BUSINESS FILES

MAURITIUS-SOUTH AFRICA

ECONOMIC TIES ARE GROWING STRONGER

MAURITIUS AND SOUTH AFRICA HAVE DEEPENED THEIR ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP IN RECENT YEARS, DRIVEN BY STRONG TRADE FLOWS AND GROWING INVESTMENT. SOUTH AFRICAN COMPANIES ARE INCREASINGLY PRESENT IN KEY SECTORS SUCH AS LOGISTICS, RETAIL, AND MANUFACTURING IN MAURITIUS, CONTRIBUTING TO INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AND JOB CREATION. IN RETURN, MAURITIUS OFFERS A STABLE AND STRATEGIC PLATFORM FOR SOUTH AFRICAN BUSINESSES LOOKING TO EXPAND IN THE REGION.

ASHLEY EMILIE

ACCORDING to Statistics Mauritius, South Africa stands out as one of Mauritius' main trading partners, accounting for 8% of exports and 8.7% of imports. In 2024, the country represented 41% of Mauritius' total exports to Africa and 12% of global exports, according to Dr. Drishtysingh Ramdenee, Secretary General of the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI). Key export items to South Africa include apparel valued at MUR 6.1 billion, textiles at MUR 1.4 billion, and cotton products at MUR 540 million. All Mauritian exports to South Africa benefit from duty-free access under the SADC Trade Protocol, offering local businesses a distinct competitive edge. Mauritius has also become the second-largest exporter of men's and boys' suits to the South African market.

Data from the International Trade Centre highlights an untapped export potential of around USD 240 million. Products with growth potential include clothing, textiles, animal feed, raw pasta, fishery products, and medical devices. *"The evolution of our export sector over recent decades reflects Mauritius' successful transition from a monoculture economy to one with diversified sectors,"* says Dr. Drishtysingh Ramdenee. While the European Union, the United States and the United Kingdom remain key markets, representing 55% of exports in 2024, Africa's rising prominence—especially South Africa—signals stronger regional integration and the development of value chains. *"Looking ahead, the African Continental Free Trade Area presents enormous opportunities for further expansion. As trade barriers across Africa* progressively diminish, both Mauritius and South Africa are well positioned to deepen their commercial ties and explore new sectors for collaboration, particularly in high-value industries like fintech, renewable energy, healthcare and advanced manufacturing," adds Dr. Drishtysingh Ramdenee.

Economist Bhavish Jugurnath notes that trade between South Africa and Mauritius has grown steadily, with promising areas for further develo pment in tourism, financial services, renewable energy, and the blue economy. The relationship between the two nations is broad, covering trade, investment and tourism. Mauritius has become a strategic base for South African businesses, particularly in financial services and real estate. In return, South Africa supports Mauritius in sectors such as manufacturing, logistics and retail.

In 2023, trade between the two countries reached R15.20 billion. South Africa exported goods worth R11.60 billion to Mauritius, while Mauritian exports stood at R3.59 billion. That same year, South Africa was Mauritius' second-largest source of foreign direct investment (FDI) after France, accounting for about 15% of total FDI and 88% of African-origin FDI. South Africa views Mauritius as a key investment destination, particularly because of its role as a regional financial centre. *"Mauritius ranks highly in financial market infrastructure. For South African investors, as highlighted by ABSA's African Financial Markets index, Mauritius as a financial hub boasts a relatively large market size compared to other African countries, reflecting its well-established financial infrastructure and strategic role as a regional financial hub, attracting both domestic and international investments."* The market offers moderate liquidity that outperforms many other African countries, alongside a wide array of financial instruments, including ESG-related assets and Islamic financial products.

Francois Garnet, CEO of Standard Bank Mauritius, also recognises the strength of bilateral relations since the establishment of formal diplomatic ties in 1994. He sees growth potential in financial services and technology, renewable energy, mining, logistics, trade, and infrastructure development.

