

AFRICA BUSINESS FORUM 2026

Financing the future of Africa: jobs and innovation for sustainable transformation

Addis Ababa, 16 and 17 February 2026

Programme of Work

| Monday, 16 February | |
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| 9–9.30 a.m. | <p>Arrival and visit to knowledge fair</p> <p>Coffee, speed networking, visit to the knowledge fair and engagement with youth enterprises, innovation partners and representatives of the creative sector</p> |
| 9.30–10 a.m. | <p>Opening of the Forum</p> <p>Moderated by Mr. Mark Eddo</p> <p>Opening remarks by the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, Claver Gatete</p> <p>Keynote speech, Secretary-General, Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA), Dr. Fatima Farouk Elsheikh</p> <p>Keynote speech, President and Chief Executive Officer, Africa Finance Corporation, Mr. Samaila Zubairu</p> <p>Remarks by President of Ethiopia, H.E. Taye Atske Selassie Amde</p> |
| 10–11.30 a.m. | <p>Presidential dialogue of Heads of State and youth entrepreneurs: “From youth enterprise to national prosperity: what works, what can be implemented at scale and what Governments must do”</p> <p>The following two spotlight presentations will precede the dialogue:</p> <p>Spotlight on the Diakite brothers: a three-minute video on Diakite Cocoa and its cocoa processing factory in Divo, Côte d’Ivoire, where 36,000 tons, of a target of 80,000 tons, of cocoa are processed annually and some 1,000 direct and indirect jobs have been created for local young people, demonstrating African entrepreneurs’ ability to compete with global industry giants.</p> <p>Spotlight on the Government of Algeria and its progress in building a start-up nation: a three-minute video focused on the rapid transformation of the start-up landscape of Algeria. In 2019, Algeria had fewer than 200 officially registered start-ups; by 2024 the number had</p> |



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| | <p>grown to more than 10,000. The growth was driven by a deliberate, system-wide effort to strengthen the enabling environment, simplify registration, expand support instruments and promote youth entrepreneurship. The country has now set a new target of establishing a further 10,000 start-ups by 2029 and expects to achieve it ahead of schedule. As the host of the African Startup Conference, in December 2025, Algeria is increasingly positioning itself as a regional convening hub. Authorities are focused on the ways in which African initiatives can be used to help Algerian and other African start-ups to expand across borders and tap into the vibrant innovation dynamics of the continent.</p> <p>The dialogue will be a moderated conversation on the ways in which Governments can deliberately enable enterprises that are led by young people to grow into job-creating industries. The moderator will lead an interactive exchange and a question and answer session, and provide a summary of core insights.</p> <p>Moderator: Founder, Mark Eddo Media, Mr. Mark Eddo</p> <p>Panellists</p> <p>Deputy Prime Minister of Somalia, H.E. Salah Ahmed Jama</p> <p>Minister of the Knowledge Economy, Start-ups and Microenterprises of Algeria, H.E. Nouredine Ouadah</p> <p>African Union Commissioner for Economic Development, Trade, Tourism, Industry and Minerals, H.E. Francisca Tatchouop Belobe</p> <p>Founder, Diakite Cocoa, Mr. Alhassane Diakite</p> <p>Regional Director, Sub-Saharan Africa, Google LLC, Mr. Charles Murito</p> |
| 11.30–11.35 a.m. | Spoken word poetry, Mr. Nahom Asrat |
| 11.40 a.m.–12.00 p.m. | <p>Centre-stage Address by the African Business and Development Finance Statesman:</p> <p>In this segment, Dr. James Mwangi will take the stage for a standalone address, offering strategic reflections on building resilient, inclusive, and scalable African enterprises rooted in domestic markets and people-centred growth models.</p> <p>Drawing on his leadership of Equity Group’s transformation from a microfinance institution into one of Africa’s most influential financial services and development platforms, Mr. Mwangi will reflect on how African capital, innovation, and entrepreneurship can be mobilized to drive jobs, productivity, and long-term economic transformation. His</p> |

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| | <p>address will emphasize the role of financial systems, MSMEs, youth enterprises, agribusiness, digital platforms, and human capital in anchoring broad-based growth across diverse African economies.</p> <p>The address will focus on the practical realities of mobilizing long-term domestic capital, expanding access to finance, managing systemic risk, and aligning private-sector incentives with development outcomes. Mr. Mwangi will share insights on partnering with governments, development finance institutions, and the private sector to crowd in investment, strengthen value chains, and translate financial inclusion into real economic participation and job creation at scale.</p> <p>This segment is designed to reinforce the Forum’s business-first orientation while broadening the lens from industrial scale alone to inclusive scale. It will serve as a bridge between political ambition and market execution, grounding high-level policy discussions in lived business and financial leadership experience, and setting the tone for the Forum’s subsequent investment, innovation, and deal-oriented conversation.</p> |
| 12.00–12.20 p.m. | Tea Break and visit to exhibition halls |
| 12.30–2 p.m. | <p>High-Level dialogue and leaders of development finance institutions and private sector entities: “Mobilizing capital for jobs at scale: leadership on corridors, value chains and industrial platforms”</p> <p>The following spotlight presentation will precede the dialogue:</p> <p>Spotlight on the Africa Finance Corporation: a three-minute video highlighting the partnership between the Africa Finance Corporation and African Governments in efforts to deliver transformative infrastructure. An example of such partnership is the joint development of the Lobito Corridor to unlock regional mineral and trade routes, which involved attracting capital from multilateral development banks and private investors, and supporting local jobs and value addition along the Corridor and the associated industrial zones. The Corridor project is an illustration of how fit-for-purpose capital, patient partnership and disciplined project preparation can result in the transformation of strategic corridors into engines of youth employment and regional integration.</p> <p>Spotlight on Trade and Development Bank: a three-minute video on the role of Trade and Development Bank as a catalytic regional development finance institution through which financing is provided for cross-border trade, industrialization and enterprise growth throughout East and Southern Africa. The video shows how long-term, sustained capital is deployed by the Bank to support regional value chains,</p> |

