

Siphiwe Ngwenya

The recent violent attacks on foreign nationals took place against the backdrop of a World Bank report entitled: The Economic Update on South Africa published early last year.

The report points to an emergence of Sub-Saharan Africa as the main destination for South Africa's non-mineral exports, overtaking Europe as the main trading partner.

The promotion of deeper regional trade integration is critical for South Africa's exports to bolster growth which would help create jobs and reduce poverty, the report says.

Gauteng is South Africa's economic engine, and any reference to export trade with the region is in fact a reference to the province.

Attacks on foreign nationals would not only jeopardise South Africa's relations with the rest of Africa, but would also impact negatively on our ability to create jobs.

Good relations with the rest of the continent would indeed help the economy of the province to grow. With this, it is likely that local people will get employment as well as greater opportunities for income.

As the agency charged with the mandate to spearhead efforts for economic development for the Gauteng province, we embrace the broader African continent as a destination for significant business interaction.

One of SA's most valuable trading block is the African continent. The trade is reciprocal in that a large number of primary goods (minerals and other commodities) are received by SA and we export value added manufactured products.

Although the balance of trade with the rest of the continent is biased in favour of SA, this may not stay this way in the long term. Other countries on the continent are also driving to achieve new levels of industrialisation through beneficiation and localisation.

SA stands to benefit in supporting the industrial and economic development priorities of countries on the continent. This will build familiarity with SA packaged services, systems and products that can be adopted by other African countries. Again, SA will be able to source beneficiated material to use in industrial production from industrialising countries on the continent.

It is also important to note the continent has in the past two years registered eight of the fastest growing economies in the world. Furthermore income levels are rising and the middleclass is also growing. Certain data trends point out that the consumer purchasing on the continent will reach a trillion dollars possibly as early as 2020.

As a nation we have made significant strides in ensuring constant movement towards a trajectory of growth and we have sailed very turbulent seas in our history to emerge on the other side as a rainbow nation of unity and significant feats.

Our recent experience of liberation as a continent with a rich tapestry of languages national symbolism music and natural heritage should remind us that the opportunities for development based on the rich resources of our African land mass are vast.

There is therefore no need for the success of another to translate into the loss of another. Our only limitation is the extent of our imagination, enterprise and creativity to generate wealth for our continent.

It's about time we celebrated the fruits of the dear price we have paid for the freedom of our continent and to rediscover and embrace our beauty as Africans.

We indeed can harness our potential if we are united. We have to combine our combine our skills, knowledge and industry to develop our people and our beloved land at large.

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