

UKUMBI AFRIKA

A PUBLICATION OF THE AFRICAN BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE

\$4.99

MAY/JUNE 2026
(MAIDEN EDITION)

THE RENAISSANCE IMPERATIVE

SAMUEL DOSSOU-AWORET'S
BOLD VISION

AFRICAN CAPITAL:
OIL, GAS, RENEWABLES &
REALITY

AFRICA RISING:
STRATEGIES & POLICIES

PEOPLE, MEDIA &
SOFT POWER

CITIES, INDUSTRY &
THE FUTURE OF WORK

ISSN 3117-8650

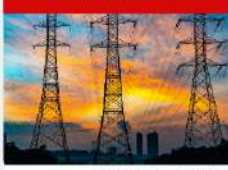


5 8745 07485 10023

A tradition of Excellence in Investment Banking Solutions

Africa is Our Market

Our practice is deeply rooted in our passion to leverage our expertise and global networks to deliver tailor-made investment banking solutions to Africa's unique financing requirements.

USD 250 million Debt Refinancing Facility  Transaction Advisor & Mandated Lead Arranger 2025	GHS 300 million Revolving Short-term Loan  Transaction Advisor & Mandated Lead Arranger 2024	USD 60 million Long-term Capital Expenditure Facility  Transaction Advisor & Mandated Lead Arranger 2022	USD 120 million Debt Refinancing Facility  Transaction Advisor & Mandated Lead Arranger 2021
USD 124 million Debt Refinancing Facility  Transaction Advisor & Mandated Lead Arranger 2020	USD 205 million Capital Expenditure Facility  Transaction Advisor & Mandated Lead Arranger 2017	USD 205 million Debt Refinancing Facility  Transaction Advisor & Mandated Lead Arranger 2016	USD 225 million Structured Finance Facility  Transaction Advisor & Mandated Lead Arranger 2014/15

- Corporate Finance
- Project Finance
- Structured Finance

- Mergers & Acquisitions
- PPP Solutions
- Capital Raising

- Financial Advisory

UKUMBI AFRIKA

MAGAZINE

EDITORIAL & PUBLICATION INFORMATION

MAIDEN EDITION 2026

VOLUME 1

NUMBER 1

ISSN 3117-8650

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

Chairman, Joint Steering Committee:
Samuel Ayodele

Editor-in-Chief:
Sunny Ugoh

Managing Editor:
Monika Winiarska

Chief Creative Officer:
Nnameka Uche Abba

Ag. Chief Executive Officer:
Victor O. Ugwuh

EDITORIAL TEAM

Sunny Ugoh

Monika Winiarska

Emmanuel K. Dossou

Yolande Mboumba

Peter Mutakwe Katapwe

ADVISORY BOARD

Mr. N. Justin Chinyanta

Mme. Jeanne Ngoleine Ossouka

H.E. Dr. Amany Asfour

Dr. Muda Yusuf

Mr. Harry van Bommel

Prof. Colin Coulson-Thomas

CONTRIBUTORS

Kwame Ndlovu

Zainab Bello

Tendai Moyo

Chinonso “Chi” Okeke

Ayo Martins

Fatima El-Tayeb

Sibusiso Dlamini

Ama Serwaa Mensah

Yusuf Diallo

Lerato Khumalo

A PLATFORM. A PERSPECTIVE. A CONTINENT.

Ukumbi Afrika Magazine is a Pan-African publication dedicated to ideas, enterprise, policy, culture, creativity, and Africa's evolving place in the global conversation.

Through investigative journalism, commentary, essays, and strategic analysis, we amplify African voices shaping the continent's future across business, governance, technology, society, and the creative economy.

PUBLISHER

Ukumbi Afrika Magazine is published by Ukumbi Afrika Publications, a member of Messe Rand Consulting Group BV.

CONTACT INFORMATION

All correspondence should be addressed to **Ukumbi Afrika Publications**

 Messe Rand Consulting Group BV, Westplein 12-14, 3016BM Rotterdam, The Netherlands.

 editorial@ukumbiafrika.org

 +31 10 307 0160

UKUMBI AFRIKA

MAGAZINE

MAY/JUNE 2026,
MAIDEN EDITION

TABLE OF CONTENT

6

EDITORIAL

A New Platform. A Shared
Future.

24

INSIGHTS & POLICIES

Navigating Regulatory
Landscapes

50

ENERGY

Powering Africa's Growth
Sustainably and Inclusively

8

AT A GLANCE

A Quick View of Key Stories

27

TRADE

The Engine of African Prosperity

60

CAPITAL

Investing in Innovation.
Financing the Future.

10

LEADERSHIP

The Minds Shaping Africa

30

CASE STUDIES

Success Stories from Across the
Continent

66

FUTURE OF WORK

Skills and Jobs for the Digital
Age

18

COVER STORY

Voices. Vision. Impact. Leading
Africa's Next Chapter

32

SECTOR DEEP DIVE

In-depth Analysis of High-
Growth Area

72

BACK PAGE

Final Thoughts and Next Steps

46

CULTURE & SOCIETY

The Fabric of Our Communities

EDITOR'S NOTE

Amplifying African Narratives: Business, Policy and People. Africa is not a continent waiting to be defined—it is one actively defining itself.

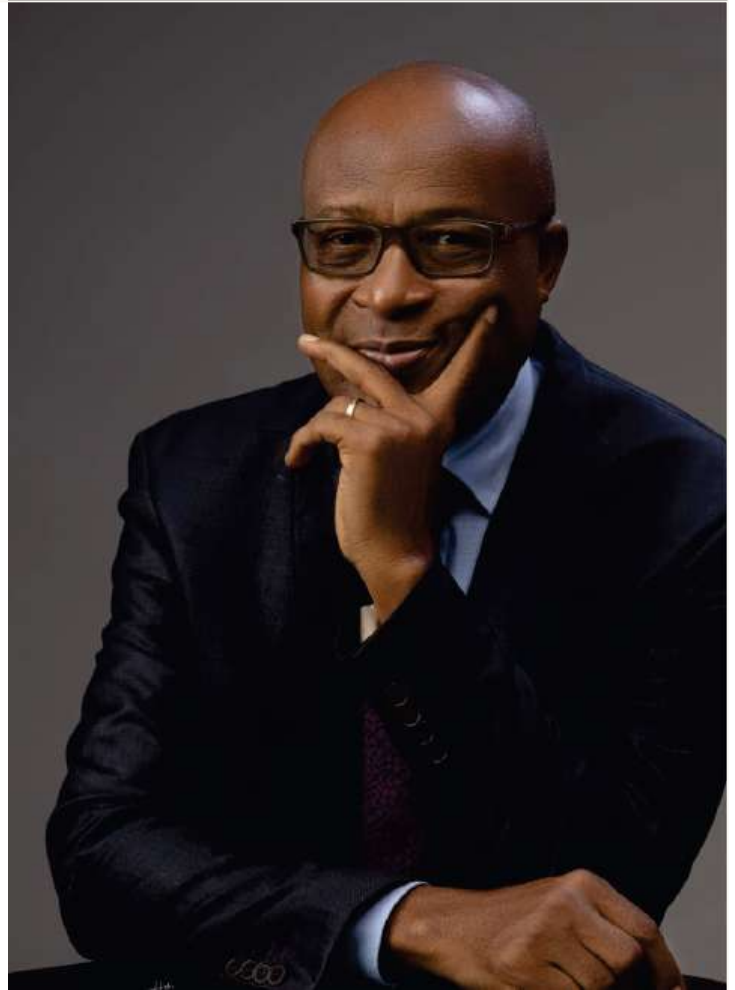
Across its cities, industries, and institutions, a new narrative is unfolding. It is a story of ambition shaped by resilience, of innovation grounded in context, and of leadership driven by purpose. Yet, despite the scale and significance of this transformation, African stories are too often fragmented, underrepresented, or told through external lenses. Ukumbi Afrika is born out of the need to change that.

As a platform, Ukumbi Afrika exists to convene ideas, elevate voices, and document the evolving intersections of business, policy, and people across the continent. The name “Ukumbi”—a gathering place—reflects our commitment to creating a space where Africa’s most pressing conversations can be engaged with depth, clarity, and integrity.

In this inaugural edition, we explore themes that sit at the heart of Africa’s transformation: the promise of continental integration through AfCFTA, the strategic importance of Africa’s energy future, the role of cities and industries in shaping the future of work, and the growing influence of diaspora capital in redefining economic possibilities.

We also celebrate leadership—individuals and institutions whose vision and commitment continue to shape Africa’s trajectory. From pioneering entrepreneurs to enduring legacies, these stories remind us that progress is not abstract; it is driven by people.

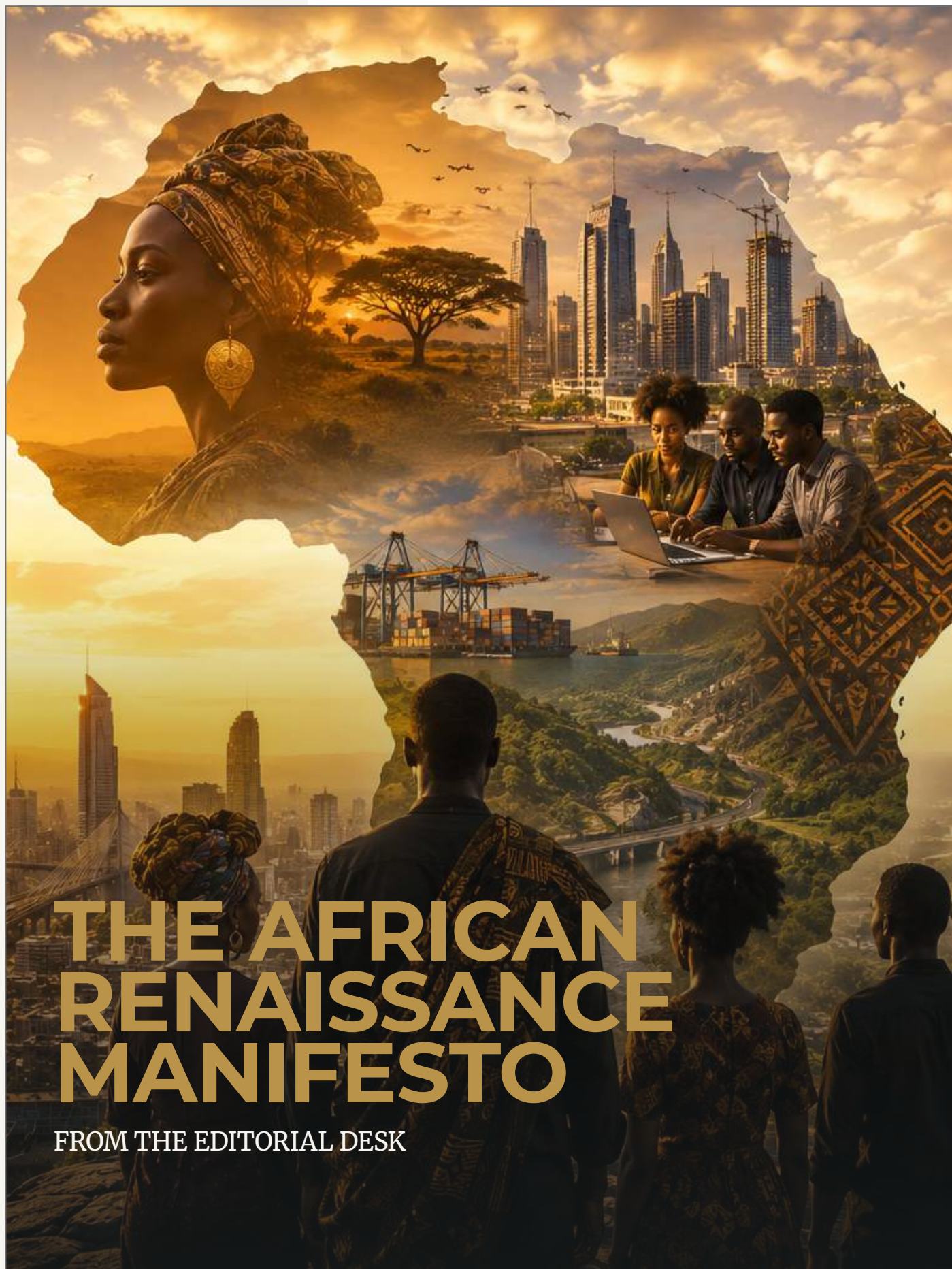
As Ukumbi Afrika begins its journey as a bi-monthly publication, with a view towards deeper, more expansive editions ahead, our goal is clear: to provide a credible, insightful, and enduring record of Africa in motion. We invite you to engage, reflect, and contribute to this shared space. Because Africa’s story is not only being written—it is being owned.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sunny Ugoh'.

Sunny Ugoh

Editor in Chief



THE AFRICAN RENAISSANCE MANIFESTO

FROM THE EDITORIAL DESK

This is a defining moment for Africa. Not because the challenges have disappeared, but because the response to them is changing—becoming more coordinated, more strategic, and more self-determined. Across the continent, there is a growing recognition that Africa's future will not be shaped by external prescriptions, but by internal alignment, institutional strength, and purposeful leadership.

The African Renaissance is no longer a distant ideal. It is an unfolding reality. It is evident in the drive toward continental integration through frameworks such as the African Continental Free Trade Area. It is visible in the repositioning of Africa within global energy conversations. It is reflected in the rapid transformation of cities into hubs of innovation, production, and talent. And it is reinforced by a diaspora increasingly engaged in the economic and intellectual life of the continent.

Yet, a renaissance is not merely a collection of positive indicators—it is a commitment.

A commitment to coherence over fragmentation, to value creation over extraction, to long-term vision over short-term gain, and to African-led solutions grounded in African realities.

This manifesto is therefore both a reflection and a call to action.

It calls on policymakers to deepen integration and strengthen institutions.

It calls on business leaders to invest with purpose and scale with vision. It calls on the African diaspora to engage not only as participants, but

as partners.

And it calls on the media to move beyond reporting events, and toward shaping understanding.

At its core, the African Renaissance demands a shift in mindset—from limitation to possibility, from dependency to agency, from narrative consumption to narrative ownership.

Ukumbi Afrika stands as part of this shift.

As a platform, we are committed to documenting, interrogating, and amplifying the ideas, policies, and people driving Africa forward. Not as observers, but as contributors to a broader continental conversation.

The work ahead is complex. The stakes are high. But the direction is clear.

Africa is not rising. Africa is repositioning.



AFRICA AT A GLANCE 2026

A CONTINENT IN MOTION

Africa today stands at a critical intersection of opportunity and transformation.

With a population exceeding 1.4 billion and a median age under 20, the continent represents one of the most dynamic demographic and economic frontiers in the world. But beyond the statistics lies a deeper story—one of structural shifts, emerging ecosystems, and a reconfiguration of Africa's role in the global economy.

Economic Integration

The African Continental Free Trade

Area continues to reshape intra-African trade dynamics, creating pathways for increased market access, industrial expansion, and regional value chains. While implementation remains uneven, momentum is steadily building toward a more connected continental economy.