For Bilal Adam, President of the South African Chamber of Commerce in Mauritius, the relationship has gone beyond traditional trade; it now includes financial integration and strategic cooperation. While trade figures remain solid, South African firms are increasingly using Mauritius as a base for regional expansion and long-term investment. Sectors such as infrastructure finance, blended capital and ESG-linked investments are seeing more activity. "This was evident at the 8th Annual Pension Funds and Alternative Investments Africa Conference, held in Mauritius this April, where asset managers, pension funds and institutional investors discussed how to channel long-term African capital into infrastructure and development.

Mauritius is no longer just hosting the conversation; it's becoming a key player. The focus now is on converting that momentum into structured investment vehicles, cross-border partnerships, and scalable outcomes," says Bilal Adam. He adds that Mauritius and South Africa each bring distinct strengths, and it's in the combination that the real potential lies for building investment strategies that are practical, ambitious.

MAURITIUS AS A DESTINATION FOR SOUTH AFRICAN INVESTORS

South Africa has emerged as a key source of foreign direct investment in Mauritius, now ranking just behind France. In 2023, investments from South Africa accounted for about 10% of total FDI into Mauritius and made up 84% of Africa-sourced FDI.

Mauritius's appeal as an investment destination

Mauritius offers a stable business climate, good infrastructure and political stability, making it attractive to South African investors. Bilal Adam notes that MUR 3.8 billion was invested by South Africans into real estate in 2023 alone, a reflection of investor trust built on legal clarity and institutional reliability. However, he believes it's time to move beyond real estate and focus on sectors that drive sustainable economic activity. This includes aligning more closely with South African businesses looking for compliant ecosystems where they can engage meaningfully. There's strong potential in agri-processing, green hydrogen, and BPO—areas where Mauritius has made foundational investments, and where South African firms can contribute technical knowledge and networks. "Interest from South African clients is growing, particularly for using Mauritius as a base for regional expansion and asset protection. But to translate that interest into long-term presence, more practical support is needed."
Bilal Adam suggests a "soft-landing" approach for SMEs, offering bundled onboarding for HR, legal, and compliance support.
He also supports structured collaboration through a potential Mauritius-South Africa Financial Innovation Bridge, connecting fintech ecosystems, asset managers, and capital markets. This would help attract more regional capital. Discussions are already underway at the Chamber to identify where support is most needed. The aim is not to push for incentives, but to help shape practical and business-friendly solutions. Mauritius already enjoys a strong reputation—the next step is refining sector-specific partnerships that turn presence into permanence. Moody's Investors Service recently affirmed Mauritius's long-term issuer ratings at Baa3 but revised the outlook to negative, citing fiscal consolidation challenges. Maintaining its rating, one of the highest in Africa, remains crucial. Transparency in addressing these challenges will further enhance Mauritius's appeal as an investment destination. Bhavish Jugurnath outlines South Africa's strong position as an investment destination, driven by its diversified and developed economy. The country boasts world-class infrastructure across finance, law, and telecommunications. It also ranks among Africa's top destinations for cleantech foreign direct investment. Nearly half of the continent's 400 multinational corporations are based in South Africa. "Investment incentives and financing mechanisms support commercial activity, infrastructure development, and green energy projects." Absa Mauritius notes that Mauritius is actively developing a green economy. The country aims to reach a 60% renewable energy mix by 2030. Incentives for renewable energy investments include income tax exemptions, exemption from land conversion tax, and eligibility for a Premium Investor Certificate for large-scale ESG and tech-driven projects. The latest Global Financial Centres Index (GFCI 37) confirms Mauritius's improved standing, ranking 58th globally. Mauritius also maintains strong ties across Africa. Absa Mauritius leverages this network to drive sustainable finance, aiming to allocate MUR 30 billion by 2030 toward green projects. To increase South African investment, several measures could help. These include offering access to hedging instruments to reduce currency risks, modernising logistics infrastructure, and simplifying regulatory processes. Expanding sector-specific incentives and promoting successful case studies could further encourage investment.

This strong investment flow reflects Mauritius' growing importance for South African businesses expanding across the region.

