MINISTÈRE
DE L'ÉCONOMIE,
DES FINANCES
ET DE LA SOUVERAINETÉ
INDUSTRIELLE ET NUMÉRIQUE
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ECONOMIC WRAP-UP
Southern Africa

A publication from the Pretoria Regional
Economic Service, from September 22 to 26, 2025

South Africa's 10 best-selling automakers of 2024

	AUTOMAKER	2024 SALES	Y-ON-Y CHANGE	MARKET SHARE
1	Toyota	128 663 units	-9.8%	24.9%
2	VW Group	66 486 units	-1.4%	12.9%
3	Suzuki	59 574 units	+20.5%	11.6%
4	Ford	32 766 units	+6.7%	6.4%
5	Hyundai	30 759 units	-3.7%	6.0%
6	Isuzu	23 290 units	+0.1%	4.5%
7	Nissan	22 284 units	-23.6%	4.3%
8	Chery	19 971 units	+22.4%	3.9%
9	GWM	18 927 units	-4.9%	3.7%
10	Renault	15 822 units	-27.1%	3.1%

Arthur Peter Mutharika wins Malawi presidential election *(Reuters)*

On 24 September, the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) declared Arthur Peter Mutharika (Democratic Progressive Party, DPP) the winner of the presidential election, elected in the first round with 56.8% of the vote (3.03 million votes). The outgoing president, Lazarus Chakwera (33%), conceded defeat and praised the quality of the election, while mentioning certain irregularities. Turnout reached 76.4% (5.5 million voters out of 7.2 million registered voters).

Mutharika, 85, previously served as President of Malawi between 2014 and 2020. The MEC has 14 days to announce the results of the parliamentary elections and 21 days for the local elections. According to the Constitution, the President-elect must be sworn in within 30 days.

The European Union has congratulated President Mutharika. The EU election observation mission deemed the election to be generally satisfactory. Detailed results by region have not yet been published, but initial trends indicate a weakening of the regional factor, with candidate Mutharika being ahead in all regions of the country.

The challenge for the new president remains the country's economic trajectory. As a reminder, Malawi's GDP is only USD 11.8 billion, making it one of the poorest economies in the world (its GDP per capita, USD 504, ranks 42nd out of 44 countries in sub-Saharan Africa). More than 70% of the population lives below the poverty line (set at USD 3 per day, applicable to the least developed countries), and the country ranks 172nd out of 198 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI).

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Southern Africa

AGOA – Imminent end of US-Africa trade deal threatens continent's exporters *(Financial Times)*

The upcoming expiry of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which offers duty-free access to US markets for 32 African countries, could have a severely debilitating effect on some exporters, according to the head of the International Trade Centre (ITC). The agreement, which came into force in 2000 and was renewed for ten years in 2015, could end as early as Tuesday 30 September if the US Congress does not extend it.

AGOA has enabled the development of certain manufacturing sectors such as clothing, leather and footwear, giving countries such as Lesotho a competitive advantage over Asian producers. The end of the agreement, combined with recently imposed US tariffs, could reduce exports from beneficiary countries by 8.7% by 2029, with a particularly severe impact on Lesotho (jeans -29%) and South Africa (cars -23%).

Experts also point out that the end of AGOA would remove a crucial forum for collective negotiation with the United States, revealing what they see as a lack of African diplomatic coordination and the low strategic priority given to the continent by the US administration.

South Africa

In 2025, South Africa's six billionaires remain unchanged

In 2025, South Africa's six wealthiest individuals will have a combined fortune of USD 31.1 billion, according to Forbes' real-time tracking. Johann Rupert remains in first place with USD 12.8 billion, followed by Nicky Oppenheimer (USD 9.5 billion), Patrice Motsepe (USD 2.7 billion), Koos Bekker (USD 2.8 billion), Michiel le Roux (USD 1.7 billion) and Christoffel Wiese (USD 1.6 billion). Rupert remains the only South African in the global top 200 and continues to dominate thanks to his holdings in Richemont and Remgro.