Energy and Resource Strategy

In an era of global energy transition, Africa finds itself at the center of a complex balancing act. Rich in both fossil fuels and renewable resources, the continent is increasingly positioning itself as a critical player in global

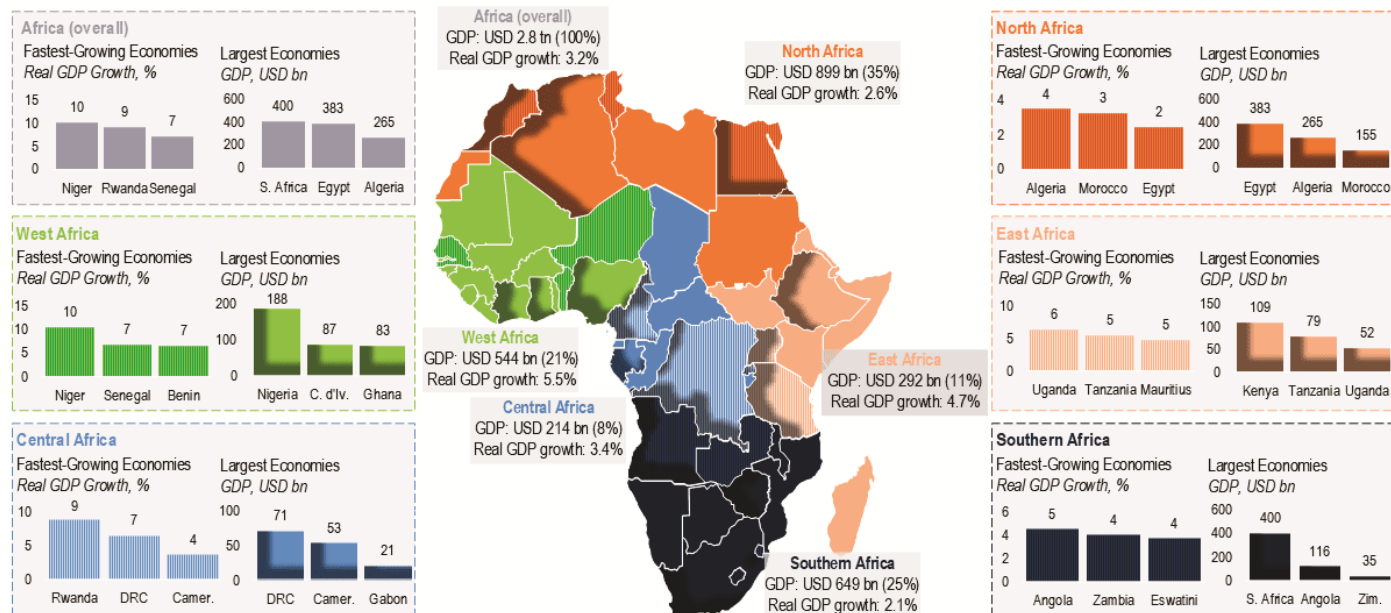
energy security, while navigating the demands of sustainability and equitable development.

Urbanisation and the Future of Work

Africa's cities are expanding at an unprecedented pace, evolving into engines of economic activity and innovation. This urban growth is redefining labour markets, accelerating digital adoption, and creating new opportunities—and challenges—for inclusive development.

Diaspora Capital and Influence

Africa Regional GDP Map: Largest and Fastest-Growing Economies (2024)



Source: IMF World Economic Outlook April 2025, ANDAMAN PARTNERS Analysis. Note: Camer. – Cameroon, C. d'Iv. – Côte d'Ivoire, Zim. – Zimbabwe.

Beyond remittances, Africa's diaspora is emerging as a strategic asset—bringing investment, expertise, and global networks that are helping to reshape sectors ranging from finance to technology and infrastructure.

Leadership and Institutional Evolution

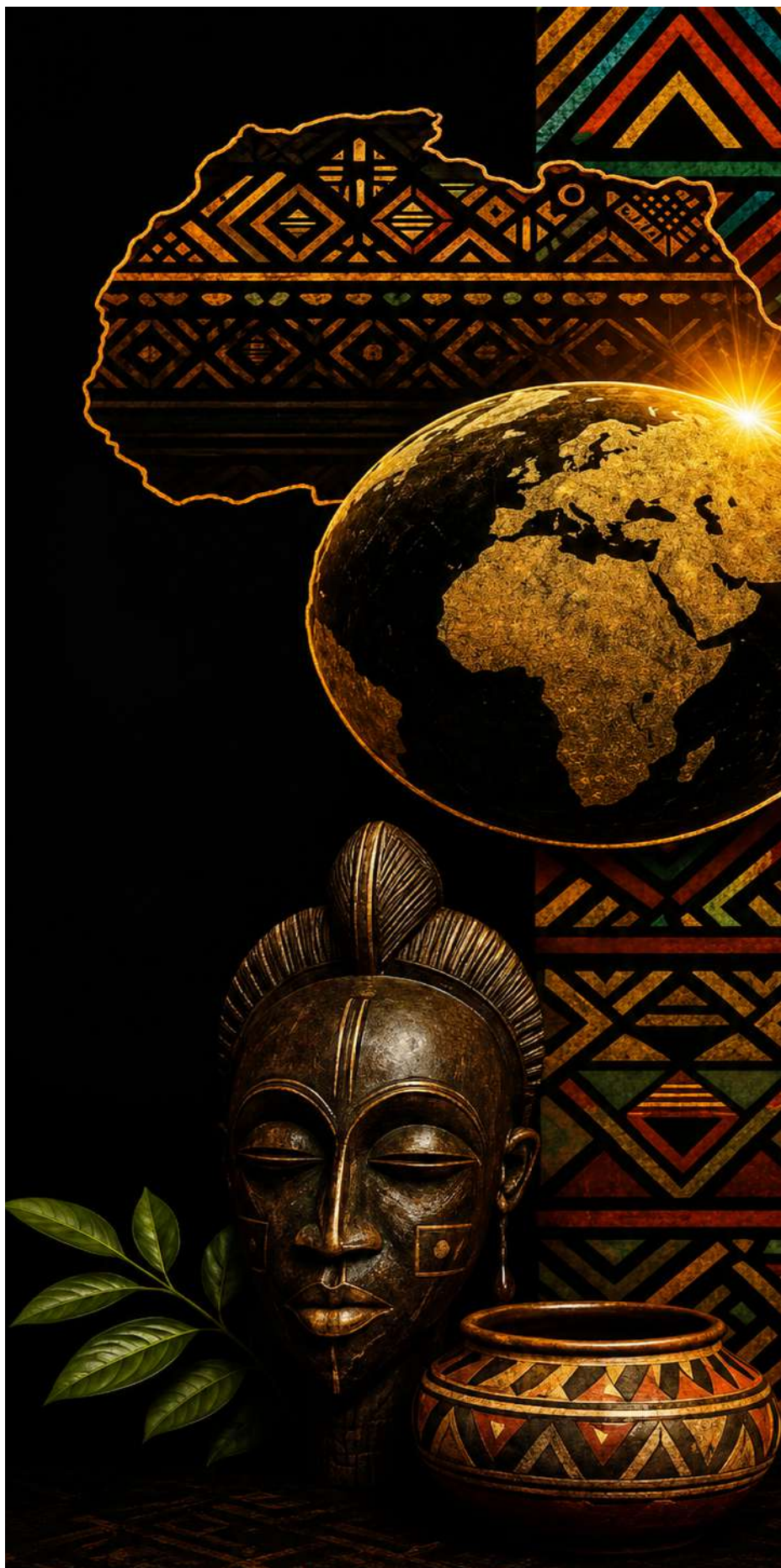
Across the continent, there is a renewed emphasis on governance, institutional reform, and strategic policy alignment. While disparities remain, there is a growing recognition that sustainable growth depends on strong, accountable systems.

Africa's trajectory is neither linear nor uniform. It is shaped by diverse national contexts, evolving global dynamics, and the interplay of opportunity and constraint.

Yet, one thing is clear:

And as these dynamics continue to unfold, platforms like Ukumbi Afrika will play a critical role in documenting, interpreting, and amplifying the continent's journey.

“Africa is no longer on the margins of global conversation. It is increasingly at the center of it.”



BUILDING FUTURES. POWERING GROWTH.

AMIRA Homes and Investment Limited is a diversified Nigerian enterprise delivering excellence across seven strategic sectors of the economy. AMIRA is rooted in integrity and driven by ambition. We connect infrastructure, energy, commerce, and agriculture, delivering projects with institutional discipline and lasting value across generations.

*Connecting
Possibilities*



Our Core Sectors

Real Estate

- Residential and Commercial Property Development

Downstream Oil & Gas

- Petroleum Distribution & Supply Chain Management

Import & Export

- Global Trade Facilitation & Market Linkage

Transportation

- Logistics, Haulage & Supply Chain Movement

General Contracting

- Civil Works, Construction & Project Execution

Agriculture

- Agribusiness Investment & Food Security

Business Facilitation & Brokerage

Connecting Investors, Partners & Stakeholders to Value-Creating Opportunities Across Sectors

Key Partnerships

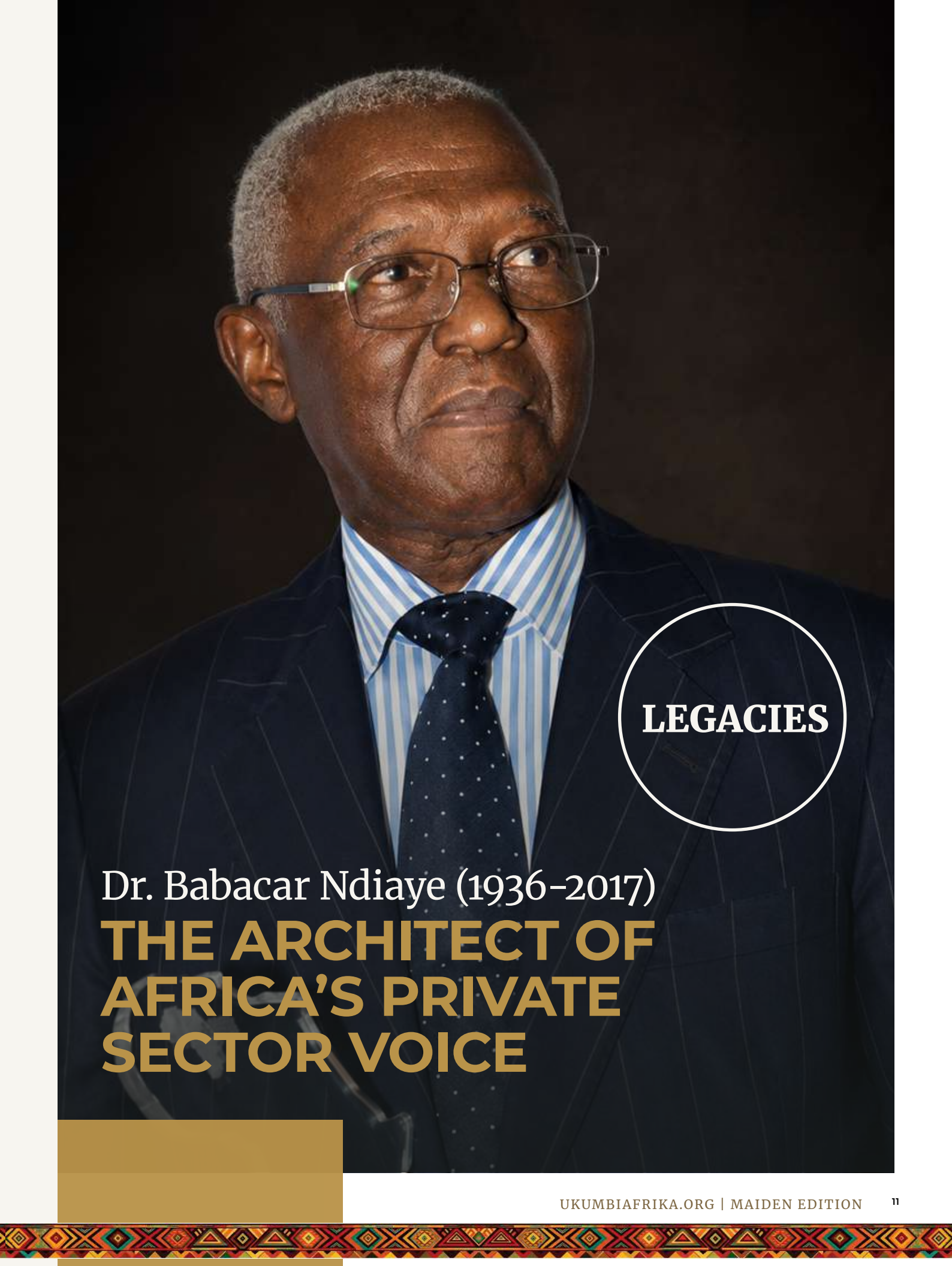
- Contractor for British American Tobacco (BAT): We provide exceptional contracting services to a prominent global corporation operating in Nigeria.
- Key Government Contractor: We are a trusted partner for government agencies, delivering critical infrastructure and essential services throughout Nigeria.

Our commitment

We are Nigerian in identity, continental in ambition, and global in standard. Every project we execute, every deal we facilitate, and every investment we make is guided by one commitment: to convert Nigeria's immense potential into measurable, lasting prosperity for our clients, our communities, and our nation.



Building Futures. Powering Growth. Connecting Possibilities. **Amira Homes and Investment Limited RC - 6938408**

A portrait of Dr. Babacar Ndiaye, an elderly Black man with short grey hair and glasses. He is wearing a dark blue pinstripe suit jacket over a light blue and white striped shirt and a dark blue tie with white polka dots. He is looking slightly to the right with a serious expression. The background is dark and out of focus.

LEGACIES

Dr. Babacar Ndiaye (1936–2017)

**THE ARCHITECT OF
AFRICA'S PRIVATE
SECTOR VOICE**

He believed Africa's future would not be built by governments alone. Through vision and conviction, Dr Babacar Ndiaye helped awaken the continent's private sector as a force for development, democracy, and global relevance.

A Vision Ahead of Its Time

In 1988, at a pivotal moment in Africa's economic history, Dr Babacar Ndiaye saw what many had yet to fully grasp: the future of the continent would depend not only on public institutions, but on the strength and engagement of its private sector.

As President of the African Development Bank (AfDB), he recognised a critical gap—the absence of a unified, influential voice for African business in shaping development outcomes. Rather than wait for change, he set it in motion.

Building a Platform for Influence

He convened twenty-five of Africa's leading business minds and thinkers, forming an Advisory Council that would go on to redefine the relationship between enterprise and governance on the continent.

From that gathering emerged a lasting institution: the African Business Roundtable (ABR).

As founding chairman, Dr Ndiaye guided ABR through its formative years with clarity of purpose and strategic intent.

Under his leadership, the organisation became more than a forum—it evolved into a platform for influence at a time when many African nations were navigating the complex transition toward economic liberalisation

and democratic governance.

ABR helped create the conditions for dialogue between governments and the business community, positioning private enterprise as a legitimate and necessary partner in national development.

It mobilised African businesses into a collective force—one capable of advocating for free-market inclusiveness, institutional reform, and sustainable growth.

This was not merely about economics. It was about shaping a new development narrative—one in which Africans themselves would define the path forward.

Connecting Africa to the World

Dr Ndiaye's vision extended beyond the continent. He understood that Africa's growth would be strengthened through strategic global partnerships.

Through ABR, he fostered connections between African businesses and their counterparts abroad, opening new pathways for investment, collaboration, and knowledge exchange. In doing so, he positioned African enterprise within a broader global conversation—ensuring it was not isolated, but actively engaged.