Dr. Drishtysingh Ramdenee points out that the appeal of Mauritius goes far beyond its geographical closeness. The country offers targeted investment opportunities in sectors where South African investors have a strong presence—real estate, ICT, manufacturing, financial services, agribusiness, healthcare, and education. Mauritius also provides sector-specific incentive programs that increase its attractiveness. Its financial infrastructure regularly places it among the leaders on the continent. *"We frequently rank in the top three on the Absa Africa Financial Markets Index, alongside South Africa itself. This creates natural synergies between our financial ecosystems,"* says Dr. Drishtysingh Ramdenee.

According to Bilal Adam, legal certainty, efficient regulation and a financial system geared toward cross-border investment are major advantages for South African investors in Mauritius. *"Through my role at the South African Chamber of Commerce in Mauritius, and leading Stewards Investment Capital, with a presence in both Mauritius and South Africa, I've seen how the country's institutional setup actively supports investors in building solid, cross-border strategies,"* he explains. South African firms find familiarity in Mauritius' blend of civil and common law. Its legal clarity and commitment to international arbitration provide reassurance. Located just four hours from Johannesburg, Mauritius plays a central role in regional finance. With over 15,000 Global Business Companies and more than 450 Africa-focused funds investing an estimated USD 40 billion, the country has become a proven gateway into the continent. There is growing alignment between South Africa and Mauritius in sectors such as infrastructure, fintech, and clean energy. *"At Stewards Investment Capital, we actively leverage Mauritius as a structuring base for pan-African deals. And through the Chamber, we're supporting that momentum by helping businesses connect, scale, and move across jurisdictions,"* adds Bilal Adam.

Economist Bhavish Jugurnath shares a similar view. He highlights Mauritius' stable legal framework, investor-friendly policies, and strategic location for accessing African and Indian Ocean markets. The double taxation avoidance agreement with South Africa adds another layer of appeal. Political stability, a skilled workforce and a supportive business environment contribute to making Mauritius an attractive option. Mauritian investors are also looking at South Africa, with growing interest in sectors such as renewable energy, agriculture, tourism, and technology. South Africa's natural resources, expanding market and government support provide a favourable context for investment.

Absa Mauritius points to the country's economic fundamentals to explain its attraction for South African investors. According to preliminary IMF findings from the 2025 Article IV Consultation, Mauritius recorded 4.7% GDP growth in 2024, driven by services, construction, and tourism. Inflation stood at 3.6%, within the Bank of Mauritius' target range, and foreign reserves rose to US$8.4 billion despite a wider current account deficit. These indicators reflect resilience and a sound policy environment. *"The island's sound legal foundation—anchored in a hybrid of civil and common law traditions and recourse to the Privy Council—instils investor confidence. This is complemented by a stable political and economic environment, a hallmark of Mauritius' longstanding reputation as a reliable gateway to Africa,"* notes Absa Mauritius.

The country's transparent and business-friendly fiscal regime adds to its strengths. Competitive corporate tax rates, an extensive network of Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements and Investment Promotion and Protection Agreements—such as the one with South Africa—offer clarity and protection for cross-border investors. Mauritius' active membership in regional blocs like SADC, COMESA and AfCFTA further extends its reach. Mauritius has long been recognised for its business environment. In the World Bank's 2020 Ease of Doing Business Index, it ranked 13th globally. In 2024, the World Bank introduced the Business Ready (B-READY) initiative, offering a more detailed assessment. Although it does not provide rankings, it evaluates several areas. Mauritius performed well in labour, business entry and international trade, reflecting its ongoing commitment to regulatory efficiency and public service.

Its status as an International Financial Centre reinforces its position. The country offers advanced banking, legal, and fiduciary services, along with flexible structures such as Global Business Companies for tax-efficient international investment. Absa Mauritius also notes the country's modern infrastructure, strong connectivity, and skilled multilingual workforce. These elements create a space where business can flourish and people can enjoy a high quality of life. South African companies are expanding their presence in Mauritius, across finance, retail, logistics, and real estate, demonstrating a shared vision and trust between the two nations.