Zak Calisto, founder and CEO of the Karooooo group, could soon join this very exclusive club of South African billionaires. However, wealth in South Africa remains largely concentrated: most of the historic fortunes, such as Rupert, Oppenheimer and Wiese, have dominated for years. Despite economic growth and the significant gains made by these billionaires, the South African wealth landscape remains largely unchanged, dominated by a few historic players and concentrated in the luxury, mining and finance sectors.

Billionaire	Wealth	World Ranking
Johann Rupert	$12.8 Bn USD	172
Nicky Oppenheimer	$9.5 Bn USD	270
Koos Bekker	$2.8 Bn USD	1208
Patrice Motsepe	$2.7 Bn USD	1234
Michiel le Roux	$1.7 Bn USD	1883
Christoffel Wiese	$1.6 Bn USD	1990

South African consumer confidence index declines in the third quarter of 2025 *(FNB/BER)*

According to the FNB/BER survey, the consumer confidence index (CCI), which ranges from -100 to +100, fell from -10 to -13 in Q3 2025, remaining well below the historical average and indicating a likely slowdown in household consumption. The decline was mainly driven by the sentiment of middle-income households, which fell from -7 to -16, due to weak job creation, high food inflation and reduced access to pension withdrawals. In contrast, low-income household confidence rose slightly, likely supported by an increase in social benefits, while high-income household sentiment remained stable, buoyed by lower borrowing costs and strong asset performance. Overall, these data suggest that household consumption could continue to slow in the fourth quarter, especially if inflation and weak employment persist, despite some positive signals in certain income and retail segments.

Slight but unexpected rebound in growth in the second quarter of 2025 *(StatsSA)*

According to Statistics South Africa (StatsSA), GDP grew by 0.8% in the second quarter of 2025 (seasonally adjusted quarterly change), following growth of 0.1% in the previous quarter. The recovery affected almost all sectors of activity. The main drivers of economic growth were manufacturing (+1.8%, a positive contribution of 0.2 points), trade (+1.7%, +0.2 points) and mining (+3.7%, +0.2 points). Only two sectors recorded a contraction: transport (-0.8%, or -0.1 points) and construction (-0.3%, or -0.1 points). From the demand side, growth was supported by final household consumption (+0.8%, a contribution of +0.6 points) and changes in inventories (contribution of +0.5 points). However, it was hampered by a decline in investment (-1.4%, a negative contribution of 0.2 points) and weak exports (-3.2%, a negative contribution of 0.9 points), which was only partially offset by the decline in imports (-2.1%, a positive contribution to growth of 0.6 points). Following the publication of these results, the South African Reserve Bank revised its growth outlook for 2025 upwards (+1.2%, compared with +0.9% previously).

South African container ports remain the worst in the world according to the World Bank *(World Bank)*

In its latest Container Port Performance Index, the World Bank once again ranks South African container ports among the worst in the world in terms of performance, with four of them in the 'Bottom 10'. Durban succeeds Cape Town in 2024 as last (403rd) in the ranking, while Coega is second to last, Cape Town is 400th and Port Elizabeth 395th.

These results come as no surprise given the dysfunctional state of South African logistics, which is characterised by a lack of investment and maintenance, as well as a failing institutional framework, particularly the state monopoly Transnet. In order to remedy this situation, there are plans to gradually open up South African ports (still managed by Transnet) to the private sector in the form of concessions. However, the first attempt at a private concession, a 25-year partnership between Philippine shipping company ICTSI and Transnet, which was due to start in April 2024 at Durban's Terminal 2, the country's main port, is the subject of a dispute and has not yet begun.

Transport Minister Barbara Creecy confirmed that 163 expressions of interest were received following a call last March to private players to revive the country's logistics corridors. This is a preliminary step to a formal tender for the launch of public-private partnerships (PPPs). The first calls for tenders for PPPs are expected to concern the ports of Richard's Bay and Coega, which would include a manganese terminal, by early 2026, according to Michelle Phillips, CEO of Transnet.

Transnet plans to invest around €6.5 billion by 2030, a significant portion of which will go to its port division. The aim is to cover debt repayments over the next five years, preserve the group's liquidity (net loss of EUR 350 million for the 2023/24 financial year and debt amounting to EUR 6.2 billion) and support the implementation of an ambitious transformation of the group. In terms of freight, Transnet aims to increase its volume from 160 million tonnes to 250 million tonnes by 2030.