An Enduring Institutional Legacy

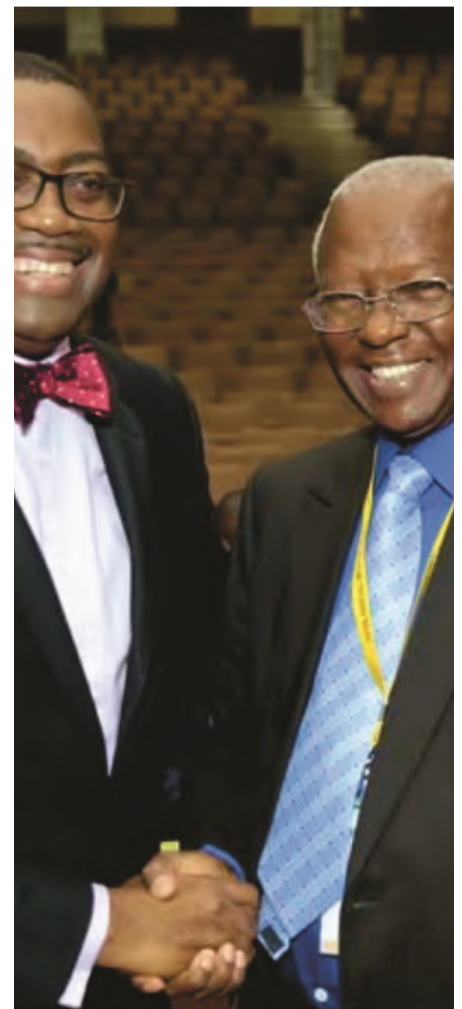
Beyond ABR, Dr Babacar Ndiaye's contributions to Africa's development architecture remain profound.

He is credited with pioneering the first private sector development unit at the African Development Bank—an initiative that underscored his belief in enterprise as a driver of growth.

“Senegal is my village; Africa is my country.”

He also played key roles in the creation of landmark Pan-African institutions, including Shelter Afrique and the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank).

These institutions continue to shape housing, trade, and financial ecosystems across the continent, standing as enduring symbols of his foresight and commitment.





“His leadership helped lay the groundwork for an Africa that could compete, negotiate, and collaborate on equal terms.”

A Life Devoted to Africa

Dr Ndiaye's Pan-Africanism was not theoretical—it was deeply personal.

He travelled extensively across the continent, championing development, building alliances, and advocating for a united African economic vision. His philosophy was captured in a simple yet profound statement:

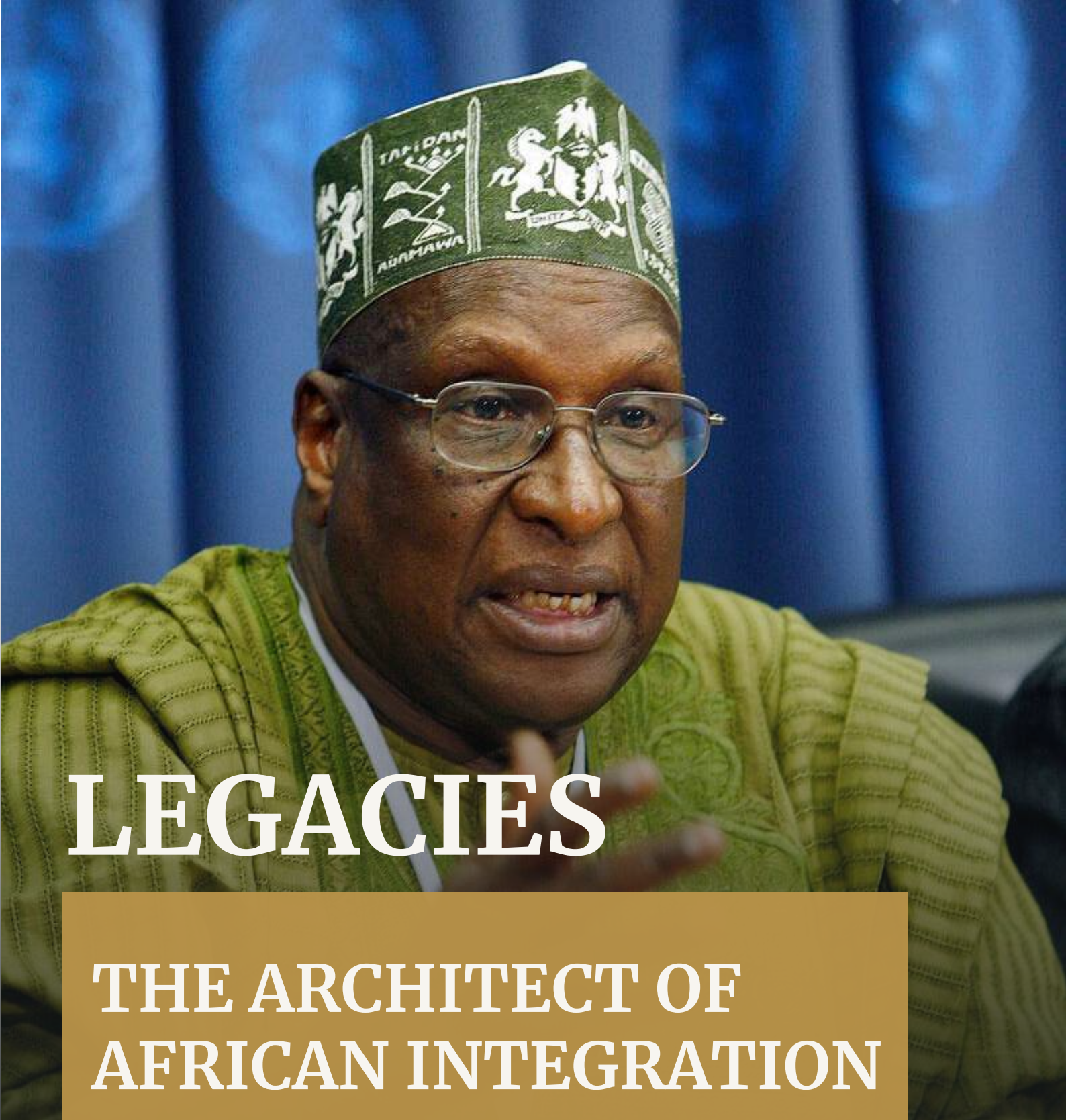
Even in his passing on July 13, 2017, in his native Senegal, that vision endures.

The Legacy That Lives On

Today, the foundations he laid

remain strong. The African Business Roundtable continues to reflect the principles he championed—partnership, inclusion, and African-led progress.

Dr Babacar Ndiaye's life reminds us that institutions matter, but the ideas that shape them matter even more. His was an idea whose time had come—and whose relevance continues to define Africa's development journey.



LEGACIES

THE ARCHITECT OF AFRICAN INTEGRATION

Reflecting On The Leadership And Impact
Of Alhaji (Dr.) Bamanga Tukur



Leadership is rarely defined by the titles one holds, but rather by the breadth of the shadows one casts across history.

In the narrative of modern Nigeria and the broader African continent, few figures cast a shadow as constructive and enduring as Alhaji (Dr.) Bamanga Tukur.

His life's work serves as a masterclass in the transition from technocratic excellence to statesman-like vision. To reflect on Tukur is not merely to recount a political career; it is to observe the evolution of a Pan-African economic philosophy that remains vital today.

The NPA Years: Beyond the Shoreline

Tukur's tenure at the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) in the 1970s was foundational. At a time when the nation's infrastructure was straining under the weight of an oil boom, he did not see the ports simply as berths for ships, but as the primary arteries of a nation's heart.

His leadership transformed the NPA into a model of maritime efficiency. He understood early on that for Nigeria to lead, it had to move.

Under his watch, the expansion of port facilities was not just a domestic project; it was a regional necessity. This period marked the beginning of his lifelong commitment to trade as the most potent tool for diplomacy and development.

A Pan-African Statesman: The NEPAD Vision

Moving beyond the borders of Nigeria, Bamanga Tukur emerged as one of

the most resonant voices for African self-reliance.

As a founding father of the Business Council for Africa and a pivotal figure in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), he championed the idea that Africa's challenges required African solutions. He was a businessman who understood politics, and a politician who understood the economy—a rare hybrid that allowed him to bridge the gap between the private sector and the corridors of power.

His advocacy was never isolationist. Instead, he sought to position Africa as a formidable partner in the global trade arena. He preached the gospel of economic integration long before it became a standard talking point of the African Union.

To Tukur, the artificial borders drawn in 1884 were no match for the natural flow of commerce and shared cultural identity. His work helped lay the intellectual and structural framework for the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) that we see coming to fruition today.

The Corporate Philanthropist and Global Citizen

Beyond the high offices, Tukur's impact is felt in his commitment to human capital. He has always maintained that the greatest resource of the continent is not the oil in the ground or the gold in the mines, but the ingenuity of its people.

Through his various business ventures and philanthropic efforts, he has mentored generations of entrepreneurs. His presidency of the Africa Business Round Table (ABR) was not just about deals; it was about dignity—



restoring the world's perception of the African professional as a peer on the global stage.

The Philosophy of “Triple-A” Leadership

Perhaps the most enduring aspect of Bamanga Tukur's legacy is his personal leadership creed: “Ability, Acceptability, and Adaptability.”

To him, a leader must first possess the technical competence (Ability) to solve problems. However, competence without the consensus of the people (Acceptability) leads to fric-

Conclusion: A Legacy of Bridges

As we reflect on the milestones of Alhaji Bamanga Tukur, we see a man who spent his life building bridges. Bridges between the NPA and international shipping lines; bridges between the private sector and government; and most importantly, bridges between African nations.

His achievements are not static monuments; they are living systems of trade, governance, and philosophy that continue to influence the continent.

His life reminds us that true greatness is found in the service of a vision larger than oneself.

Bamanga Tukur did not just inhabit history; he helped design it. For the young African creative, entrepreneur, or leader, his journey is a testament to the fact that with a clear vision and a commitment to regional unity, one person can indeed change the trajectory of a continent.

From the office of Corporate Affairs, ABR.

“True leadership is the ability to see the invisible threads that connect a local port to a global marketplace, and a single nation to a united continent.”

tion. Finally, a leader must remain fluid (Adaptability) to navigate the shifting tides of global trends and local needs.

This philosophy was put to the test during his time as the National Chairman of the People's Democratic Party (PDP).

In the turbulent waters of partisan politics, he remained a figure of poise, often acting as the “elder in the room” whose primary concern was the stability of the democratic process over personal or factional gain. His leadership style was never about the loud roar, but about the steady hand on the tiller.





Transforming Africa's Trade

Afreximbank champions Africa's long-term growth and prosperity.

For 30 years, the Bank has been deploying innovative structures to deliver financing solutions that support the transformation of the structure of Africa's trade, accelerating industrialisation and intra-regional trade, thereby boosting economic expansion in Africa.

Subsidiaries:



Specialized Initiatives:



ATG Initiatives:



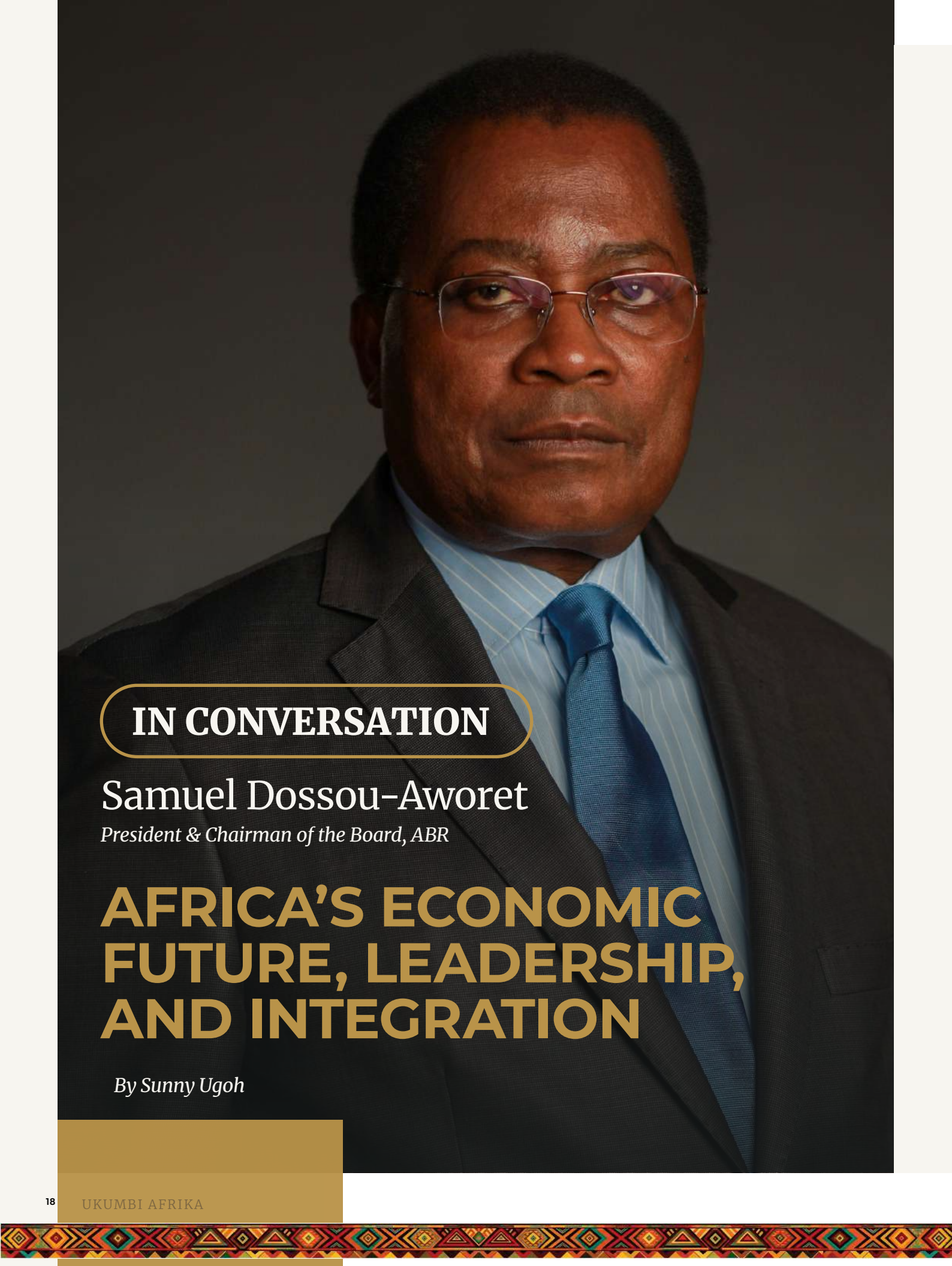
Discover more [@afreximbank.com](https://afreximbank.com)

Like, comment and share Afreximbank content



QR CODE



A professional portrait of Samuel Dossou-Aworet, a middle-aged Black man with short dark hair and glasses. He is wearing a dark grey suit jacket over a light blue striped shirt and a blue tie. The background is a dark, neutral grey.