OPPORTUNITIES WITH AFCFTA

Bilal Adam explains that South African firms are shifting their approach in Mauritius. They are no longer simply doing business on the island; they are building long-term platforms rooted in the local

Mauritius as a gateway for investment into Africa

South Africa is also opening up infrastructure projects to private investment, including through blended finance platforms. Mauritian investors have an opportunity to play a role here. According to Bilal Adam, South Africa's infrastructure pipeline presents long-term potential. The country will need R6.2 trillion in investment by 2040, with a R2.15 trillion gap. Blended finance, led by Infrastructure South Africa and the DBSA, is designed to bridge this. While Mauritius already hosts many Africa-focused funds, South African infrastructure hasn't always been a core focus. Adam proposes a Mauritius–South Africa Infrastructure Co-Investment Desk to facilitate due diligence and increase visibility. Green infrastructure is a particular focus, with South Africa's Just Energy Transition Plan aiming for nearly R1 trillion. ESG-aligned investors in Mauritius are well positioned to support this shift. For the Chamber, it's not just about funding—it's about laying the groundwork for a regional platform where African capital supports African ambitions.

Absa Mauritius supports this vision, citing Mauritius's position as a gateway jurisdiction for investment into Africa. For many clients, it also serves as a treasury or headquarters, offering operational efficiency and regional reach. Absa Mauritius sees itself as a connector, linking clients to African markets and international capital. The Property Development Scheme (PDS) has already facilitated joint ventures between Mauritian and South African investors in luxury real estate, serving as a model for future infrastructure collaborations. By building on its financial ecosystem and location, Mauritius can enable investors to take part in South Africa's infrastructure development.

economy. This change is particularly visible in sectors like real estate, financial services, and corporate advisory. According to Bilal Adam, these platforms are increasingly led by South Africans who are hiring locally, developing expertise, and deepening capabilities. GRIT Real Estate, listed in both Mauritius and London, uses Mauritius as a base to enter key African markets. Banks such as Investec and ABSA have expanded their cross-border financing operations from the island, serving clients across East and Southern Africa. Sanlam is also making use of Mauritius's insurance and fund management infrastructure to scale up its regional activities. At the same time, international players like ENSafrica have established a full-fledged office in the country. From Mauritius, they manage complex regional legal transactions, combining local legal know-how with international reach.

These companies are not only managing pan-African portfolios; they are also investing in local talent, knowledge transfer, and skills development. "*We've also taken that approach, working with local professionals across investment analysis, compliance, and client service to deliver increasingly complex, multi-jurisdictional work,*" says Bilal Adam. From his perspective at the South African Chamber of Commerce in Mauritius, the level of engagement is particularly encouraging. South African firms are actively participating in local industry debates, joining professional associations, and contributing to discussions that influence the local business climate. "*It's not one-sided – it feels genuinely collaborative,*" he adds.

Dr. Drishtysingh Ramdenee sees joint ventures in sustainable finance, green bonds, and ESG-compliant investments as particularly promising. Both Mauritius and South Africa have committed to sustainable development, and their financial sectors can collaborate to create innovative financing tools that meet infrastructure needs while aligning with international sustainability benchmarks. Fintech is another area where deeper collaboration is possible. By aligning their regulatory frameworks and creating compatible digital platforms, Mauritius and South Africa could position themselves as central players in Africa's fintech sector, expanding financial access across the continent.

Both countries are signatories to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which aims to establish a single market for goods and services across 54 countries, covering over 1.3 billion people and a combined GDP exceeding $3.4 trillion. For Bilal Adam, AfCFTA is one of the most ambitious trade projects ever undertaken in Africa. It seeks to lower tariffs, eliminate non-tariff barriers, and boost intra-African trade. But to turn this vision into reality, implementation must be grounded in practical collaboration. In that regard, Mauritius and South Africa bring complementary assets. South Africa offers manufacturing scale, industrial strength, and access to supply chains. Mauritius provides agility, financial structuring capabilities, and an efficient business environment. Together, they show how AfCFTA can move beyond a policy framework and into practice.

