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## Shilowa to launch Gauteng 'city region'

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GAUTENG will be launched as a "city region" this August, joining the likes of London, Tokyo and Sao Paulo to become more competitive by creating a common development plan for the entire province.

As Gauteng is projected to have a population of 14,6-million by 2015, the province's leadership is concerned that it will not be able to "meet its significant development challenges" unless all three spheres of government work together and are thinking beyond the boundaries of municipal structures.

The executive mayors of the province's three metros — Tshwane, Johannesburg and Ekurhuleni — and mayors from the districts of West Rand, Sedibeng and Metsweding, support the "city region" concept.

Premier Mbhazima Shilowa, the mayors and the local government and finance MECs now plan to canvass the support of society and business on how government could go about structuring the "city region".

Annette Griessel, provincial spokeswoman said the premier, the mayors of the metros and government officials had already visited cities abroad where the regions were successful to determine if Gauteng would meet the requirements.

It was decided that Gauteng, as an extended urban province with interconnections with its regions and neighbouring provinces, was uniquely placed to become a city region, she said.

Griessel said municipalities would retain control of their finances, but would work more closely on issues of common interest such as public transport planning, safety and security, sustainable housing strategies, trade and tourism.

The changes would be largely economic and socioeconomic rather than political or administrative, and as a result there would be no need for changes to the constitutional make-up of the various structures, she said.

"At the moment, each municipality has its own long-term strategy competing with that of its neighbours, which is a waste of resources.

"What a city region can do is play on the strengths of certain areas, and work to strengthen them," she said. Griessel said it could be decided that Ekurhuleni would be the manufacturing hub, Tshwane the seat of government and motoring hub, while Johannesburg capitalised on an information, communication and technology hub.

In March Shilowa told the Wits Business School that city regions were becoming increasingly important in the national and global economic space.

"We need to move beyond administrative and jurisdictional demarcations to better understand the economic geography of the city region," he said. This would include looking into how the different components related to each other; what their comparative and competitive advantages were; how the flow of capital affected people, as well as how business links shaped the regional economy, the Gauteng premier said.

The 2004 conference of the African National Congress (ANC) supported Shilowa's proposal.

"The city region is also in line with the ANC's national spatial development perspective and Gauteng's five-year strategic programme of action, which was unveiled in June last year," said Griessel.