IN CONVERSATION

Samuel Dossou-Aworet

President & Chairman of the Board, ABR

AFRICA'S ECONOMIC FUTURE, LEADERSHIP, AND INTEGRATION

By Sunny Ugoh

Samuel Dossou-Aworet: Building Africa Through Vision, Energy and Infrastructure

Few African business leaders have combined entrepreneurial ambition, Pan-African conviction, and long-term strategic thinking as consistently as Mr. Samuel Dossou-Aworet.

Widely regarded as one of Africa's most influential energy entrepreneurs, the Benin-born petroleum engineer has spent more than four decades shaping major developments across the continent's oil, gas, infrastructure, logistics, and media sectors.

Founder and Chairman of the Petrolin Group, a Pan-African energy and infrastructure conglomerate established in 1992, Samuel Dossou-Aworet has built a reputation for creating transformative partnerships between African enterprises and global industry leaders.

Under his leadership, Petrolin evolved into a major African player with strategic interests spanning petroleum trading, exploration, infrastructure, logistics, media, and regional development. His corporate footprint is both vast and influential.

Through Petrolin and its affiliates, he played a key role in the creation and expansion of several globally recognized companies and ventures, including Energy Africa, which later

became part of Tullow Oil; MTN Group, Africa's leading telecommunications operator; Vivo Energy; Aradel Holdings; ND Western Limited; Seplat Energy; and Renaissance Africa Energy.

His strategic collaborations with global industry giants such as Shell, Engen, Hess, Perenco, TotalEnergies, and Agip further positioned him as a central figure in Africa's energy transformation.

Beyond oil and gas, Mr. Dossou-Aworet has championed one of West Africa's most ambitious infrastructure visions through the Petrolin Backbone Project — an integrated regional corridor comprising railways, dry ports, a deep-sea port, roads, and a proposed bi-national airport linking Benin, Niger, Nigeria, and the wider Sahel region.

The initiative reflects his long-standing commitment to African economic integration and intra-African trade, aligned with the aspirations of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Yet, Samuel Dossou-Aworet's legacy extends beyond business success. Through the Fondation Espace Afrique (FEA), he has promoted education, social development, interfaith

dialogue, entrepreneurship, and cultural preservation across Africa.

His media investments, including Eden TV and Diaspora FM, further demonstrate his belief in information, culture, and communication as instruments for African development and unity.

Known for his guiding philosophy of “Solidarity, Discipline and Affection (SDA),” Samuel Dossou-Aworet represents a generation of African industrialists committed not only to profit, but also to building sustainable institutions, empowering local talent, and redefining Africa's place in the global economy.

In this exclusive conversation with Ukumbi Afrika Magazine, he reflects on leadership, Africa's future, strategic partnerships, infrastructure development, and the enduring vision that continues to shape his remarkable journey.

Samuel Dossou-Aworet on Africa's Economic Future, Leadership, and Integration

In today's evolving economic landscape, what makes African Business Roundtable distinct—and why does it matter even more now?

In line with our principles of solidarity, we believe that other organizations can pursue similar objectives in their own way. What distinguishes us is not competition, but collaboration.

We are committed to practicing what we call positive solidarity—working alongside institutions, governments, and private actors to build synergies rather than silos. In a time when Africa is navigating economic integration, geopolitical shifts, and internal transformation, this collaborative approach is more critical than ever.

The future of the continent will not be built by isolated actors, but through aligned efforts that bring together diverse strengths toward a shared vision of sustainable development.

Having operated at the highest levels of African enterprise, how should today's African business leader redefine their role in shaping the continent's future?

In my view, it is important for an African leader to first understand the most pressing needs of the community they serve, within the context of a constantly evolving environment.

There is no single model of leadership.

What I advocate is a form of leadership that goes beyond profit. Business must be a vehicle for sustainable transformation.

A holistic approach encourages leaders to invest in projects that not only generate economic returns but also create meaningful human and social impact.

Today, this is even more relevant. Africa's young population, urbanisation trends, and digital transformation demand leaders who think beyond quarterly performance—leaders who measure success in terms of long-term societal value.

In that respect, the humanitarian and social return on investment should be a central priority, alongside financial performance.

AfCFTA is often described as Africa's most ambitious economic project. From a private sector standpoint, what would real success look like in practical terms?

The African Business Roundtable fosters business across Africa. We believe a successful AfCFTA would also mean that businessmen all over Africa take ownership of the principles and goals portrayed by AfCFTA.

In this regard, it is important to acknowledge that important initiatives, led by the private sector, are

already taking place on the continent to promote cross-border investment, trade, and economic integration. These initiatives show that African free trade dynamic is in motion.

Success begins with achieving the core objectives of AfCFTA: the creation of a single African market for goods and services, the reduction of tariffs and non-tariff barriers, and the facilitation of trade—especially for MSMEs.

“Africa was never a collection of borders—it has always been a shared space of possibility.”

But beyond policy frameworks, success must be tangible.

It means the effective free movement of goods, services, and people across borders. It means reducing customs delays, improving logistics, and ensuring that African businesses can operate seamlessly across markets, and progress regarding visa policy needs to be addressed.

More importantly, success must

translate into transformation—industrialisation, local value addition, and a stronger capacity to process Africa's natural resources within the continent.

Ultimately, AfCFTA must deliver not just economic growth, but a higher social return on investment, with visible improvements in human development indicators across African societies.

What must African governments do differently to ensure AfCFTA delivers real value to businesses—especially small and medium enterprises?

AfCFTA's success depends largely on the role of governments.

States must create a secure, predictable economic and legal environment that encourages investment and supports business growth. This includes removing trade barriers, simplifying regulatory frameworks, and implementing common policies that facilitate the movement of goods, services, and people.

Equally important is access—ensuring that local businesses and entrepreneurs can benefit from the opportunities created by continental and international frameworks.

Strategic partnerships are also essential. Collaboration with institutions such as the African Development Bank, the African Union and its development agency AUDA-NEPAD, private financial institutions, and global partners like UNDP will help strengthen implementation capacity.

Without strong policy alignment and execution, the promise of AfCFTA risks remaining theoretical.

Is Africa truly at an economic diver-

sification point—or are we still laying the groundwork for that moment?

Africa has always had the potential. What is required now is recognition—and strategic utilisation—of its strengths.

The continent holds more than 30% of the world's critical mineral reserves, contributing about 75% of global cobalt production, 62% of manganese, while holding significant deposit of lithium, copper and rare earth elements.

Beyond resources, Africa's demographic strength is equally significant. Its population represents both a vast market and a powerful workforce.

The world is increasingly aware of this potential. To fully harness it, it is essential that Africa continues to develop strategies to organize itself to bring forth industrialization, value addition, and stronger intra-continental trade.

Several major initiatives have already taken place on the continent to foster this structural transformation such as ECOWAS, SADC, COMESA, in addition to other key sectoral initiatives like the Cocoa Producers' Alliance (COPAL), the Nigeria-East and

Southern Africa Air Cargo Corridor, and Special Economic Zones across the continent.

The question is whether Africa can organise itself to fully harness it—through industrialisation, value addition, and stronger intra-continental trade.

So yes, the inflection point is here—but it must be actively seized.

For decades, African economies have been shaped by state and external actors. What structural role should organised African private capital now play?

Organised private capital has a critical role to play in shaping Africa's development trajectory.

There must be alignment between all stakeholders—governments, which must operate with transparency and good governance, and investors, who require fair and predictable conditions that justify the risks they take.

But beyond financial returns, we are committed to achieve humanistic and social impact, and we want to do it with our partners.

In addition to responding to policy, private capital has a key role to play

“God has placed a measure of His perfection in each of us; our duty is to use it to fulfill our purpose.”

to help shape it, bringing practical insight, efficiency, and innovation into development frameworks.

You have built in Africa's energy sector under far more constrained conditions than today. What realities about energy development are still not being honestly addressed?

At its core, this is a question of vision.

We must first understand how value is created and shared among stakeholders—states, investors, and communities—and ensure that both financial and social returns are balanced.

Africa's industrialisation requires energy, and hydrocarbons remain essential for near-term growth. At the same time, the global push for energy transition cannot be ignored.

The reality is that Africa must pursue a balanced approach.

Gas, for example, is a cleaner transitional energy source. Efforts to eliminate routine gas flaring, reduce carbon footprints, and expand renewable energy—such as solar mini-grid systems for rural communities—are already underway and must be scaled. The challenge is not choosing between growth and sustainability, but achieving both.

How central is energy security to Africa's competitiveness under AfCFTA—and what are the risks of getting it wrong?

Energy security is fundamental. AfCFTA is built on the premise of increased industrial production and intra-African trade. Without reliable and affordable energy, this vision cannot materialise.

“Africa must not stand apart—it must engage and collaborate on equal terms.”

Achieving energy security requires strong cooperation between states, integrated infrastructure systems, and efficient distribution networks.

It also demands regional agreements that support the seamless movement of energy resources.

If we fail in this area, we risk undermining the very foundation of Africa's economic integration.

Despite policy progress, intra-African trade remains low. What are the most persistent non-tariff barriers—and how can they be addressed?

Several non-tariff barriers continue to constrain trade.

These include restrictive laws and regulations that limit market access, national preference policies, and complex or inconsistent mining and industrial codes.

Bureaucratic inefficiencies—particularly in customs processes—also create significant delays.

Infrastructure deficits remain a major challenge. Poor road networks, limited port capacity, and weak connectivity between regions hinder the movement of goods, people, and services.

Geopolitical instability in certain regions further complicates trade

flows.

Addressing these challenges requires coordinated action—policy reform, infrastructure investment, and regional cooperation. Initiatives such as backbone connectivity projects are essential in bridging these gaps.

Petrolin Group Backbone Project forms a regional logistics ecosystem, enabling industrialization and cross-border trade.

The Backbone Project is a large-scale integrated infrastructure project in West-Africa, designed to connect multiple countries and open up trade routes across borders.

It is a Public Private Partnership with the government of Benin and it includes four components; a railway, dry ports such as the built Parakou dry port, a bi-national airport and a deep-water port. Centered in Benin Republic, it reaches Niger, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mali, and landlocked countries and areas.

The project transports raw materials and finished goods efficiently to the coast, stimulating industrialization and diversification. In addition to playing a key hubs role for landlocked areas, it contributes to promote socio-economic development.

In a world increasingly shaped by economic fragmentation and shifting alliances, how should Africa



position itself?

Africa must position itself as a strategic and confident player in the global economy.

This begins with strong partnerships leveraging interest from multiple global powers while reinforcing autonomy. It also requires building strong solidarity alliances to negotiate effectively within international institutions.

At the same time, Africa must strengthen its own financial systems and reduce dependence on imports by prioritising industrialisation and

“Every project is more than an investment—it is a doorway for Africans to collaborate, succeed, and shape their own future.”

local value addition.

The goal is not isolation, but strategic engagement—on Africa’s own terms.

Finally, how would you like your contribution to Africa’s development to be remembered?

As that man of faith who never wavered in his belief in Africa’s

potential.

A man who acted with conviction toward a borderless continent—one where Africans and international players work together, build together, and succeed together.

INSIGHTS & POLICIES

AfCFTA : Beyond Signatures Africa's Economic Future, Leadership, and Integration

By Ama Serwa Mensah



Trade in Motion

When the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) began its official trading phase, many analysts treated it as another ambitious continental treaty.

What once seemed largely symbolic is now evolving into a tangible driver of regional economic integration, reshaping how goods flow, how factories operate, and how African markets interconnect. AfCFTA is no longer just a diplomatic framework; it is increasingly an operational reality.

The agreement unites 54 African countries into a single market of over 1.3 billion people, with a combined GDP surpassing \$3 trillion. Its implementation is focused on removing tariff barriers, simplifying customs procedures, digitizing trade systems, and eliminating non-tariff barriers that have historically hindered cross-border commerce. Early reports from the AfCFTA Secretariat indicate steady progress on tariff liberalization schedules, alongside the deployment of monitoring tools designed to ensure compliance and reduce trade bottlenecks.

A key enabler of this integration is the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS), which reduces reliance on foreign currencies for intra-African trade. By streamlining cross-border payments, PAPSS addresses one of the most persistent obstacles to regional commerce, facilitating smoother transactions and reducing transaction costs for businesses across the continent.

Research cited by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) estimates that AfCFTA could

boost intra-African trade by more than 50% once fully implemented, particularly in manufactured goods. The African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) stresses that the pace of this transformation will depend not only on policy harmonization but also on trade facilitation systems and infrastructure connectivity. Port efficiency, logistics corridors, and regional rail networks will be decisive in turning policy gains into commercial outcomes.

Distinct impact zones are already emerging across the continent. In West Africa, the Lagos–Abidjan corridor is evolving into a manufacturing and logistics belt, serving over 400 million consumers and connecting major industrial hubs in Nigeria, Côte d’Ivoire, and Ghana. East Africa’s Northern Corridor is improving access for landlocked countries like Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi, accelerating regional integration and trade efficiency.

In Southern Africa, automotive and industrial supply chains anchored in South Africa are expanding into neighboring economies, while in North Africa, Egypt is positioning itself as a production and export gateway for the broader continent.

The AfCFTA experience demonstrates that trade integration is not only about removing formal barriers; it requires aligning infrastructure, industrial capacity, and policy frameworks. Where these elements converge, goods are moving, factories are scaling, and regional markets are beginning to operate as a cohesive economic unit.

AfCFTA is no longer a distant aspiration. It is a functional platform shaping Africa’s industrial landscape,



creating corridors of opportunity, and laying the foundation for a new era of pan-African commerce. The next phase will test the continent's ability to translate policy frameworks into measurable economic outcomes, ensuring that African businesses, from SMEs to large manufacturers, can fully capitalize on the potential of a single continental market.

The African trade revolution is underway, and the movement of goods under AfCFTA is just the beginning. As infrastructure, finance, and regulatory alignment deepen, the promise of a continent-wide economic ecosystem capable of supporting industrial growth, regional competitiveness, and sustainable trade becomes increasingly attainable.

Industrial Policy, Manufacturing and Value Chains

For decades, Africa's trade structure has been dominated by the export of raw commodities and the import of finished goods, a pattern that has constrained job creation, limited industrial innovation, and left economies highly vulnerable to global price shocks.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) now provides a transformative opportunity to reverse this historical trajectory. By creating a unified market of over 1.3 billion people with a combined GDP exceeding three trillion dollars, AfCFTA offers both the scale and the predictability necessary to build regional industrial ecosystems that can generate sustainable growth and resilience.

Research from the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) and the African Union underscores that manufacturing and value-added pro-

duction are essential for structural transformation. Without these, Africa remains exposed to external shocks, while opportunities for technological learning and employment expansion remain underutilized. The agreement encourages countries to integrate into continental value chains, leveraging their unique comparative advantages while fostering economies of scale across borders.

One of the most promising aspects of AfCFTA is its potential to enable multi-country production networks. In the automotive and machinery sector, for example, components can be manufactured in different countries and then assembled regionally.

This model reduces production costs, enhances competitiveness, and strengthens industrial linkages across the continent. By spreading production and assembly across multiple jurisdictions, African manufacturers can tap into specialized skills, local resources, and regional infrastructure while minimizing reliance on imports of finished goods.

Textiles and apparel provide another compelling example. Africa produces significant volumes of cotton, particularly in West African countries such as Nigeria, Burkina Faso, and Benin. However, much of this raw material is currently exported without processing. AfCFTA creates the conditions for a continental textile ecosystem, where cotton is spun into yarn in North Africa, woven and dyed in other regions, and ultimately assembled into garments in East Africa, Ethiopia, Kenya, and even Nigeria.