Absa Mauritius identifies specific areas of opportunity under AfCFTA. These include the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS), which enables instant cross-border payments in local currencies, and the Investment Protocol, which aims to streamline regulations and create legal certainty for cross-border investments. Mauritius's trade agreements also position it strategically within India–Africa and China–Africa trade corridors. AfCFTA's focus on SME empowerment and digital innovation offers additional room for progress, particularly in expanding access to finance and fostering entrepreneurship. Absa Mauritius is already engaging with these opportunities. The bank is integrating its digital platform, Absa Access, with PAPSS to facilitate cross-border transactions. It also offers tailored financial products and advisory services in line with the Investment Protocol to help businesses navigate regulatory environments. "*As a facilitator of South-South trade, Absa leverages Mauritius's gateway role to support clients engaging with India and China,*" the bank notes. Through programmes such as Absa Women Forward, which provides AI-powered tools and training to women entrepreneurs, the bank supports the broader goal of inclusive growth.

Bilal Adam sees further potential in merging value chains between the two countries. For example, a South African company manufacturing solar components could handle production and logistics, while Mauritius could serve as the financial centre, managing capital structuring and risk, and coordinating exports to East Africa under AfCFTA preferences. With its broad trade agreements and established financial services sector, Mauritius is well positioned to support this model. However, challenges remain. Fragmented customs systems, technical standard inconsistencies, and infrastructure deficits continue to restrict trade. From the Chamber's perspective, there is an increasing need to assist businesses, especially SMEs, in overcoming these barriers. Mauritius could play a key role as a compliance and consolidation hub, helping firms reduce friction and improve access to regional markets.

Bhavish Jugurnath points out that only South Africa and Madagascar hold a significant share of Mauritius's exports to the African continent.

In 2019, South Africa accounted for 53% of these exports, while Madagascar represented 14%. Mauritian exports to Africa are largely concentrated in three industries: clothing and textiles, sugar, and plastics. That same year, Mauritius imported USD 453 million worth of goods from South Africa, making up 60% of its total imports from the continent, though this was just 9.2% of overall imports. According to Bhavish Jugurnath, this suggests that Mauritius has yet to fully explore opportunities in the African market, particularly in sourcing raw and intermediate materials. "*There is a low level of integration in the regional value chains as Mauritius mostly trades in finished goods and agricultural products with Africa,*" he says. However, AfCFTA offers a pathway to address these limitations.

Strategic sectors such as pharmaceuticals, clothing and textiles, food, education, and financial services are being prioritised to drive transformation. The agreement could increase intra-African exports by over 81% by 2035.

COMPLEMENTING EACH OTHER'S FINANCIAL SERVICES SECTORS

Over the past decade, Mauritius and South Africa have established themselves as key financial centres in Africa. South Africa is known for its developed financial markets, while Mauritius has gained a reputation for facilitating international trade. Their collaboration has helped attract increased investment to the region, as both countries bring different but complementary strengths. Bilal Adam highlights this by stating that South Africa offers scale, thanks to its deep capital markets, a mature financial ecosystem, and active institutional investment. Mauritius, on the other hand, brings precision, acting as a trusted base for fund structuring, cross-border finance, and international operations. "It's no coincidence that over 450 Africa-focused investment vehicles are now based here," he points out, noting how central Mauritius has become in Africa's investment landscape. Clients are looking for a mix of regional growth potential and operational clarity—Mauritius provides structure and efficiency, while South Africa gives depth and access. His organisation aims to connect both markets through effective structuring and forward-thinking strategies.

Absa Mauritius also emphasises the importance of this partnership. The bank believes that the synergy between South Africa and Mauritius lies in combining South Africa's strong capital markets with Mauritius's globally connected and well-regulated International Financial Centre. Key areas for collaboration include financial innovation, digital transformation, sustainable finance, private banking, and wealth management. As demand grows for integrated and responsible financial services, the combination of Mauritius's agility in fintech and structuring with South Africa's market depth presents new opportunities. Mauritius is also positioning itself as a key player in private banking and wealth management, benefitting from the rise in African millionaires. Absa Bank Mauritius has played a pioneering role in that regard, launching Absa Pay—the country's first tap-and-pay solution—and advancing its digital offering with end-to-end digital personal loans and mobile banking. Its sustainable finance efforts include a trade finance facility supporting environmentally

conscious business practices, reinforcing Mauritius's role in Africa's financial evolution.