The first positive results are already being seen, with the port of Cape Town recording the strongest improvement worldwide (+240 points between 2023 and 2024), thanks to investments in equipment and operational reforms. Africa Global Logistics (AGL), a former subsidiary of Bolloré Logistics in Africa acquired by the Swiss-Italian group MSC, was awarded a three-and-a-half-year contract in 2025 to manage the A-Berth and Duncan docks in the Port of Cape Town.

The Port of Coega ranks fourth in terms of strongest growth (+160 points). Durban is also benefiting from certain modernisations (new tugs, gantry cranes, digital management). According to Transnet, between mid-2024 and August 2025, ship waiting times fell by 75%, crane movements increased by 13% and operations per ship by 25%.

Strengthening economic ties between South Africa and China *(Engineering News)*

The ninth edition of the South Africa-China Trade and Investment Promotion Conference saw the strengthening of economic ties between the two countries. Several memoranda of understanding (MoUs) were signed, notably between Business Unity South Africa (BUSA), the main organisation representing the interests of South African businesses, and the South Africa China Economy and Trade Association (SACETA), an association of more than 200 Chinese companies operating in South Africa, to promote collaboration between South African and Chinese businesses. Other MoUs were signed between Mantengu Mining and SANY, and China State Construction and AfriSam, for the distribution of heavy equipment and the supply of construction materials.

According to China, the country has invested USD 13.2 billion in South Africa, while South Africa has invested USD 8 billion in China, creating 26,000 and 9,000 jobs respectively. Bilateral trade reached USD 12.4 billion in South African exports to China, mainly unprocessed minerals, and USD 21 billion in Chinese exports to South Africa in 2024, mainly manufactured goods. As a reminder, South Africa is affected by a 30% increase in US customs duties and is seeking to diversify its export markets, including China.

Chinese exports to South Africa have recently caused a stir with the introduction of tariff measures by South Africa in 2025 to defend its industry, which has been hit hard by Chinese competition (Arcelor Mittal South Africa has announced the closure of its long steel division at the end of September and the loss of 3,500 jobs). Other examples include the imposition of 13% customs duties on hot-rolled steel imported from China from 1 May, and the revision of 82 tariff codes relating to imports of materials and components used in the value chains of wind turbines, solar panels and storage batteries.

Taiwan suspends restrictions on semiconductor exports to South Africa *(BusinessTech)*

Taiwan has decided to suspend the semiconductor export controls it imposed on South Africa just two days earlier. This decision follows South Africa's request to move Taipei's liaison office from Pretoria to Johannesburg, which functions de facto as Taiwan's representative office.

On 23 September, Taipei had restricted chip exports to South Africa for the first time ever, citing South African actions that 'undermine national and public security'. These measures were intended to use exports of key technologies as diplomatic leverage, particularly in the context of Beijing's pressure on its official partners to limit their ties with Taiwan.

The restrictions, which were due to take effect at the end of November after a 60-day notice period, would have had a symbolic impact, as Taiwan's exports to South Africa are relatively low (≈$4 million last year).

Botswana

Economic contraction in Botswana in the second quarter of 2025 *(StatsBots)*

According to the National Statistics Agency (StatsBots), GDP contracted by -5.3% year-on-year in Q2 2025, compared with -3.6% in Q1 and -0.4% in Q2 2024. In the primary sector, mining declined sharply (-37.8%), mainly due to a significant drop in diamond production (-41.3%). In contrast, agriculture grew by 1.4%, buoyed by better rainfall. In the secondary sector, manufacturing activity declined by 0.5%, penalised by contractions in meat processing (-8.3%), diamond cutting and polishing (-4.9%), dairy production (-3.8%) and furniture manufacturing (-2.1%). The tertiary sector showed some resilience, with most industries expanding, except for diamond traders (-46.5%) due to high downstream inventories and reduced demand. On the demand side, final consumption grew slightly by 1.9% (households +1.8%, government +2.0%), while investment declined by 4.4%, signalling weaker investment. Foreign trade also weighed on growth: exports of goods and services fell by 3.9%, while imports fell by 18.4%, largely due to De Beers reducing imports of rough diamonds from neighbouring countries (Namibia, Angola) for storage. Overall, these figures reflect a marked economic slowdown, with tensions in the mining and manufacturing sectors, despite some pockets of resilience in agriculture and services. The outlook for the second half of 2025 remains cautious, with domestic demand and investment expected to remain under pressure.