This integrated approach not only retains value within the continent but also opens doors to millions of jobs in manufacturing and related services,

from logistics to quality assurance. Agro-processing is equally critical for industrial development. By processing cocoa in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, cassava in Nigeria, grains across East Africa, and oilseeds in Southern Africa, African economies can add value to their agricultural output, generate employment, and support rural industrialization.

The shift from exporting raw agricultural products to producing processed goods for regional consumption contributes to food security and promotes industrial diversification.

Pharmaceuticals and health-related manufacturing also benefit from regional integration. Local production of essential medicines, vaccines, and medical inputs reduces dependence on imports and strengthens Africa's health security, a need highlighted by recent global disruptions in supply chains.

Similarly, fertilizer and petrochemical industries can provide essential inputs for both agriculture and industrial processes, creating backward and forward linkages that further embed manufacturing into continental value chains.

The African Development Bank emphasizes that regional value chains are not only beneficial for large firms but also critical for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). These businesses can participate in continental markets if financing, standards, and certification frameworks are strengthened.

Access to cross-border markets allows SMEs to supply inputs to larger manufacturers, scale operations, and benefit from the growing demand for regionally produced goods. However,

realizing this potential requires coordinated support from governments, institutions, and financial intermediaries to bridge gaps in capital, logistics, and technical expertise.

While AfCFTA eliminates many tariff barriers, industrialization requires proactive policy support. AUDA-NEPAD highlights the need for investments in reliable energy infrastructure, as power supply reliability remains a critical constraint for African manufacturers.

Transport and industrial infrastructure must also be strengthened to ensure that factories can source inputs efficiently and deliver finished goods competitively. Technical and vocational education must be expanded to equip the workforce with skills in production, quality assurance, and maintenance, enabling firms to adopt modern technologies and scale operations effectively.

Harmonization of standards and certification systems is another essential element. Without uniform quality benchmarks, goods produced in one country may face barriers when entering neighboring markets, undermining the potential of regional value chains.

Special economic zones, industrial parks, and export processing hubs provide practical frameworks for integrating policy, infrastructure, and industrial strategy, allowing both domestic and foreign investors to participate with greater confidence. Policy alignment and coordination across African countries are crucial.

Nations that align their industrial policy with AfCFTA implementation (ensuring energy reliability, infrastructure efficiency, workforce

development, and standards harmonization) are best positioned to capture the benefits of continental integration.

Industrial policy should also promote SME participation, enabling smaller firms to integrate into supply chains, contribute to value addition, and share in the economic growth generated by regional industrialization.

Ultimately, AfCFTA provides the structural framework, but the actual transformation hinges on deliberate policy choices. Countries that combine infrastructure investment, human capital development, and

ability to build robust regional manufacturing networks will determine the trajectory of its economic growth, the stability of its labour markets, and its position in the global industrial landscape. AfCFTA offers both the opportunity and the framework to move Africa from extraction to production, from fragmented markets to regional integration, and from dependency to self-reliant industrial development.

The coming decade will define whether African countries can seize this moment to transform their economies fundamentally, harness the potential of regional value chains, and establish a manufacturing base capa-

“Agro-processing presents a compelling case for value retention within the continent, encompassing cocoa, cassava, grains, and oilseeds. By processing these products locally,”

industrial strategy with market access stand to gain the most. By leveraging regional value chains in automotive, textiles, Agro-processing, pharmaceuticals, and petrochemicals, Africa can shift from raw material dependence toward manufacturing-led growth. This transition promises not only economic diversification but also job creation, technological learning, and enhanced resilience against global shocks.

Africa’s industrial pivot is more than an economic objective; it is a structural imperative. The continent’s

able of sustaining long-term growth and prosperity.

Infrastructure, Logistics and New Trade Corridors

For decades, Africa’s trade structure has been dominated by the export of raw commodities and the import of finished goods. This dynamic has limited economic diversification, constrained employment creation, and left the continent vulnerable to commodity price fluctuations. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) offers the scale and market

certainty required to shift this paradigm, enabling the development of regional industrial ecosystems that can compete both continentally and globally.

Research from the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) and the African Union underscores that manufacturing and value-added production are central to achieving structural transformation.

By moving beyond commodity dependence, African countries can stabilize revenues, strengthen local industries, and reduce exposure to global price volatility. Industrial policy is no longer a matter of choice; it is a strategic imperative for economic sovereignty. AfCFTA facilitates the creation of multi-country production networks that can distribute components, assembly, and value addition across borders.

In the automotive and machinery sector, parts can be manufactured in one country and assembled in another, reducing costs while improving competitiveness.

The textile and apparel sector benefits from a similar approach: cotton cultivated in West Africa can be spun into yarn in North Africa, and garment production can occur in East Africa, feeding a single continental market. Agro-processing presents a compelling case for value retention within the continent, encompassing cocoa, cassava, grains, and oilseeds. By processing these products locally, Africa captures more economic value, creates employment, and reduces dependence on imported finished goods.

The pharmaceutical sector illustrates another strategic opportunity. Regional production not only

addresses import reliance but also strengthens health security across African nations. Similarly, fertilizer and petrochemical production within Africa supports agriculture and industrial inputs, laying the foundation for broader economic resilience. According to the African Development Bank, the expansion of regional value chains creates pathways for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to engage in continental markets, provided that certification, standards, and financing frameworks are adequately developed.

Industrial policy is essential to translate AfCFTA's tariff liberalization into meaningful economic outcomes. Removing trade barriers alone is insufficient. Governments must prioritize investment in reliable energy systems, industrial infrastructure, and logistics networks. Technical and vocational education must be strengthened to supply the skilled

enabling seamless trade. Special economic zones, industrial parks, and targeted support for SMEs participating in value chains can further accelerate regional industrialization. Countries that align their industrial policy with AfCFTA implementation are positioned to derive the greatest benefit from a continental market exceeding 1.3 billion consumers. By combining strategic infrastructure investment, skills development, and regional coordination, African economies can shift from being commodity exporters to industrial powerhouses.

The convergence of trade liberalization and deliberate industrial policy offers a blueprint for structural transformation, employment generation, and sustained economic growth.

“Harmonization of standards and certification systems is another essential element. Without uniform quality benchmarks, goods produced in one country may face barriers when entering neighboring markets,”

workforce that modern manufacturing requires.

Harmonized standards and certification systems will ensure that goods produced across multiple countries meet common quality benchmarks,



THE NEW GEOGRAPHY OF AFRICAN TRADE

BY AYO MARTINS

The African Continental Free Trade Area is redefining the economic geography of the continent. AfCFTA is more than a treaty or a policy declaration; it is a blueprint for structural transformation that integrates markets, production systems, and value chains.

Its success will not be measured by the number of signatories or ceremonial launches, but by tangible outcomes on the ground: faster border crossings, smoother movement of components across countries, and the creation of regional manufacturing networks that allow small and medium enterprises to participate in continental trade.

Infrastructure connectivity remains the cornerstone of this new trade geography. Roads, railways, ports, and energy corridors are no longer national utilities; they are continental enablers of commerce.

The Lagos–Abidjan corridor in West Africa is emerging as a dynamic industrial and logistics belt capable of serving over 400 million consumers, while the Northern Corridor in East Africa is improving access for landlocked countries, accelerating regional integration, and reducing the cost of trade.

In Southern Africa, industrial and automotive supply chains are being strengthened through corridor connectivity between South Africa, Mozambique, and neighboring countries. North Africa is positioning itself as a production and export gateway, with Egypt leveraging the Suez Canal to link African goods to European and Asian markets.

Trade facilitation is also undergoing a digital transformation. The Pan-

African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS) is reducing reliance on foreign currencies and enabling seamless intra-African payments. Digitization of customs procedures, simplification of documentation, and real-time monitoring of non-tariff barriers are helping reduce delays that historically undermined cross-border commerce.

Together, these measures are turning AfCFTA from a theoretical framework into a practical tool for economic growth, allowing goods, services, and capital to move more efficiently across borders.

At the centre of this transformation is the creation of regional manufacturing and value-added networks. For decades, Africa's trade patterns were defined by the export of raw commodities and the import of finished products. AfCFTA now provides the scale, predictability, and incentives necessary to reverse this pattern. Countries can specialize in segments of production that leverage their natural resources, labor pools, and industrial strengths.

West African cotton can be spun into yarn in North Africa, assembled into textiles in East Africa, and distributed across the continent. Cocoa

from Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire can feed agro-processing plants in Nigeria and Cameroon, retaining value within Africa while generating employment. Pharmaceuticals, fertilizers, petrochemicals, and machinery can increasingly be produced regionally, reducing dependence on imports, mitigating exposure to global commodity shocks, and building resilient industrial ecosystems.

Policy alignment is critical to these outcomes. AfCFTA alone cannot generate industrial growth without supportive national policies. Governments must invest in reliable energy infrastructure, expand techni-

cal and vocational skills, harmonize standards and certification systems, and support special economic zones and industrial parks that facilitate SME participation.

Countries that integrate industrial policy with AfCFTA's trade liberalization framework will capture the greatest benefits, turning tariff removal into measurable production and employment gains.

The role of finance cannot be overstated. Sovereign funds, development banks, and regional investment vehicles can provide the long-term capital needed to build factories, support

The African Continental Free Trade Area is a blueprint for structural transformation that integrates markets, production systems, and value chains.

logistics networks, and enable SMEs to scale.

The African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) has expanded financing for energy infrastructure, industrial parks, and intra-African trade settlements, aligning financial flows with the continent's production ambitions.

This alignment ensures that capital supports tangible industrial capacity rather than speculative investments, creating a sustainable ecosystem where production drives economic growth rather than financial arbitrage.

AfCFTA is also changing the mindset of African businesses. Companies are no longer constrained to national markets. With regional corridors and integrated supply chains, businesses can plan for scale, design for export, and participate in multi-country value chains. Lagos and Aba in Nigeria, Accra in Ghana, Cairo in Egypt, Johannesburg and Durban in South Africa, and Nairobi in Kenya are all emerging as regional hubs where industrial output, logistics, and innovation converge. Startups and SMEs in these hubs are beginning to design products with continental markets in mind, integrating manufacturing, digital platforms, and cross-border logistics into their core strategy.

The implications extend beyond manufacturing. Trade integration under AfCFTA strengthens Africa's bargaining power in global markets and enables the continent to capture more value from its resources.

Industrial clusters linked to regional markets reduce exposure to global price shocks, stabilize employment, and create opportunities for skills

development across sectors. The convergence of infrastructure, industrial policy, and finance transforms trade corridors into engines of growth, turning once-static trade flows into dynamic economic activity that spans countries and regions.

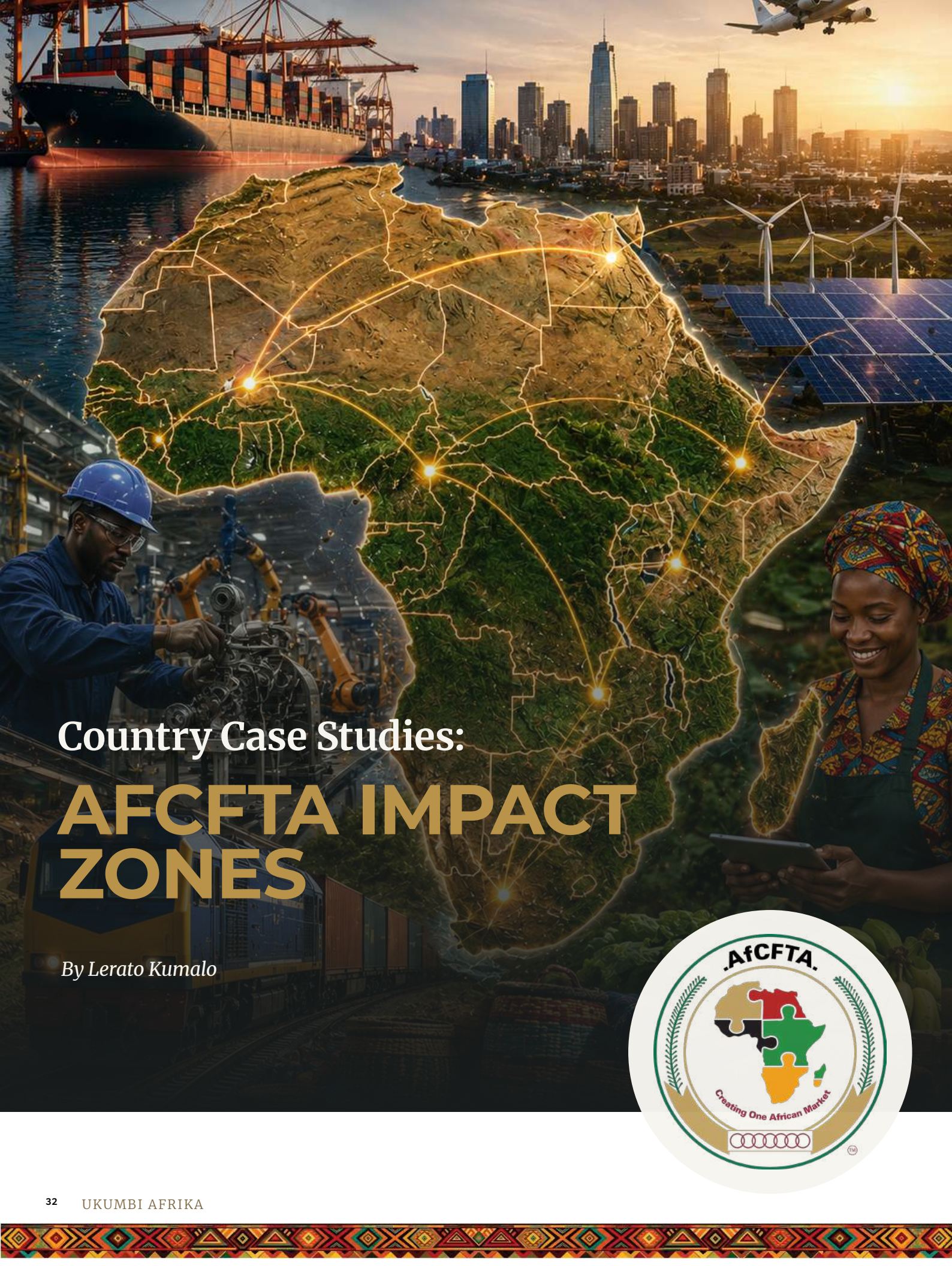
Ultimately, AfCFTA represents a shift from a fragmented economic landscape to an interconnected African economy. The African Union, AUDA-NEPAD, and the AfCFTA Secretariat are aligned on one fundamental truth: continental integration will be driven by infrastructure, industrial policy, and value-added production.

Trade in Africa is no longer static or constrained by borders. It is moving along corridors, through factories, and across national boundaries. Success will be measured in the creation of regional industrial networks, the participation of SMEs in continental value chains, and the ability of countries to leverage their industrial potential for inclusive economic growth.

For African businesses, policymakers, and investors, the message is clear. The future belongs to those who can produce, connect, and trade. Countries that align infrastructure investment, industrial policy, and financial mobilization with AfCFTA implementation will not only capture intra-African market opportunities but will also position themselves as continental leaders in industrial and economic transformation.