Bilal Adam argues that the potential goes far beyond what individual institutions can do. What's needed, he says, is coordination at the ecosystem level. *"Think about what's possible: dual listings between the JSE and the Stock Exchange of Mauritius, co-domiciled Africa-focused funds, or regional fintech innovation supported by shared infrastructure and licensing alignment."* These are realistic next steps if collaboration is approached with intention. The Chamber is already engaging key stakeholders to explore how cross-border financial connections can be strengthened. With Africa's financial services sector growing rapidly, investors are looking for credible, connected platforms. Aligning Mauritius's structure with South Africa's scale could offer something distinctive in the region.

For Bhavish Jugurnath, joint financial products, expertise sharing and harmonising regulatory frameworks are some of the ways Mauritius and South Africa can attract more regional investment. By leveraging their financial infrastructure and experience, both countries can draw in crypto investors and contribute to the growth of the fintech sector. Offering long-term residence permits to those bringing at least USD 1 million in digital assets into the Mauritius Digital Custody Programme is one such move. Clear, streamlined access to business and tax incentives also strengthens Mauritius's appeal. This strategy, which enhances the country's role as a fintech destination, brings tangible economic benefits.

Francois Garnet points to the gap between Africa's potential and its actual performance. A decade ago, the continent was expected to grow by 5.4%, driven by urbanisation and regional trade. In reality, growth averaged just 3%, intra-African trade remains low, and infrastructure investment falls short by more than USD 100 billion each year. For him, the partnership between Mauritius as a strategic IFC and South Africa as a regional economic leader opens up new paths for growth through trade and investment.

Focus on bilateral strategy

As the global economic landscape shifts, deeper cooperation between the two countries could foster sustained growth. Bilal Adam identifies three main areas for alignment: skills mobility, innovation, and supply chains. A mutual recognition of qualifications, cross-border training, and remote service partnerships would enhance service exports. Joint innovation platforms could help commercialise African ideas, attracting global investment. On the supply chain front, South Africa offers manufacturing scale, while Mauritius adds neutrality and efficiency. Specialised production zones could support streamlined compliance and global distribution. These collaborations—where capital, talent, and regulation converge—are attracting investor interest. Platforms like the South African Chamber of Commerce in Mauritius offer an opportunity to evolve from isolated efforts to systematic alignment, through industry-led groups in trade, innovation, education, and finance. For Bilal Adam, the next 20 years will be about bilateral strategy, not just trade.

Bhavish Jugurnath echoes this view. He believes Mauritius and South Africa should deepen ties in financial services, trade, tech, and infrastructure, while also addressing climate change and promoting regional integration. Mauritius can act as a gateway to Africa for South African firms, while South Africa can provide global market access to Mauritian businesses. Absa Mauritius underlines that both countries share a history as Commonwealth members and former British colonies. Their relationship, spanning 26 years, is built on shared democratic values and regional cooperation. Several areas stand out for further collaboration. The Mauritius Research and Innovation Council and South Africa's Technology Innovation Agency are already working together on research in climate tech, the blue economy, fintech, and digital transformation. Both countries are also committed to sustainability, and aligning on ESG frameworks could unlock new avenues for impact investment. Human capital development through talent exchanges, digital skills training, and regional education hubs is another priority. *"Absa Mauritius has launched multiple initiatives, including a Sustainable Trade Finance Facility aligned with Mauritius's goals of reducing emissions and increasing renewable energy use."*

BILAL ADAM (PRESIDENT OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE)

"THERE'S A PRESSING NEED TO MODERNISE CUSTOMS AND LOGISTICS COORDINATION"

In January 2024, South Africa was the fourth-largest source of imports for Mauritius, accounting for 8.1% of total imports. What measures can be taken to balance trade between the two countries and ensure a mutually beneficial exchange of goods and services?

The trade relationship between South Africa and Mauritius remains strong, with clear room to create more balance and value on both sides. For Mauritius, the next step is shifting toward higher-value exports such as processed agri-products, pharmaceuticals, and digital services. The capability is there; however, friction points like licensing delays, logistics gaps, and inconsistent standards need to be addressed to help those sectors scale. Concurrently, South African businesses operating in Mauritius can contribute by sourcing more locally. Whether it's packaging, support services, or components, integrating Mauritian SMEs into their supply chains would boost local capacity and help build a more resilient regional ecosystem. The services sector also holds untapped potential. We're seeing growing demand for Mauritian legal, financial, and IT services across Africa. With the right frameworks, such as mutual recognition agreements or digital service delivery models, these offerings could be exported more efficiently into South Africa.