Mozambique

Moody's maintains Mozambique's sovereign rating at Caa2 in foreign currency and Caa3 in local currency *(Standard Bank)*

On 19 September, Moody's completed its periodic review of Mozambique. No new ratings were announced following this publication, the main purpose of which was to reassess the relevance of sovereign ratings in light of recent economic developments and Moody's methodologies. Despite the reservations expressed by the IMF following its mission at the end of August, which concluded that the economic situation remained poor and that various risks were on the rise, Moody's maintained Mozambique's foreign currency issuer rating at 'Caa2' and its local currency rating at 'Caa3', citing severe liquidity strains and strong fiscal pressures.

Russian group AMAN announces $140 million tourism investment on the edge of Kruger Park *(Luxe et Passions)*

On 17 September, Russian hotel group Aman announced the launch of a safari lodge in the Massingir district of Gaza province. Covering approximately 150,000 hectares within the Karingani reserve, which runs for 84 km along the South African border of Kruger Park, the project involves the construction of international standard luxury hotel facilities by 2028. The group's first venture in sub-Saharan Africa, this initiative would position the provinces of Inhambane and Gaza as a leading tourist destination, while strengthening the link between high-end tourism and biodiversity conservation. The project is expected to employ around 300 people during the construction phase and 400 during the operational phase. At the same time, President Daniel Chapo announced a long-term plan (10 to 20 years) to rehabilitate Massingir Airport and develop the Mapinhane-Pafuri corridor in order to boost tourism and integrate value chains related to agriculture, energy and hospitality.

Namibia

Economic slowdown in Namibia in the second quarter of 2025 *(NSA)*

According to the National Statistics Agency (NSA), GDP grew by 1.6% year-on-year in Q2 2025, compared with 2.8% in Q1 (revised from 2.7%) and 3.3% in Q2 2024. Growth was driven by the mining sector (+2.7%, a positive contribution of +0.3 points), buoyed by uranium (+44.1%), while other sectors generally underperformed. On the demand side, growth was held back by household consumption (-7.2%), but supported by investment (+5.0%), public spending (+4.2%) and foreign trade (exports +18.5%; imports -1.6%). Overall, these results highlight weakened domestic momentum, despite a buoyant mining sector. The outlook for the second half of 2025 remains moderate, with an improvement expected in agriculture and fisheries from the third quarter onwards, but domestic demand likely to remain under pressure in the face of high costs and limited household incomes.

Zambia

Zambia aims for historically low budget deficit ahead of elections *(Bloomberg)*

The Zambian government has presented a 2026 budget firmly focused on fiscal discipline, with the aim of reducing the deficit to 2.1% of GDP, down from 4.6% this year, its lowest level since 2011. This trajectory is all the more remarkable given that it comes on the eve of general elections scheduled for August 2026, when President Hakainde Hichilema will seek a second term.

To achieve this ambitious target, Lusaka plans to double taxes on mobile money transactions (widely used in the informal economy) and raise the excise duty on single-use plastics from 30% to 100%. These measures are intended to broaden the tax base and offset expenditure constraints imposed by the preparations for the elections.

Finance Minister Situmbeko Musokotwane is also counting on economic growth to accelerate to 6.4% in 2026 (5.8% estimated in 2025), driven by rising prices and production of copper, of which Zambia is Africa's second largest producer. However, this forecast remains subject to several risks, including the historic drought that has limited hydroelectric production and reduced household supply to six hours of electricity per day.

At the same time, to secure the electricity supply, the government plans to add 1,500 MW of solar energy and 300 MW of coal to the grid within 12 months and has announced the creation of a dedicated fund of 500 million kwachas (EUR 21 million) to stabilise supply.
This budget illustrates the government's desire to restore fiscal credibility, attract investors and consolidate its economic gains while appeasing voters.

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