The new geography of African trade is being drawn now, and it rewards those ready to turn ambition into production, and policy into tangible economic results.





Country Case Studies: **AFCFTA IMPACT ZONES**

By Lerato Kumalo



The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is rapidly shifting from diplomatic vision to operational reality, creating new production, trade, and industrial opportunities across the continent.

While its long-term success will depend on harmonized policies, infrastructure investment, and standards alignment, early impact zones are already emerging in key countries where industrial capacity, logistics, and market access intersect. These case studies illustrate how AfCFTA is reshaping regional economies and industrial landscapes.

Nigeria: West Africa's Production and Market Engine

Nigeria combines the continent's largest consumer market with substantial industrial potential, positioning it as a natural production hub for West Africa. Its strategic assets include the Lekki Deep Sea Port and Free Zone, providing modern maritime infrastructure capable of handling containerized trade and supporting industrial clusters.

The Lagos–Abidjan trade corridor offers critical connectivity to neighbouring countries, while manufacturing hubs in Aba and Kano anchor industrial output.

Nigeria's petrochemical and fertilizer industries provide essential inputs for agriculture and local value chains, offering opportunities to supply processed agricultural goods across the region.

Under AfCFTA, Nigeria can leverage its population scale and industrial base to evolve into West Africa's principal production engine. By integrating manufacturing, agro-processing,

and logistics, the country can serve both domestic and regional markets, reducing dependence on imported goods and stimulating employment.

However, infrastructure reliability, energy stability, and logistics efficiency remain pressing challenges. Roads, rail, and port efficiency must align with AfCFTA trade facilitation goals to ensure Nigerian goods remain competitive within the continental market.

Egypt: North Africa's Industrial and Logistics Bridge

Egypt's geography and industrial capacity make it a natural export platform for AfCFTA-enabled trade. Strategically located at the nexus of Africa, Europe, and the Middle East, Egypt's Suez Canal serves as a global trade artery, offering unparalleled maritime access.

The country has developed a diversified manufacturing base across sectors including textiles, chemicals, automotive components, and food processing. Industrial zones, particularly in the Suez Canal Economic Zone, provide integrated logistics, regulatory incentives, and energy infrastructure that support large-scale manufacturing and export operations.

AfCFTA presents Egypt with an opportunity to expand its role as a production gateway. By aligning domestic industrial policy with continental trade frameworks, Egypt can supply African markets while simultaneously positioning itself as a bridge for exports to Europe and Asia.

Investments in transport infrastructure, port capacity, and trade facilitation mechanisms will be crucial to

capturing this opportunity, ensuring that regional supply chains are efficient and globally competitive.

South Africa: Continental Industrial Anchor

South Africa's industrial diversity and infrastructure sophistication position it as a central pillar for AfCFTA regional value chains.

The country's advanced automotive sector, heavy machinery, and chemical industries form a robust industrial base capable of producing intermediate and finished goods for neighbouring markets.

Logistics corridors connecting Durban, Johannesburg, and Maputo enhance cross-border trade, linking manufacturing output to regional consumers. South Africa also benefits from established financial markets, industrial financing mechanisms, and skilled labor pools, supporting high-value production.

Under AfCFTA, South Africa is poised to supply intermediate industrial goods and finished products across Southern Africa and beyond. Regional integration can amplify its role in multi-country production networks, enabling components to be manufactured domestically while assembly occurs in neighbouring economies.

However, policy coordination, cross-border infrastructure improvements, and streamlined customs procedures are critical to realizing these opportunities at scale.

Kenya: East Africa's Logistics and Innovation Gateway

Kenya leverages both logistics leadership and a growing digital innova-

tion ecosystem to serve as a critical AfCFTA trade facilitator. The Port of Mombasa remains East and Central Africa's primary maritime gateway, handling the majority of containerized imports and exports for landlocked countries.

The Northern Corridor connects Mombasa to Uganda, Rwanda, South Sudan, and eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, ensuring reliable road, rail, and inland container depot networks. Investments in rail modernization, road expansion, and customs digitization have strengthened Kenya's capacity to serve regional trade flows efficiently.

Beyond logistics, Kenya's thriving technology sector offers opportunities to support AfCFTA implementation. Digital trade platforms, payment systems, and supply chain software are increasingly enabling small and medium enterprises to engage in cross-border commerce.

Agro-processing exports are particularly poised for growth, with Kenya serving as a hub for fruits, vegetables, dairy products, and processed foods targeted at East African markets.

Comparative Insights and Regional Dynamics

These case studies illustrate a broader pattern: countries that combine industrial capacity, logistics infrastructure, and governance alignment are best positioned to benefit from AfCFTA.

Nigeria demonstrates how domestic market size and industrial clustering can drive regional production. Egypt highlights the strategic advantage of geographic positioning and export-oriented infrastructure. South

Africa showcases the role of industrial diversification and financial sophistication.

Kenya underscores how logistics efficiency and digital innovation can catalyze regional trade.

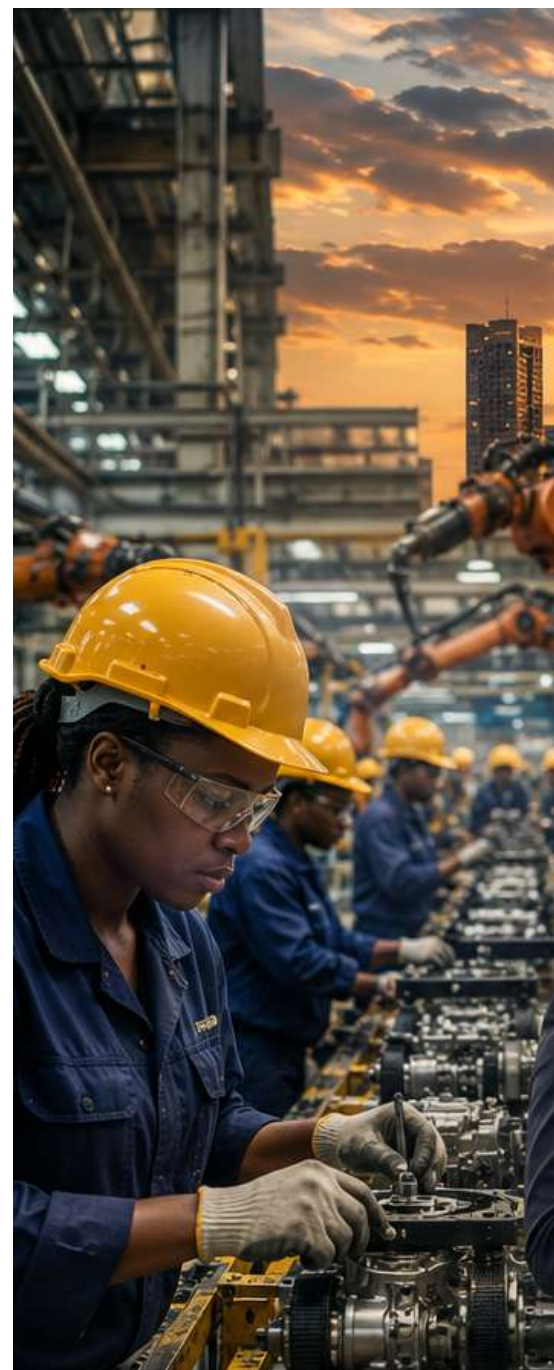
The convergence of these factors is particularly important when considering intra-African value chains. For example, automotive components may be produced in South Africa, assembled in Nigeria, and distributed across West and Central Africa.

Textile value chains can link cotton from West Africa with processing in North Africa and final garment production in East Africa. Agro-processing networks spanning multiple countries retain value on the continent while enhancing food security.

Infrastructure development remains a central enabler. Ports, rail, road, and energy systems must be upgraded in parallel with AfCFTA trade facilitation initiatives. Digital systems, including the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS), reduce reliance on foreign currencies and simplify intra-African transactions, addressing a historical barrier to regional commerce.

Harmonization of standards, certification, and technical regulations is equally essential, ensuring goods produced in one country meet requirements for neighbouring markets.

Finally, policy alignment is critical. Countries must integrate industrial strategy, trade facilitation, and investment promotion to ensure that AfCFTA generates tangible economic outcomes. Special economic zones,



industrial parks, and targeted SME support programs will help translate tariff liberalization into sustained industrial and employment growth. In sum, AfCFTA is no longer a theoretical agreement. In Nigeria, Egypt, South Africa, and Kenya, trade is beginning to flow where infrastructure, policy alignment, and industrial capacity converge.

These countries exemplify the conti-



ment's potential to build regional value chains, strengthen industrial ecosystems, and create a structurally integrated African market.

With sustained investment, coordination, and strategic implementation, AfCFTA has the potential to transform Africa from a continent of raw commodity exporters into a hub of diversified industrial and manufacturing excellence.

“The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is rapidly shifting from diplomatic vision to operational reality, creating new production, trade, and industrial opportunities across the continent.”



SECTOR DEEP DIVE

THE NEW INDUSTRIAL FRONTIER: AFRICA'S EMERGING AUTOMOTIVE ECOSYSTEMS

By Chinonso Okeke



Africa's automotive and industrial manufacturing sector is entering a transformative era. With rising urban populations, growing incomes, and expanding regional markets, the continent presents an unprecedented opportunity to develop integrated vehicle assembly ecosystems and industrial clusters.

Traditionally, vehicle manufacturing has been concentrated in South Africa and Morocco, countries benefiting from relatively advanced industrial infrastructure, skilled labour, and established export linkages.

However, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and strategic industrial policies are now enabling emerging automotive hubs in Egypt, Kenya, Rwanda, and Ghana, fostering a more diversified and regionally integrated production landscape.

The future of African automotive manufacturing will be defined by regional value chains. Instead of centralizing production in a single country, components can be sourced from multiple locations across the continent and assembled regionally for domestic and intra-African markets.

This approach reduces production costs, enhances supply chain resilience, and stimulates industrial linkages between upstream suppliers and downstream assemblers. For instance, steel and metals might be produced in West Africa, electrical components and wiring harnesses in North Africa, plastics and rubber in East Africa, and glass and upholstery in Southern Africa.

These inputs are then consolidated in regional assembly hubs such as Lagos, Nairobi, Cairo, or Casablanca

to produce vehicles that respond to continental demand.

This decentralized model mirrors successful automotive ecosystems in Asia and Europe while being adapted to Africa's unique geography and market conditions.

The automotive value chain encompasses a broad range of critical inputs and stages. Local production of steel sheets and structural components is essential for cost efficiency and supply security, while electrical components such as wiring systems, batteries, and electronic control units can be manufactured or partially assembled in industrial parks across Africa, benefiting from AfCFTA's tariff reductions on imported inputs.

Plastics and rubber, including tires, interior components, and bumpers, represent opportunities for domestic and regional manufacturing, reducing reliance on imports and generating employment in related sectors.

Glass and upholstery production for windows, mirrors, and seating materials can be localized close to assembly plants to minimize logistics costs. Regional assembly plants consolidate all components and distribute finished vehicles to national and continental markets, emphasizing the importance of reliable transport corridors and logistics networks for competitiveness.

Africa's vehicle demand is projected to exceed five million units annually in the next two decades, according to the African Association of Automotive Manufacturers (AAAM). Urbanization, rising incomes, and infrastructure development are driving this growth. Capturing even a portion of this demand through

locally assembled vehicles presents significant industrial and economic opportunities.

AfCFTA provides a critical framework to support this transformation. Reduced tariffs on components and inputs within Africa encourage regional sourcing and lower production costs, while access to a unified market of 1.3 billion consumers enables manufacturers to scale production, achieve economies of scale, and develop regional supplier networks.

These advantages position Africa not merely as a market for imported vehicles, but as a competitive manufacturing hub for the continent.

Supportive industrial policies are crucial to realizing this potential. Local content frameworks incentivize the growth of domestic suppliers and industrial clusters, while supplier development programs provide training, financing, and technical support to small and medium-sized suppliers, ensuring quality and delivery standards are met. Investments in infrastructure, including reliable energy, transport networks, and logistics corridors, are vital to reducing production costs and ensuring timely distribution of finished vehicles.

Developing a technically skilled workforce through vocational training and partnerships with technical institutes is equally essential to support complex assembly and industrial processes.

Africa's automotive sector is not limited to cars alone. Opportunities span buses, trucks, motorcycles, and specialized vehicles such as agricultural and construction machinery.

The growth of electric vehicles on the continent also opens niches in battery assembly, charging infrastructure, and energy management software, particularly in countries with renewable energy strategies.

Regional integration and AfCFTA's market liberalization further enable industrial diversification. Automotive hubs can anchor industrial clusters that produce plastics, electronics, metals, and logistics solutions, generating employment and technological spillovers across the manufacturing ecosystem.

Despite these opportunities, challenges remain. Automotive manufacturing is capital-intensive, requiring substantial investment in factories, equipment, and research and development. Stable electricity supply is essential to prevent production interruptions and maintain quality stan-

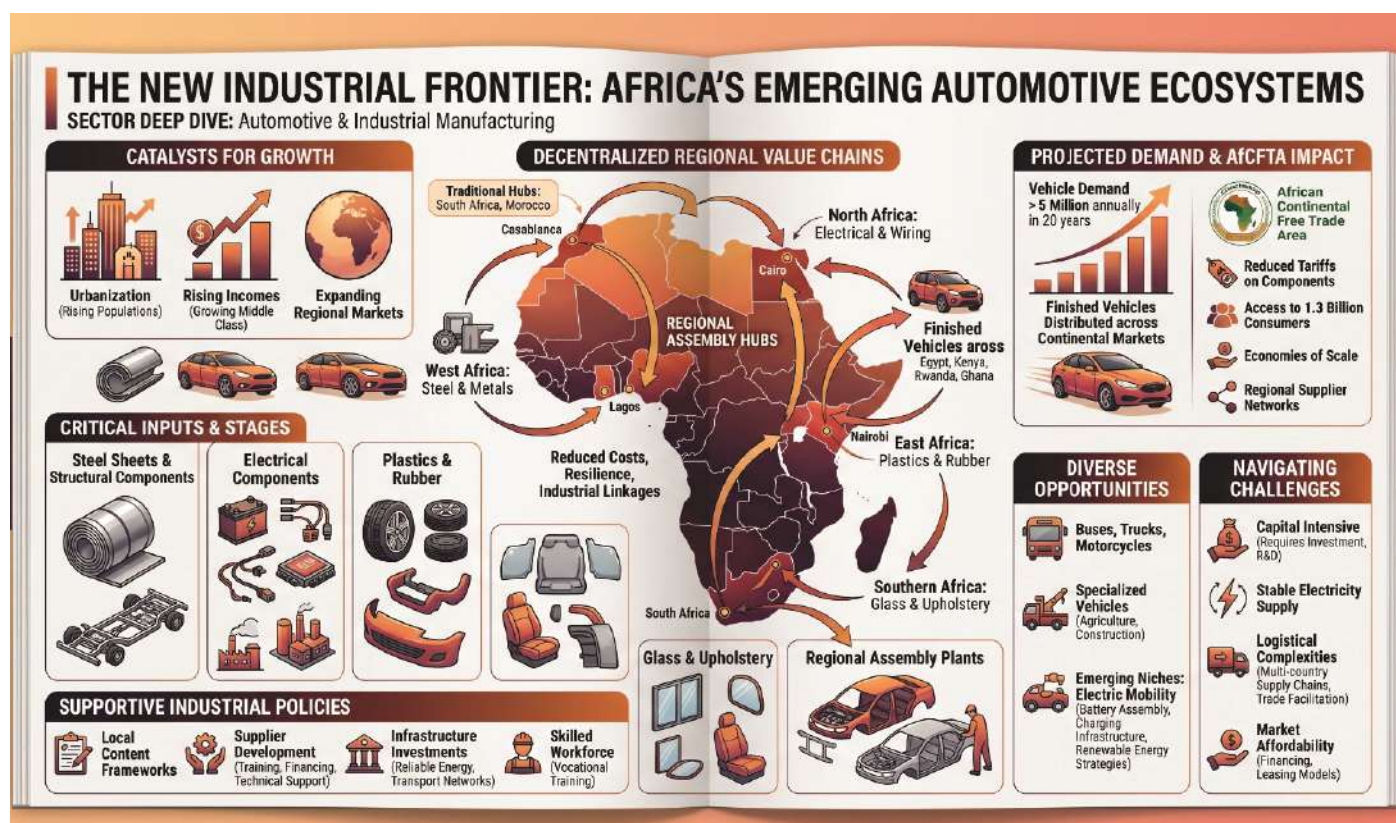
dards. Coordinating multi-country supply chains introduces logistical complexities that must be addressed through effective trade facilitation, customs harmonization, and robust transportation infrastructure. Market affordability is another key consideration, requiring financing solutions and innovative leasing models to expand access to consumers.

