no less, is a major notch on his belt and a huge moment for endurance runners in South Africa.

“Cocodona took me deeper than any race ever has—physically and mentally. It’s amazing that after almost two decades of racing, I can still find events that spark that fire.

What makes it even more rewarding is that after 18 years of racing, I still find exciting events. Signing up for Cocodona reignited something in me—I felt a bit stagnant last year, especially after UTMB, and this brought the fire back. This result means a lot to me.” – Source: www.goodthingsguy.com

SOUTH AFRICA’S JUNIOR AQUATICS TEAM ARE THE CHAMPIONS OF THE CONTINENT

South Africa’s Junior Aquatics Team has been crowned the champions of the African continent thanks to their stellar medal-haul at the 16th Africa Junior Swimming Championships.

Thanks to a stellar series of performances at the recent 16th Africa Junior Swimming Championships, Team South Africa’s Juniors walked away with not only an impressive medal haul but also a finish at the top of the medal table. The championships, held in Cairo from 30 April to 4 May, saw talent from all over Africa compete for the coveted spot.

According to Africa Aquatics, the SA Junior team earned an incredible 52 medals overall; 25 of these medals were gold, while 17 were silver and 10 were bronze.

Egypt scooped the second overall spot at the Africa Junior Swimming Championships, ultimately claiming a total of 43 medals.



“South Africa showed incredible strength, skill and unity in the pool. Your hard work and dedication paid off—you’ve made your nation and the entire continent proud!” Africa Aquatics shared proudly. – Source: www.goodthingsguy.com

KIRA BESTER CLAIMS THREE WINS ACROSS THREE OCEANS IN SEVEN DAYS

South African surfski superstar Kira Bester has opened the 2025 season like a champion. Claiming three wins across three oceans in just seven days, the reigning 2024 ICF Canoe Ocean Racing World Champion showcased a flair of dominance few could match.

The campaign began on home soil with a powerful performance at the South African Surfski Championships, in which Bester outpaced the field on the 21k course from Simon's Town to Fish Hoek.

"That win meant a lot," reflected Kira. "It's a tough course that demands physical and tactical strength. I had to work smart and draw on the strength of the paddlers around me. To take the title was a huge sense of relief and pride."



Only a few days later, it was time for her next victory. Teaming up with powerhouse Melanie van Niekerk, the two tackled the Freedom Paddle—South Africa's premier doubles ocean race around Robben Island.

"Mel was phenomenal in the back," Bester said. "Her power and experience were unmatched, and I learnt so much from her. I just focused on steering clean lines and keeping us efficient—it was a real team effort."

The final leg of her whirlwind week was in Villajoyosa, Spain, where she secured the overall women's title at the ICF Canoe Ocean Racing World Cup.

"This event has been on my bucket list for a while, so to win it was massive. The competition was world-class, and to come out on top on an international stage gives me huge confidence going forward," she said.

While her results speak volumes, the campaign came with its challenges.

"Mentally, staying sharp through back-to-back races took a lot," Bester admitted. "There were moments of doubt and exhaustion, but I leaned on my team and kept focused on one race at a time." Key to her success, Bester credits her training environment, singling out Pete Cole of the Orka squad for surfski preparation and Mitch for gym-based strength and conditioning.

"The balance they bring to my routine—on the water and in the gym—has been a winning formula. I'm lucky to have them both in my corner."

For younger paddlers watching her success, Bester encourages perseverance and confidence, sharing:

"Don't be afraid to get uncomfortable—that's where the growth happens. When I started, I was one of the few girls on the water and often felt out of place. But that became my motivation. Find your passion, show up every day, and celebrate the small wins."

Looking ahead, Bester's sights are now set on the 2025 ICF Canoe Ocean Racing World Championships, to be held in Durban, South Africa.

"It's a huge opportunity to race against the world's best on home soil," she says.

"Durban's ocean is unpredictable and exciting—I'm preparing hard and giving it everything and I'll be proud no matter the result, but yes, I'm absolutely racing to win." – Source: www.goodthingsguy.com

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FOURTEEN-YEAR-OLD CALEB BECOMES INTERNATIONAL MASTER OF CHESS

South Africa's latest International Master (IM) of chess has officially been announced as fourteen-year-old Caleb Levitan.

It's a monumental achievement for any chess player, let alone one who is still in high school. In fact, there are only a handful of International Masters of Chess in South Africa, with the teenager becoming the 10th and none so early on in their careers. As such, Levitan has accomplished what most spend lifetimes striving towards.

Levitan (who was also recently recognised as South Africa's Top Active Chess Player by Rating) earned his place as an International Master more than a decade after South Africa's last IM, Daniel Cawdery.



“Caleb’s achievement is really meaningful,” says Emil Sutovsky, International Chess Federation (FIDE) CEO. “It speaks volumes about his potential—which was noticeable already a few years back. Caleb participated in several camps and training sessions—as well as many championships organised by FIDE, and we are looking forward to providing more opportunities, including educational programmes, aimed at the world’s most talented young players. South Africa is on its way to have a new Grandmaster after a long hiatus—and FIDE is happy and proud about that.”

The International Master title is awarded by FIDE, the global chess federation. It is awarded to chess players who demonstrate sustained excellence at a high level and are just one step below the Grandmaster title.

To earn an IM title, a player needs to have achieved three IM norms; tournament performances that meet strict international standards; and reach a FIDE rating of 2400 or higher at any point. This way, FIDE can ensure that the title reflects not only peak achievement but also consistent competitive strength.

Levitan’s chess development, though seemingly rapid, is actually the result of years of disciplined play in both local and international arenas. His first big break came about in 2018 when he was just eight years old. Then, he and his twin brother Judah shared first place at the African Youth Chess Championship in Kenya. Judah is currently a Candidate Master who is currently ranked among the top 10 chess players in South Africa. Together, the twins are making South Africa proud with each move.

Levitan continued to ascend throughout different competitions, and in 2024 became the youngest South African to represent the rainbow nation at the Chess Olympiad that year.

Of his IM title, Caleb shares that “There have been a lot of sacrifices to get to this level, and I’m relieved that all the hard work paid off; I’m incredibly grateful for the support of my family, friends, and my amazing coaches. Hopefully there’s more to come—my dream is to become a Grandmaster.” – Source: www.goodthingsguy.com

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