

South Africa 

# Trade negotiations with the US now 'based on text' – Ramaphosa

Which he characterises as progress toward getting an agreement nailed down.

By Bastian Benrath-Wright, Bloomberg · 29 Oct 2025 ⌚ 21:24



President Cyril Ramaphosa was speaking on Wednesday during a state visit to Switzerland. Image: Bloomberg

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has said that negotiations for a trade deal with the US are ongoing and voiced optimism for an agreement, without providing a clear timeframe.

"We are looking forward to concluding an agreement fairly soon, and soon could be tomorrow, next week, next month," he told reporters in Bern on Wednesday during a state visit to Switzerland. "Timeframes, when you deal with governments, always shift."

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South Africa is seeking to alleviate hefty tariffs that President Donald Trump slapped on its exports to the US in August, potentially risking thousands of jobs in the automobile and citrus fruit sectors in Africa's most industrialised economy.

## Ramaphosa was joined in the joint press conference by his Swiss counterpart Karin Keller-Sutter.

He said negotiations with the US are now "based on text", which he characterised as progress toward getting an agreement nailed down.

Switzerland shares a similar fate, with a 39% tariff on most of its exports to America. Despite ongoing efforts of Swiss officials, a deal to secure a lower levy has so far proved elusive.

Ramaphosa was asked if he had any advice for his host in how to approach dealings with the US president, who ambushed him with false claims that his government is perpetuating a genocide against White South African farmers during a visit to the White House in May.

"We share notes," Ramaphosa said. "We share best practice."

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On the Swiss negotiations with Trump, Keller-Sutter said that while talks go on, "in the end the US president decides".

"So maybe it just needs some more patience."

### SA-Switzerland trade

Switzerland and South Africa earlier reaffirmed their intention to advance negotiations on modernising an existing free-trade agreement between the Southern African Customs Union and the European Free Trade Association, according to a [statement](#).

"We are hoping for rapid progress," Keller-Sutter told the reporters.

South Africa's bilateral trade with Switzerland is worth about 6.25 billion Swiss francs (\$7.8 billion or around R134 billion), [according](#) to the government in Bern.

**MUCH OF THIS COMPRISES EXPORTS OF GOLD TO THE ALPINE NATION, AS  
well as platinum, wine, fruit and nuts.**

South Africa mainly imports pharmaceuticals, machinery and watches from Switzerland.

Ramaphosa's Swiss visit follows directly from a three-nation tour through Southeast Asia to attend a summit in Malaysia.

Read: [SA to boost continental trade ties as US tariffs bite](#)

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