

**Unlocking Regional Value Chains:
Empowering Youth-Led Enterprises in Africa
to thrive Under AfCFTA**

Organized by the ECA Subregional office for Southern Africa (SRO-SA)
In collaboration with ECA Regional Integration and Trade Division (RITD)
the International Labour Organisation (ILO)

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Southern Africa Youth Forum

Thursday June 11, 2026

Time: 16:15 - 17:15 (Eastern African Time)

Venue: Room CR4, UN Conference Centre.

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Session Provisional Agenda

An Africa Development Impact Forum (ADIF) Action-Oriented Engagement Series

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

	Date: Thursday June 11, 2026 16:15-17:15 Room CR4, UNCC	
TIME	THEME	
16:15-17:15	<p>Round Table on “Unlocking Regional Value Chains: Empowering Africa’s Youth-Led Enterprises to Thrive Under AfCFTA”.</p> <p>Moderator: Mr Melaku Desta, Director, ECA Regional Integration and Trade Division (RITD)</p> <p>Setting the stage: Moderator (2 mins)</p> <p>Round 1</p> <p><i>Testimonials:</i> Entrepreneurship Experiences in Southern Africa (15 mins)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Ms. Gugulethu Siso, Founder, Thumeza Zimbabwe ii. Ms. Tasha Chitika, Founder, Wingy Generals Dealer, Zambia. iii. Youth Entrepreneur from Ethiopia (tbc) <p>Round 2 Round table discussion on 4 framing themes: Access to finance, Market access, Trade facilitation and Digital borders, Technology and e-commerce (25 mins)</p> <p>Additional Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Shiphra Chisha, Director of Programmes, Graça Machel Trust and SADC Business Council • Mr. Fetene Aragaw, Business Development Manager, AeTrade • Andrew Allieu, Regional Economist, ILO. • Representative of IYBA, Team Europe Initiative <p>Leading Questions</p> <p>Access to Finance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What are the major factors impeding youth-led SMEs to access finance to participate in value-chains and trade across borders? ▪ What innovative financing mechanisms can realistically be scaled up across Africa for youth enterprises to allow them to grow and trade? <p>Market Access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What actions will be most effective in enabling youth enterprises to break barriers to integrate into export markets? ▪ How can supplier development programmes and value chain linkages be strengthened to connect youth enterprises to large firms and regional supply chains? 	

Trade Facilitation and Digital Borders

- What are the most urgent reforms and actions needed to reduce trade costs and improve cross-border trade efficiency for SMEs?
- How can governments accelerate the development of digital trade corridors and smart borders?

Leveraging technology and e-commerce

- How can digital marketplaces and e-commerce platforms help youth enterprises access regional and continental markets under AfCFTA?
- What are the key bottlenecks preventing SMEs from converting online presence into actual cross-border trade?

General

- What are the most transformative interventions needed to enable youth-led enterprises to move from survival entrepreneurship to competitive participation in regional value chains under AfCFTA?
- What concrete commitment or initiative can your institution deliver within the next 12–18 months to unlock opportunities for youth-led enterprises under AfCFTA?

Q&A (15 mins)

Summary and Way Forward: Ms. Eunice G. Kamwendo, Director, ECA Subregional Office for Southern Africa (SRO/SA) (2 mins)

Vote of Thanks: Mr. Mischek Gondo, Regional Coordinator, Southern Africa Youth Forum (SAYoF) (2 mins)