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| | <p>strategic industries and infrastructure that underpin private sector-led job creation. It will provide practical insight on the ways in which regional development finance institutions can work with Governments and the private sector to increase investment, deepen markets and translate financing into sustainable enterprise growth and jobs in multiple countries.</p> <p>The objective of this high-level dialogue is to examine how coalitions of Governments, regional development finance institutions and private sector actors can structure capital, align markets and execute platforms that generate employment at scale.</p> <p>Moderator: Aboubakri Diaw, Chief of Staff, ECA</p> <p>Panellists</p> <p>Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Rebeca Grynspan</p> <p>Group President and Managing Director, Trade and Development Bank, Mr. Admassu Tadesse</p> <p>Executive Vice President for Intra-African Trade, African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank), Ms. Kanayo Awani</p> <p>President Africa Business Council (AfBC), Dr. Amany Asfour</p> <p>Founder and CEO, YYTZ Agro Processing, Mr. Fahad Awadh</p> <p>Founder and General Partner of HealthCap Africa, Dr Ola Brown</p> |
| 2–2.30 p.m. | <p>Presentation of Major Initiatives</p> <p>Ceremonial introduction of the Jobs Wall of Commitments: a short introduction of the jobs wall and its pledges, one of the flagship delivery mechanisms of the Forum, to explain areas to be tracked, including capital mobilized and disbursed, enterprises supported, jobs created and sustained, and related outcomes, and the mechanisms for partners to report progress.</p> <p>Launch of the 2025 edition of the Least Developed Countries Report, by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.</p> |
| 2.30 p.m. | <p>Networking lunch</p> |

| Tuesday, 17 February | |
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| 9–9.30 a.m. | <p>Arrival and visit to knowledge fair</p> <p>Coffee, speed networking, visit to the knowledge fair and early engagement with youth enterprises, innovation partners and representatives of the creative sector.</p> |
| 9.30–10 a.m. | <p>Opening of the second day of the Forum</p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Mark Eddo</p> <p>Recap of day one</p> <p>Opening remarks by the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, H.E. Claver Gatete</p> |
| 10–11.10 a.m. | <p>Round table 1: creating jobs at scale – aligning philanthropy, enterprise growth and market expansion in Africa</p> <p>The following spotlight presentation will precede the round table:</p> <p>Spotlight on Kabana Leather: a three-minute video on Kabana Leather, a Made-in-Africa leather goods company transforming locally sourced materials into premium products while creating dignified jobs especially for women and young people across the design, craftsmanship, and light manufacturing value chain. From a small enterprise, Kabana has grown into a respected African brand supplying both local and international markets, contributing to inclusive industrialisation, women’s economic empowerment, and creative industry development. The story illustrates how inclusive entrepreneurship, skills transfer, and African brand building can generate sustainable jobs, empower women, strengthen creative manufacturing ecosystems, and show that African products can compete successfully in high-value global markets.</p> <p>Participants in the round table are expected to examine the ways in which African enterprises can scale up from early-stage ventures to competitive, job-creating firms, and to analyse the enabling role of philanthropy, foundations and other forms of catalytic capital, exploring how philanthropists and philanthropic entities can support entrepreneurship, skills development, innovation and market access; de-risk enterprise growth; and encourage commercial finance. In addition, participants will be invited to discuss the factors that help to translate philanthropic partnerships into sustainable jobs, competitive firms and the emergence of the next generation of African business leaders.</p> |

