

Govt hosts media tours across Gauteng

PRETORIA: Government and Brand SA have arranged media tours as part of the build-up to South Africa's hosting of the 25th African Union Summit.



The media tours, which commenced on Sunday and will end on Tuesday, are intended to profile a country with a rich history of diverse cultures, a land of possibility and opportunity, as well as a proud heritage that continues to shape South Africa's journey to a thriving democracy, said Brand SA.

Activities for the tour have been designed to showcase key strengths that profile South Africa's competitive strengths including its culture, heritage, archaeology, science, technology and innovation.

The tours include a visit to inner city Johannesburg which will showcase how a nation's competitiveness is born from its cities as well as Cradle of Humankind and Hartebeesthoek Radio Astronomy Observatory, among other sites.

Brand SA said the AU Summit 2015 presents an opportunity for South Africa to showcase to the world a country that embodies the spirit of partnership, commitment to Africa's socio-economic development through Agenda 2063.

The AU opened its annual summit with a meeting of the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) on Sunday, focussing on issues concerning women empowerment and the continent's long-term development.

The summit is being held under the theme: "Year of Women empowerment and Development towards Africa's Agenda 2063".

Addressing delegates at the PRC meeting, PRC Chairperson Albert Ranganai Chimbindi described the theme as pertinent.

"We must remember that women constitute more than half of the African Union population, and that they make up 75 percent of our agricultural workforce," said Chimbindi.

Chimbindi said the time has come for Africa to recognise women as equal to men, emphasising that this will result in the highest development of race and economy.

"Time is with us and we should make that extra effort to ensure the empowerment of the African woman in order to achieve the vision that is enshrined in our 2063 blueprint".

Chimbindi, who is also the Zimbabwean Ambassador to Ethiopia, challenged African countries to implement the many decisions already taken by the continent to attain gender equality.

"The AU gender architect that must be implemented include the protocol to African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, the Fund for African Women and the African Women's Decade," Chimbindi said.

PRC Deputy Chairperson Erastus Mwencha outlined the core agenda of the 25th AU summit. These include improving Africa's economy, infrastructure development, poverty, peace and security.

"We will be looking at reports on the challenges in Burundi, South Sudan and others.

"However, we have made progress especially in Mali where a peace agreement was signed," said Mwencha.

He added that the summit will also take a close look at the rise of terrorism incidents in countries like Kenya, Nigeria and Somalia.

"We now have new challenges of terrorism, radicalisation and extremism," he said.

With thousands of African migrants losing their lives in the Mediterranean sea while trying to seek greener pastures in Europe, Mwencha said issues of migration will also be high on the agenda.

"Our young people drown each day. Africa should go to the root cause of this challenge that has scarred the continent so badly."

On the economic front, inter-regional trade will be discussed to ensure Africa moves towards being able to sustain itself.

Also on the agenda will be possible measures to stop financial illicit flows by multinational companies that have seen Africa losing over 50 billion US dollars per year.

The two-day PRC meeting is expected to produce reports on all issues set to be discussed during the summit and submit the report to the Executive Council composed of Ministers of External Affairs in African countries.

The summit will culminate in the 25th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Heads of State and Governments of the African Union on June 14-15, where Heads of State are expected to take final decisions on all critical issues raised.

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