The African automotive and industrial manufacturing sector is at a pivotal juncture. Integrating regional production networks, leveraging AfCFTA's tariff reductions, and developing industrial ecosystems linking suppliers, assemblers, and markets can transform Africa from a passive consumer of imported vehicles into a competitive manufacturer.

The strategic combination of industrial policy, infrastructure investment, workforce development, and

regional market integration will determine which countries emerge as dominant automotive hubs. South Africa, Morocco, Egypt, Kenya, Rwanda, and Ghana demonstrate early leadership, but the broader opportunity lies in establishing a continental network of regional assembly plants supported by strong supplier ecosystems.

Africa has the potential to produce not just vehicles but industrial capability itself, laying a foundation for manufacturing, employment, and economic resilience. Coordinated policies, investments in technical capacity, and strategic regional integration under AfCFTA can enable the continent to build a competitive regional automotive ecosystem capable of serving a growing market of 1.3 billion people while creating sustainable industrial growth for decades.



A portrait of Massogbe Toure, Founder/C.E.O of SITA S.A. She is a Black woman wearing a red headwrap and a black blazer, smiling at the camera. The background is a collage: the top left shows cashew fruits hanging from a tree; the top right shows a factory interior with workers in green uniforms and masks; the middle left shows a large basket of cashew nuts; and the bottom left shows a close-up of cashew nuts. The Ivorian flag is visible in the background on the left.

SITA S.A. Group:

**IVORIAN EXCELLENCE
TRANSFORMING THE
CASHEW INDUSTRY**

MASSOGBE TOURE, FOUNDER/C.E.O OF SITA S.A

Since 1980, the SITA S.A. Group, founded by Mrs Massogbé Touré, has redefined excellence in cashew nut processing in Côte d'Ivoire.

What started as a modest agricultural initiative has evolved into a powerful industrial, economic, and social force—creating sustainable impact for communities, the national economy, and the wider cashew industry. SITA is more than a company: it is a model of innovation, leadership, and responsibility.

A Local and International Economic Powerhouse

As the leading national private investor in the cashew sector, SITA has generated over 1,000 direct and indirect jobs, strengthening the livelihoods of countless Ivorian families.

Through complete vertical integration—from sourcing nuts from local producers to industrial processing and exporting to Europe, the United States, and other global markets—SITA ensures that every cashew nut becomes a sustainable economic opportunity.

The modern processing facility in Odienné, capable of handling thousands of tonnes of nuts annually, reflects the company's commitment to quality, innovation, and global competitiveness.

Certified to HACCP, KOSHER, HALAL, and FDA standards, the factory is more than a production hub—it is an engine of sectoral growth and employment, and a platform positioning Côte d'Ivoire as a leading international supplier.

Transforming Lives Through Social Impact

At the heart of SITA's mission is women's empowerment. More than 50% of the company's workforce are women, benefiting from employment, training, and professional development opportunities that foster leadership and economic independence.

Beyond employment, SITA engages in social programs that strengthen the rural communities it touches, promoting skills development and inclusive practices. This commitment ensures that industrial growth goes hand in hand with social cohesion and community resilience.

Environmental stewardship is also central to SITA's operations. By working with local organizations, the company promotes sustainable agricultural practices, combats deforestation, and safeguards natural resources—demonstrating that industrial performance and environmental

“Every cashew nut we process is a step toward economic opportunity for Ivorian communities.”

responsibility can coexist.

A Growth Engine for the Cashew Industry

Under Mrs Touré's leadership, the Odienné region has witnessed remarkable transformation. Cashew plantations have expanded from a few hundred hectares to tens of thousands, while local processing adds sig-



“A simple cashew nut can be transformed into a tool for economic and social transformation across Africa.”

nificant value before export.

SITA's international footprint highlights the quality and potential of Ivorian cashews, inspiring other African companies to invest in industrialization and value addition. The group has set a benchmark, showing that local agricultural wealth can be leveraged to drive both national and continental progress.

A Model of Responsible Business

SITA S.A. Group exemplifies how strategic vision, industrial expertise, and social commitment can generate economic growth, social empowerment, and sustainable development simultaneously.

Its investments, inclusive workforce, and international success demonstrate that agriculture and industry can be powerful engines for inclusive growth.

Today, SITA is not just a business—it is a beacon for Côte d'Ivoire and Africa, illustrating that with leadership, responsibility, and innovation, even a humble cashew nut can become a catalyst for national prosperity.



“What started as a modest agricultural initiative has evolved into a powerful industrial, economic, and social force”

TEXTILES & APPAREL

Rebuilding Africa's Cotton-to-Clothing Value Chain

By Tendai Moyo



Africa is uniquely positioned in the global textiles and apparel landscape. The continent produces substantial volumes of cotton, particularly in West Africa, yet paradoxically imports the majority of finished garments consumed domestically.

This has long reflected a missed opportunity: Africa exports raw materials but imports value-added goods, leaving significant economic potential untapped.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) now offers a framework to reverse this trend, providing scale, market access, and incentives for developing integrated textile and apparel value chains across multiple countries.

The Value Chain Opportunity

The textiles and apparel sector encompasses several interconnected stages, each offering distinct investment and industrialization opportunities.

Cotton Production

West African countries such as Nigeria, Benin, and Burkina Faso are major cotton producers. Together, they generate hundreds of thousands of metric tons annually, providing the raw material foundation for a regional textile ecosystem.

However, much of this cotton is exported unprocessed, leaving value addition on the table. Strategic investments in local ginning, quality control, and cooperative farming models could dramatically enhance yields, reduce post-harvest losses, and ensure consistent supply to downstream processing facilities.

Spinning and Weaving

The intermediate stages of the value chain, including spinning, weaving, and fabric finishing, have historically been limited to a few countries in North and East Africa.

Investments in modern spinning mills, weaving technology, and dyeing facilities are essential to convert raw cotton into high-quality fabrics suitable for both domestic and regional markets. AfCFTA's tariff liberalization and cross-border market access create incentives to site these intermediate facilities in countries with reliable energy, industrial infrastructure, and skilled labor.

Garment Manufacturing

The garment production segment is concentrated in countries with nascent but growing industrial capacity, such as Ethiopia, Kenya, Egypt, and Nigeria.

Ethiopia, for instance, has become a hub for apparel exports to the European Union under preferential trade agreements, leveraging low-cost labor and industrial parks.

Kenya is scaling textile clusters with the support of special economic zones, while Egypt benefits from industrial zones and logistics connectivity through the Suez Canal corridor.

Nigeria's Lagos and Aba regions also offer established garment production clusters.

Expanding manufacturing capacity across these regions could allow Africa to capture a larger share of the global apparel market while supplying domestic and continental consumer demand.



Retail and Consumer Markets

The final link in the value chain is the retail market. Africa's growing middle class, projected to reach 1.1 billion by 2035, represents an increasingly sophisticated consumer base.

Urbanization and rising disposable incomes are driving demand for ready-made clothing and branded apparel.

By integrating production across the continent, African textile firms can reduce costs, improve quality, and meet diverse consumer preferences while competing with imported goods.

Africa possesses several intrinsic strengths that can accelerate the redevelopment of a continental textile ecosystem.

Abundant Raw Materials:

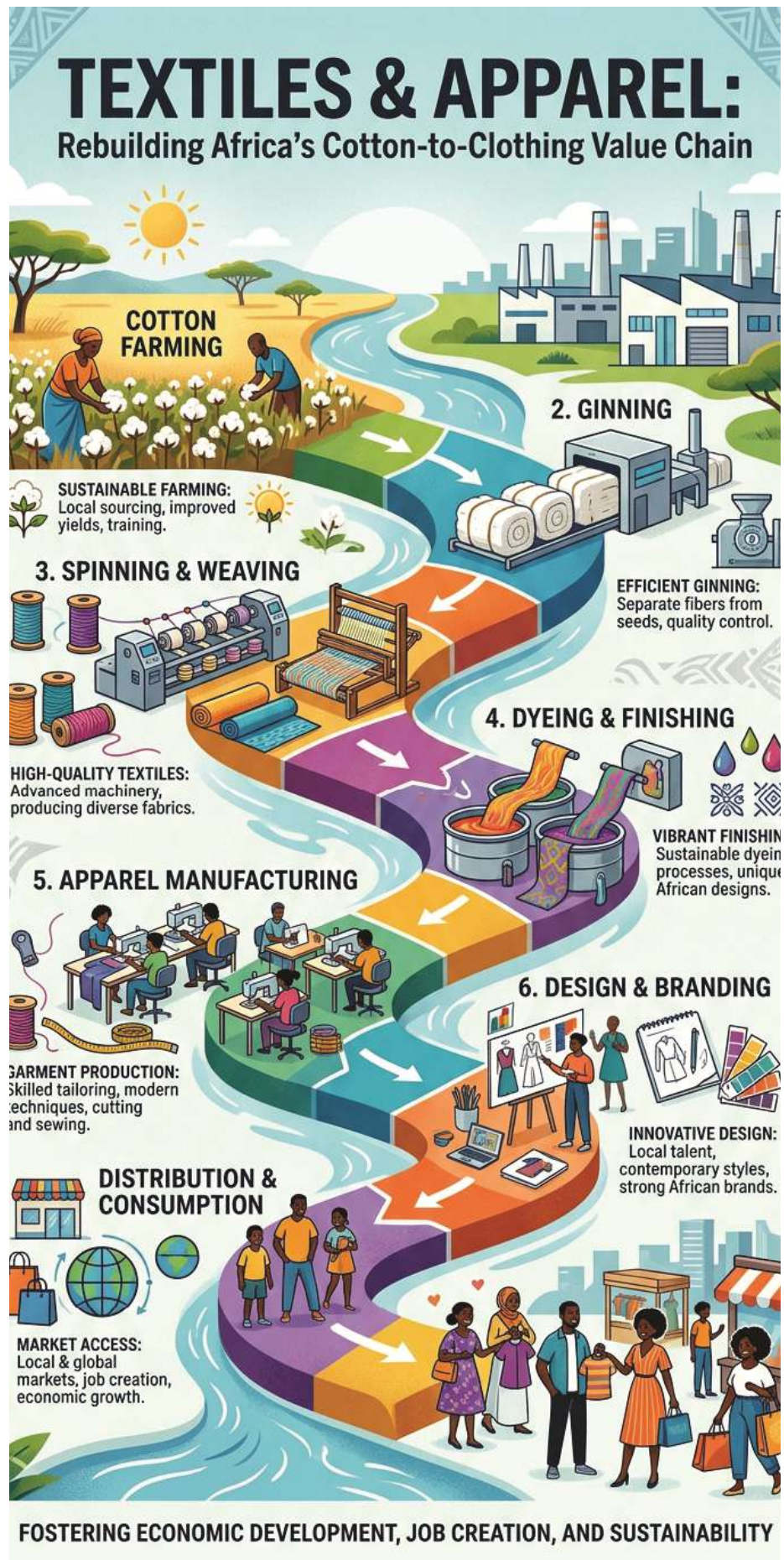
The continent produces cotton, wool, and other fibers, providing a secure and locally sourced input base.

Youthful Labor Force:

With over 60% of Africa's population under 25, the continent offers a large pool of labor capable of scaling industrial operations.

Expanding Consumer Market:

Continental market integration under AfCFTA means manufacturers can sell beyond national borders without the tariff and regulatory barriers that previously constrained trade.



Proximity to European and Middle Eastern Markets:

North Africa's ports, West Africa's Atlantic access, and East Africa's Indian Ocean corridors provide strategic export gateways for finished apparel.

Key Constraints

Despite these advantages, several challenges must be addressed to realize the full potential of Africa's textiles and apparel sector.

Power Reliability:

Frequent energy outages and high electricity costs increase production costs, reduce efficiency, and deter industrial investment. Countries investing in renewable energy and

stable grids, such as Morocco and Namibia, are emerging as more competitive manufacturing hubs.

Outdated Machinery:

Many spinning, weaving, and garment facilities still rely on outdated equipment. Modernization is critical to improve quality, reduce waste, and enhance competitiveness against global players.

Logistics Costs:

High transport costs and inefficient customs procedures increase the final price of garments, undermining regional trade. Investments in cross-border logistics, warehouse infrastructure, and streamlined trade facilitation under AfCFTA are crucial.

Quality Certification Standards:

Inconsistent standards and certification requirements across countries hinder the movement of finished goods.

Harmonized certification and quality assurance frameworks will enable regional sourcing and intra-African exports.



A large, cracked stone map of Africa is being held up by several people. The stone is a light brown color with numerous cracks and fissures, giving it a weathered appearance. The people holding it are of various ages and are wearing different colored clothing. In the foreground, there are several African flags, including the flag of Ghana (red, white, and green horizontal stripes with a black star) and the flag of Ethiopia (green, yellow, and red horizontal stripes with a blue circle containing a yellow star). The background shows a crowd of people and a cityscape under a blue sky with white clouds.

CULTURE & SOCIETY

BUILDING GLOBAL AFRICA BY HARNESSING THE \$4 TRILLION DIASPORA ECONOMY

By Temwa Gondwe

Were he to be alive today, Frantz Fanon, the revolutionary Pan-African thinker and son of Martinique, would have celebrated his centenary in July 2025.

It is profoundly symbolic that, in the year of his centenary, we gathered in Algiers, the land where Fanon joined the struggle for liberation, to mark Global Africa Diaspora Day at the Intra Africa Trade Fair 2025 (IATF2025).

As a young man, Fanon left the Caribbean to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Africans in the fight against colonial domination.

His message still echoes through time: Africans must unite—wherever they may be—regardless of beliefs, colour, gender, or political persuasion. That message is as urgent today as it was in the 1950s, for across the world, people of African descent continue to face marginalisation, suspicion, and systemic inequities.

Despite our significant numbers and immense contribution to civilisation, we remain divided and too often defined by narratives, not of our own making. Fanon's life reminds us that unity is possible where there is a will.