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| | <p>The round table will be focused on practical models through which philanthropy, investment, policy and markets can be aligned to accelerate the growth of enterprise and boost employment outcomes. The moderator will lead an interactive discussion and a question and answer session and provide a summary of core insights.</p> <p>Moderator: Ms. Yuko Naab, Head of Partnerships and Resource Mobilisation, ECA</p> <p>Panellists</p> <p>Minister of Gender, Children and Social Welfare of The Gambia, H.E. Fatou S Kinteh</p> <p>Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations Global Compact, Ms. Sanda Ojiambo</p> <p>Country Director for Kenya, Mastercard Foundation, Ms. Hannah Tsadik</p> <p>Chief Executive Officer, Mo Ibrahim Foundation, Ms. Nathalie Delapalme</p> <p>Founder of Kabana Leather, Ms. Semhal Guesh</p> <p>Founder of NovFeed, Ms. Diana Orembe</p> |
| 11.10 a.m.–12.20 p.m. | <p>Round table 2: financing the innovation economy in Africa through financial, agricultural, industrial and health technology</p> <p>The following two spotlight presentations will precede the round table:</p> <p>Spotlight on the Government of Algeria and its progress in building a start-up nation: a three-minute video focused on the rapid transformation of the start-up landscape of Algeria. In 2019, Algeria had fewer than 200 officially registered start-ups; by 2024 the number had grown to more than 10,000. The growth was driven by a deliberate, system-wide effort to strengthen the enabling environment, simplify registration, expand support instruments and promote youth entrepreneurship. The country has now set a new target of establishing a further 10,000 start-ups by 2029 and expects to achieve it ahead of schedule. As the host of the African Startup Conference, in December 2025, Algeria is increasingly positioning itself as a regional convening hub. Authorities are focused on the ways in which African initiatives can be used to help Algerian and other African start-ups to expand across borders and tap into the vibrant innovation dynamics of the continent.</p> <p>Spotlight on Psaltry International Limited: a three-minute video on Psaltry International Limited, a Nigerian agro-industrial venture</p> |

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| | <p>transforming cassava into high-value industrial and food-grade products while integrating thousands of smallholder farmers into modern value chains. Starting from a modest processing operation, Psaltry has grown into a leading cassava derivatives company addressing food security, import substitution, rural incomes, and industrial development, while creating jobs across farming, aggregation, logistics, and processing. The story illustrates how agro-industrial value addition, inclusive supply chain models, and market-driven innovation can generate sustainable jobs, raise farmer incomes, strengthen local manufacturing, and demonstrate that African agribusinesses can compete in sophisticated global markets.</p> <p>Participants in the round table are expected to examine the ways in which digital and industrial innovation in financial, agricultural, industrial and health technology and related platforms is transforming productivity, enterprise competitiveness and job creation. The moderator will lead an interactive discussion and a question and answer session and provide a summary of core insights.</p> <p>Moderator: Ms. Hayat Abdulmalik, Chief Impact Officer, Kifiya Financial Technology PLC</p> <p>Panellists</p> <p>Minister of the Knowledge Economy, Start-ups and Microenterprises of Algeria, H.E. Noureddine Ouadah</p> <p>ASG, and Program Assistant Administrator And Director, UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa, Ms. Ahunna Eziakonwa</p> <p>Co-founder and CEO CBE Capital Investment Bank and Global Chairman, Fairfax Africa Fund, LLC, Mr. Zemedeneh Negatu</p> <p>Founder of Psaltry International, Ms. Yemisi Iranloye</p> <p>Managing Director, Teryden Farm & Investments, Ms. Muttwiwa Sharon</p> |
| 12.30–1 p.m. | Break, knowledge fair visit and speed networking |
| 1–2.10 p.m. | <p>Roundtable 3: Afrofuturism – scaling Ethiopia’s creative industries through investment, partnerships and inclusive markets</p> <p>This roundtable will spotlight Ethiopia’s creative industries as a bankable growth frontier and a practical pathway to jobs, exports, and scalable returns. It will focus on what it takes to move from talent and cultural capital to structured value chains, investable projects, and inclusive market access across film, music, fashion, and digital content.</p> |

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| | <p>The discussion will examine the full pathway from creation to commercialization: idea development, production capacity, intellectual property, distribution, audience building, monetization, and cross-border market entry. It will draw lessons from real business models and deal structures that can unlock private capital, de-risk investment, and expand opportunities for women and young creators. With perspectives from a film producer, music producer, musical artist, fashion designer, and a social media content creator and influencer, the roundtable will prioritise actionable solutions and partnership pathways that can be implemented at scale in the Ethiopian context.</p> <p>The moderator will lead an interactive discussion, guide a question and answer segment, and close with a concise summary of core insights and practical recommendations.</p> <p>Moderator: Hannane Ferdjani, independent journalist and freelance reporter</p> <p>Panellists</p> <p>Producer Yisakal Entertainment, Mr. Eyob Alemayehu</p> <p>Digital Content Producer, Ms. Mahider Kebede Bekele</p> <p>Founder, Acklog Fashion, Ms. Tsegamariam Zewdie</p> <p>Ethiopian singer and songwriter, Ms. Betty G</p> <p>Producer and Director Ethio Film Production, Mr. Yonas Mewa</p> |
| 2.10–2.30 p.m. | <p>Closing of the Forum</p> <p>During the closing of the Forum, a summary of outcomes and major commitments announced throughout the two days will be shared among the participants, including information on how they will be structured in order to maximize visibility and ensure their follow-up through the jobs wall and reporting by ECA.</p> <p>Closing remarks will be delivered by Mr. Aboubakri Diaw</p> |
| 2.30 p.m. | <p>Lunch</p> |