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Zimbabwe and Botswana provisionally agree on free movement of citizens

Зімбабве та Ботсвана попередньо домовилися про вільне пересування громадян

Президенти Зімбабве Еммерсон Мнангагва та Ботсвани Мокгвітсі Масісі домовилися про вільне пересування своїх громадян, і тепер очікується, що імміграційні чиновники обох країн опрацюють ці умови. Якщо він набуде чинності, це буде друга подібна домовленість у Ботсвані. У регіоні, де нелегальні мігранти неодноразово піддаються кримінальній відповідальності, ця угода не лише зменшить міграційні перешкоди, а й сприятиме розвитку торгівлі, забезпечуючи такий необхідний економічний імпульс кожній країні та її народу.

<https://www.news24.com/news24/africa/news/zimbabwe-and-botswana-provisionally-agree-on-free-movement-of-citizens-20231207>

The presidents of Zimbabwe and Botswana have instructed their governments to work on a free movement agreement.

The decision will work in favour of cross-border traders and minimise irregular migration.

Economist Stevenson Dhlamini says this is win-win for both countries.

The Presidents of Zimbabwe and Botswana have in principle agreed on the free movement of their citizens, and now immigration officials from both countries are expected to work on the modalities.

If it comes into effect, this would be Botswana's second such arrangement.

The first was with Namibia in February of this year.

Addressing delegates at the 5th Kusi Ideas Festival in Gaborone in Botswana, Zimbabwe's president, Emmerson Mnangagwa said he had reached an agreement with his counterpart, Mokgweetsi Masisi.

"We agreed that from now on, we shall instruct our officials that there should be no question of how to enter Zimbabwe or how to enter Botswana.

"The two of us agreed because we are all Africans. We should be able to walk into Botswana, Zambia, and Kenya," Mnangagwa said.

With Zimbabwe being the most economically challenged country in the region, Botswana and South Africa receive an influx of illegal immigrants from it.

As far back as 2004, when Zimbabwe was undergoing one of its worst political and economic episodes, Botswana was deporting an average of 2 500 Zimbabweans monthly.

Last year, the United Nations working group on arbitrary detention (WGAD) raised concerns about Botswana's punitive approach towards refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants.

Under the current arrangements, a national from both countries can spend up to 90 days or three months per year using a passport without a work visa or permit.

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In a region where irregular migrants are repeatedly criminalised, this agreement would not only lower migratory obstacles but also promote trade, providing a much-needed economic boost to each country and its people.

Economist Stevenson Dhlamini said this will be a win-win for both countries.

"This is a welcome step for informal cross-border traders, particularly women. This should make their task easier, which is critical in eradicating poverty," he said.

Botswana and Zimbabwe share a land border that stretches 841 kilometres from the tripoint with Zambia in the northwest to the tripoint with South Africa in the southeast.

The last time it was demarcated was in 1959.

There are four border posts between the two countries.