

# Africa Business Forum 2025

## Proposal to include a discussion on value chain enablers at the subnational level

1. The Africa Business Forum, organized annually by the Economic Commission for Africa, serves as a premier platform for fostering partnerships and unlocking economic potential in Africa. The 2025 Forum, on the theme “From potential to prosperity: activating Africa’s regional value chains”, will be focused on accelerating growth through regional value chains, in particular in the livestock, pharmaceutical and agripark sectors.
2. To enhance the agenda of the Forum and provide actionable insights into the development of regional value chains, the present document contains a recommendation to include at the Forum a panel discussion with representatives of subnational governments on the role of those governments as value chain enablers. The discussion would showcase how subnational governments are tackling challenges and driving progress through innovative policies and initiatives. By featuring leaders of States, provinces or cities in African countries that have successfully attracted investment, developed and scaled up value chains, supported small and medium-sized enterprises and addressed such socioeconomic issues as employment and insecurity, the discussion would provide practical, replicable strategies to drive regional integration.

### I. Rationale

3. A panel discussion on subnational governments as value chain enablers will provide an opportunity to share knowledge on the following topics:
  - (a) **Developing subnational value chains.** Subnational governments play a pivotal role in implementing policies that shape agriculture, industry and trade, which are the cornerstones of regional economic integration;
  - (b) **Attracting investment.** Successful models of attracting domestic and foreign investment through public-private partnerships and infrastructure development can provide blueprints for other countries;
  - (c) **Supporting small and medium-sized enterprises and inclusive growth.** Subnational value chain enablers can connect small and medium-sized enterprises to regional markets, enhance capacity and provide access to financing, all of which drive inclusive economic growth;
  - (d) **Tackling employment and security challenges.** Subnational governments can create enabling environments to facilitate employment, address insecurity and foster trust in governance, which are essential components of inclusive and sustainable development;
  - (e) **Developing infrastructure.** Subnational governments are often at the forefront of building such critical infrastructure as roads, storage facilities and logistics hubs, which are vital for unlocking the full potential of regional value chains;



(f) **Improving business development.** By fostering innovation hubs, incubation programmes and business support services, subnational governments enhance the capacity of local enterprises to scale up and compete in regional and global markets;

(g) **Enhancing transparency and peer-learning.** By sharing their achievements and challenges, subnational value chain enablers can promote transparency and inspire learning across subregions, thereby driving innovation and accountability.

## II. Details on the proposed segment

4. Details on the proposed segment are as follows:

(a) The proposed title is “Show and tell: subnational value chain enablers activating regional value chains”;

(b) The duration of the discussion would be between 15 and 20 minutes;

(c) The format would be a moderated panel discussion featuring four representatives from subnational governments in the region, acting as value chain enablers.

## III. Panellists

5. The proposed panellists are as follows:

(a) **Governor of Oyo State, Nigeria, Seyi Makinde.** Mr. Makinde is a transformational leader who is redefining governance in Africa through innovation, transparency and inclusive growth. As Governor of Oyo State, he has spearheaded landmark initiatives in infrastructure, agriculture and industry, leveraging public-private partnerships to attract significant investments. Under his leadership, a special agro-industrial processing zone and agribusiness park was launched in Awe, Oyo State, to enhance crop production, livestock farming, irrigation, agribusiness and agroprocessing. He is a seasoned entrepreneur and engineer, and his data-driven and people-centred policies have positioned Oyo State as a model for sustainable economic transformation. His visionary leadership and proven ability to drive impactful change would make him an exceptional panellist at the 2025 Forum, where his insights on fostering collaboration, resilience and growth would inspire actionable strategies for the continent’s economic future;

(b) **Governor of Kilifi County, Kenya, Gideon Mung’aro.** Mr. Mung’aro is a dedicated leader with a deep commitment to sustainable development and community empowerment. Since assuming office, he has prioritized transformative initiatives in such important sectors as infrastructure, education, health care and tourism, with the aim of positioning Kilifi County as a regional economic powerhouse. With a focus on public-private partnerships, Mr. Mung’aro has worked to attract investments that drive growth while addressing such local challenges as youth unemployment and climate resilience. His inclusive leadership style and strategic vision make him an essential voice in shaping the future of Kenya and a valuable contributor to regional and national development dialogues;

(c) **Mayor of Freetown, Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr.** Ms. Aki-Sawyerr is a visionary leader who is transforming urban governance in Africa through her innovative and inclusive approach. Since taking office in 2018, she has spearheaded the “Transform Freetown” initiative, which is focused on such critical areas as climate resilience, housing, sanitation and

economic empowerment. She has garnered international recognition for her leadership, under which data-driven strategies have been integrated with grassroots engagement. Groundbreaking efforts have included the planting of 1 million trees to combat deforestation and urban flooding. With a commitment to sustainability and equity, Ms. Aki-Sawyerr has positioned Freetown as a model for progressive urban development, earning her global acclaim as a dynamic and impactful leader shaping the future of Africa;

(d) **Governor of Cairo, Khaled Abdel Aal.** Mr. Abdel Aal is a visionary leader at the helm of one of the largest and most dynamic cities in Africa. With a focus on urban modernization, sustainability and infrastructure development, he has driven initiatives to address the challenges of rapid urbanization in Cairo, including improved traffic management, enhanced public services and revitalized public spaces. Under his leadership, Cairo has advanced the integration of smart city solutions in alignment with Egypt Vision 2030 for sustainable and inclusive growth. His strategic approach to governance and his commitment to enhancing the quality of life of residents of Cairo make him a significant figure in urban transformation across Africa and the Middle East.

#### IV. Objectives

6. The objectives of the panel discussion are:

(a) **Knowledge-sharing.** Effective policies, challenges and lessons learned in activating regional value chains will be highlighted;

(b) **Policy innovation.** Innovative approaches to integrating small and medium-sized enterprises into the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area will be explored;

(c) **Collaboration.** Partnerships among subregional value chain enablers, development partners and private sector stakeholders will be facilitated;

(d) **Youth employment and security.** Strategies to address youth unemployment and insecurity through regional value chain development will be discussed;

(e) **Transparency and accountability.** Experiences in successfully overcoming challenges faced in promoting trust in governance will be shared.

#### V. Expected outcomes

7. Expected outcomes of the panel discussion include:

(a) **Practical insights.** Attendees will gain actionable knowledge on replicable models of regional value chain activation;

(b) **Enhanced collaboration.** Partnerships will be fostered among members of the Economic Commission for Africa, subnational governments and principal stakeholders;

(c) **Empowerment of small and medium-sized enterprises.** Strategies for integrating small and medium-sized enterprises into regional value chains will be strengthened.

(d) **Policy recommendations:** Frameworks aimed at addressing employment, security and governance challenges will be enhanced.

## **VI. Conclusion**

8. Including a discussion on subnational value chain enablers at the Forum would provide fresh perspectives and demonstrate how local innovation drives regional economic integration. By showcasing their strategies and achievements, ECA can highlight the vital role of such enablers in realizing the economic potential of Africa. The segment would amplify the impact of the Forum, promote peer-learning and inspire greater collaboration across levels of governance.

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