One idea worth exploring is a joint trade and services platform, focused on identifying key sectors, piloting export opportunities, and building support mechanisms for SMEs, including credit guarantees or advisory tools. It would give structure to the relationship while opening practical doors for new business. At the South African Chamber of Commerce in Mauritius, this is exactly the kind of collaboration we're encouraging — grounded in real business needs, rather than policy alone. Balanced trade is less about adjusting numbers and more about building stronger value chains across both economies.

With South Africa's focus on transitioning to electric vehicle production and renewable energy projects, as evidenced by its investment in local EV production, what opportunities exist for Mauritius to collaborate with South Africa in the renewable energy sector?

South Africa's energy shift is fast becoming the backbone of its industrial strategy. That's creating real momentum around renewables, EVs, and green hydrogen — and with it, a growing need for smart, reliable platforms to structure the capital behind it. Mauritius is well placed to support that shift. With its regulatory clarity, financial infrastructure, and growing ESG ecosystem, it can serve as a trusted gateway for channelling investment into the region. It can add value by helping structure the kinds of financing vehicles this transition demands, especially around blended capital and climate-linked instruments.

Beyond funding, there's a whole layer of services that will need to grow alongside South Africa's energy economy: for example, digital infrastructure, logistics, compliance platforms, and innovation ecosystems. Mauritius already has strengths in ICT and digital transformation, and that could be a real asset in co-developing tools like energy data systems, EV management platforms, or subscription-based solar services. It's also a great place to test ideas. With high energy costs and ambitious renewable goals, the island is well suited to trial solutions like microgrids or battery storage before scaling them across the SADC region.

Longer term, there's scope for collaboration in green hydrogen logistics, energy certification, and regional power integration. Mauritius's location and governance make it a strong candidate to support the compliance and connectivity side of that regional energy future. The potential is there. It just needs coordination between investors, developers, regulators, and service providers. Mauritius may be small in size; it nonetheless has the tools to play a catalytic role in one of the most important transitions on the continent.

Despite strong trade relations, non-tariff barriers can impede the flow of goods and services. What steps should both governments take to identify and eliminate such barriers, thereby facilitating smoother trade interactions?

Trade agreements alone aren't enough for smooth economic integration. Even with strong ties, non-tariff barriers (NTBs) such as inconsistent standards, customs delays, and licensing issues can slow trade between Mauritius and South Africa.

The first step is data. A good starting point would be creating a joint NTB monitoring and resolution platform, collecting real-time input from exporters, logistics providers, and trade financiers to identify and address friction points. These can include burdensome paperwork, duplication of testing protocols, or delayed approvals. Without a shared system for feedback and resolution, NTBs tend to become institutionalised and harder to dismantle.

Secondly, there's a pressing need to modernise customs and logistics coordination. South Africa has made significant strides with its Single Window initiative, and Mauritius has a digitised trade environment, but the two systems remain largely unlinked. Creating a bilateral customs interoperability agreement, supported by digital data sharing and advanced cargo clearance protocols, would reduce clearance times and increase transparency — especially for time-sensitive goods like perishables or pharmaceuticals.

In tandem, harmonising technical standards, particularly in sectors like food processing, cosmetics and pharmaceuticals would greatly reduce redundant testing and approval costs for exporters. A mutual recognition framework, drawing on both SADC and AfCFTA standards, could be negotiated bilaterally to enable smoother access to each other's markets. To institutionalise progress, both governments could jointly establish a Mauritius–South Africa Trade Facilitation Council, with private sector representation from manufacturers, freight operators, financial institutions, and SMEs. Here, organisations like the South African Chamber of Commerce in Mauritius can serve as an essential bridge — providing structured, on-the-ground feedback from businesses and facilitating practical dialogue between public and private stakeholders.