Today, the challenge before us is not only political or cultural—it is fundamentally economic. To address it, we must transform the global African community, both on the continent and throughout the diaspora, tapping into our shared ancestry, identity and destiny, to mould a cohesive, self-reliant global economic powerhouse.

This is the essence of Global Africa – a modern Pan-Africanism rooted not only in shared identity, but also

in markets, capital, and ownership.

It is Pan-Africanism underpinned by economics – by empowering Africans everywhere to control the value chains and institutions that shape our destiny. It is about building resilient cross-regional value chains.

The data tells a powerful story of untapped potential. The Global African community, approximately two billion people and a combined GDP (in PPP – purchasing power parity – terms) of approximately US \$12 trillion, is one of the untapped economic blocs.

If we successfully integrate this ring-fenced economy, we could unlock an unparalleled opportunity for internal trade, investment and shared prosperity. Yet for too long, this potential has remained latent. Our fragmentation, fostered by centuries of divide-and rule, has kept us from leveraging this collective strength.

Drawing from it will unlock economic sovereignty, which is the next chapter of Pan-Africanism that will reconnect us through trade, investment and cultural exchange.

Consider the world of sport. People of African descent dominate sprinting, football, endurance running and other sports. Yet the true economic rewards of their excellence often lie elsewhere. Our communities provide the sweat; others reap the profit.

This pattern repeats across industries—from commodities to manufacturing, from music to film. The challenge is not a lack of talent or creativity; it is the absence of control over markets and distribution.

This is why today's conversation on

the strategic value of the Global Africa economy matters. If Global Africa is to move from rhetoric to reality, we must institutionalise it.

The proposed Global Africa Commission seeks to do just that—building the governance, networks and financial instruments that will give coherence and longevity to our shared economic vision while amplifying our common voice and influence globally.

The commission will help formalise efforts in advancing trade, cultural, education, and creative agenda of the growing alliance.

In addition to leaning on our economic ties, we must also harness the soft power of our people. The proposed Global Africa Athletics Championships, as well as an expanded Unity Cup that celebrates Afro-Caribbean ties, linking African and the Caribbean nations, are not just sporting events—they are strategic levers for economic integration, vehicles for new industries, branding, and commercial opportunities that return value to our athletes and communities. The championship will strengthen ties and create opportunities for the youth.

The message from IATF2025 in Algiers was unambiguous: the era of fragmentation must end. The future of Global Africa depends on our determination to produce within our communities, trade within our communities, and take pride in consuming what we produce.

Only we can shape a solid, secure future for ourselves, rooted in unity and sovereignty, while recognising our global cosmopolitan identity, to reignite bonds. We need to mobil-

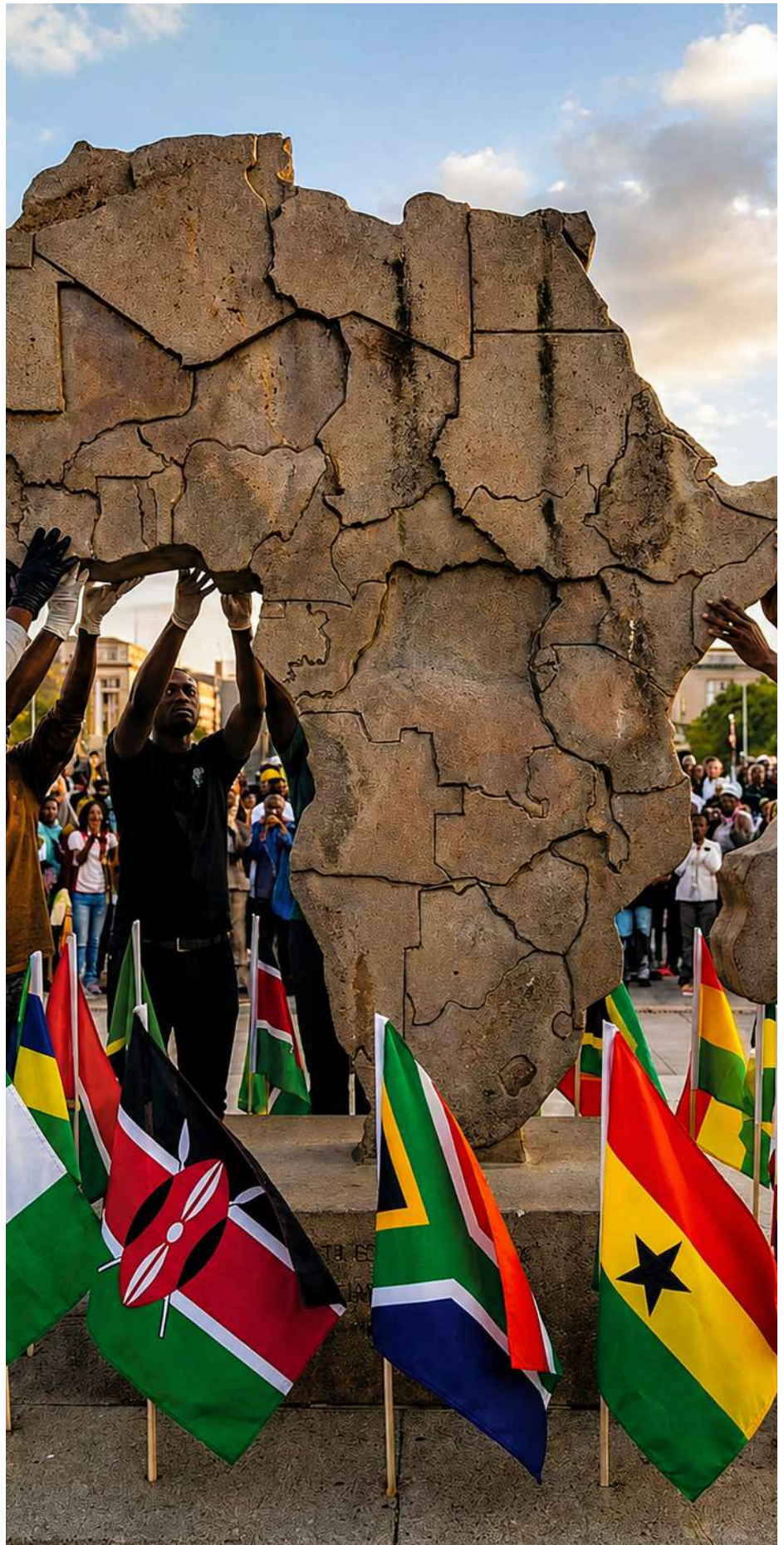
ise investment, leverage remittance-based financing, promote skills and knowledge exchange, support development of cultural industries and accelerate cross-border integration.

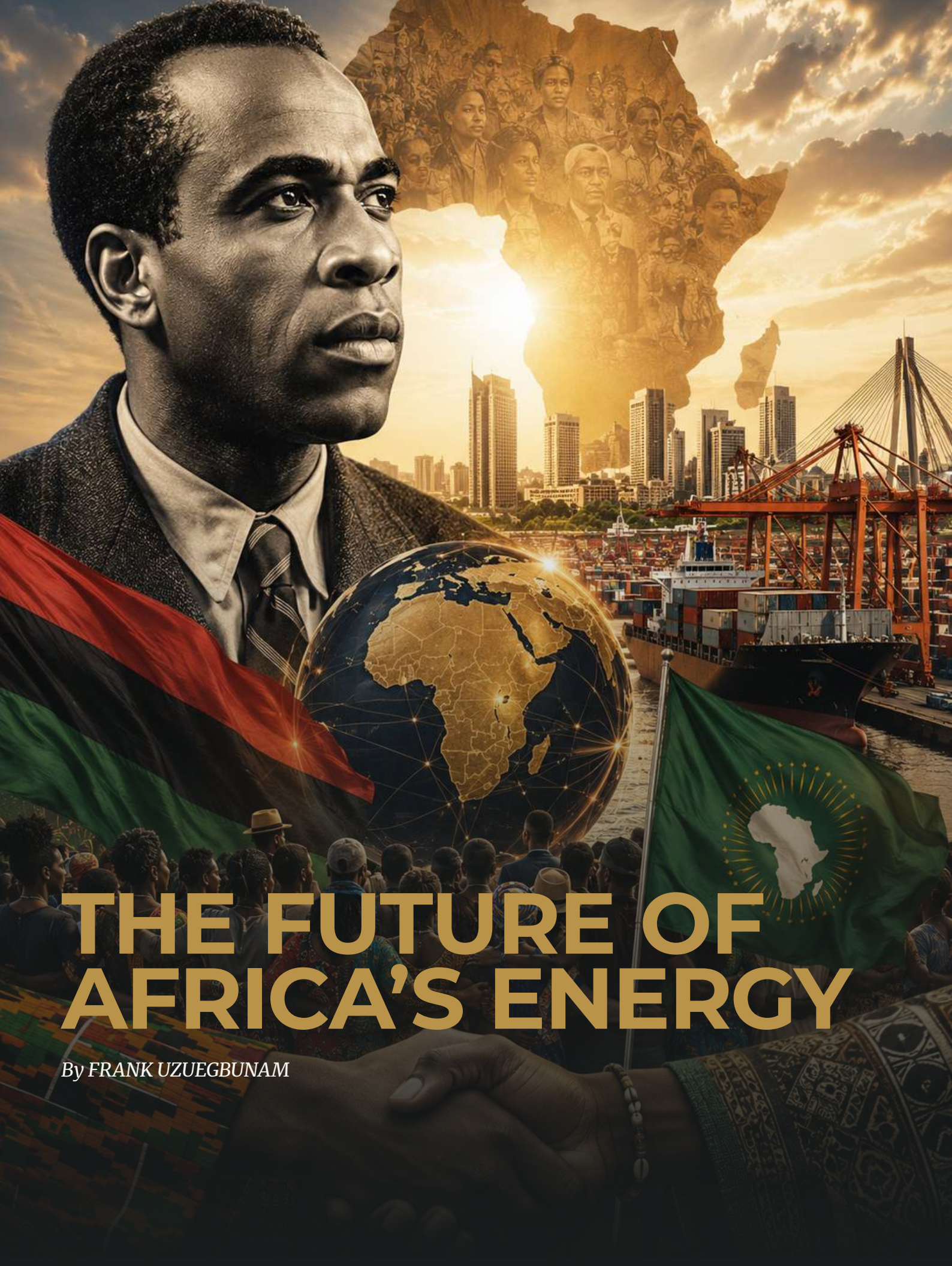
The IATF stands as a living testament to this vision—a space where Africa and its diaspora connect, transact, and build shared wealth. The biennial fair that is Africa’s premier trade and investment event, continues to play a critical role in enhancing access to information on trade and investment opportunities across Global Africa.

We need to capitalise on such benefits of interconnected African value across the world. The foundation has been laid, and the next step is to continue building intentionally, to harness our economic potential, and to finally make Global Africa not just a dream of our forebears—but a reality for generations to come.

Temwa Gondwe is The Director, Creatives and Diaspora, African Export – Import Bank (Afreximbank).

This Opinion Editorial was first published by Project Syndicate.





THE FUTURE OF AFRICA'S ENERGY

By FRANK UZUEGBUNAM

Nigeria positions itself at the center of Africa's energy future at NIES 2026

Nigeria positions itself at the center of Africa's energy future at NIES 2026.

The 9th Nigeria International Energy Summit (NIES 2026) was held from 2–5 February 2026 in Abuja, bringing together global energy leaders, policymakers, investors, and technology innovators to examine the future of energy in Nigeria and across Africa.

Hosted at the State House Presidential Banquet Hall and the Bola Ahmed Tinubu International Conference Centre under presidential patronage, the summit reinforced Nigeria's ambition to serve as a strategic hub in Africa's energy landscape.

Now one of the continent's leading energy platforms, NIES convenes government officials, regulators, oil and gas companies, financiers, and service providers.

The 2026 edition drew over 5,000 participants under the theme “Energy for Peace and Prosperity: Securing Our Shared Future.”

NIES 2026 aimed to drive strategic dialogue on how Nigeria and Africa can leverage abundant energy resources to accelerate economic growth, reduce energy poverty, and advance sustainability.

The summit prioritized investment across oil, gas, and renewables, deeper regional cooperation, and the adoption of technology and innovation to improve efficiency and strengthen Africa's evolving energy systems.

NIES 2026 delivered a packed four-day programme of ministerial dia-

logues, executive panels, investment roundtables, and technical sessions. Discussions examined policy reforms, market trends, and financing for major energy infrastructure.

Two themes dominated: strengthening local content to empower indigenous firms and advancing regional gas cooperation through cross-border pipelines and integrated markets.

Opening ceremony sets strategic tone
The summit opened with a formal ceremony at the State House Banquet Hall in Abuja, attended by senior Nigerian government officials, foreign dignitaries, and industry leaders.

The session set the strategic tone for the four-day gathering, emphasizing the central role of energy in Nigeria's economic transformation and Africa's broader pursuit of sustainable growth.

Delivering the opening address on behalf of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Vice President Kashim Shettima outlined the administration's vision for Nigeria's energy future, stressing that energy must remain central to economic stability, industrial expansion, and international cooperation.

“Energy must unite communities, stabilize economies and secure futures. It must power factories, illuminate homes, fuel innovation and build trust between government, investors and citizens,” President Tinubu stated.

The President reaffirmed Nigeria's commitment to working with African countries, global partners, and private investors to deliver energy that is secure, affordable, cleaner, and inclusive.

President Adama Barrow of The

Gambia also underscored the importance of regional collaboration, noting that Nigeria's policies “have implications far beyond its borders” and that stronger partnerships among African nations will be vital for achieving long-term energy security.

Representing indigenous producers, IPPG Chairman Adebite Falade said “Nigeria's energy future must be defined by self-sufficiency, competitiveness, and collaboration while delivering lasting benefits for all Nigerians.”

Nigeria's evolving energy strategy

Nigeria's national energy strategy featured prominently throughout the summit, with government officials reaffirming that oil and gas will remain central to the country's economic architecture in the medium term, even as Nigeria gradually diversifies its energy mix.

Delivering his State Industry Address, the Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil), Senator Heineken Lokpobiri, emphasized the importance of collaboration between international operators and indigenous companies to strengthen efficiency and competitiveness across the sector.

According to Lokpobiri, “Nigeria is big enough for both EPC companies and indigenous companies to coexist. Complex offshore projects still require EPC expertise, while collaboration can help reduce costs and improve competitiveness.”

Nigeria's hydrocarbon resources remain a critical driver of industrial growth, fiscal revenues, and export earnings. At the same time, natural gas was repeatedly highlighted as a strategic transition fuel capable of

Picture 1: HE Vice President Kashim Shettima, GCON, representative of HE President Bola Tinubu, GCFR, flanked by HE Adama Barrow, President of The Gambia, Mr. Domingo Mba Esono, representative of HE Teodoro Mbasogo, President of Equatorial Guinea, Ministers of State for Petroleum (Oil & Gas) Senator Heineken Lokpobiri, Hon. Ekperikpe Ekpo; Ministers from APPO-member countries; Heads of International Energy Organisations and NIES 2026 Platinum Sponsors at the opening ceremony of the 9th edition of Nigeria International Energy Summit (NIES2026) held in State House Banquet Hall, Abuja.



Picture 2: Dr. James Shindi, CEO, Brevity Anderson/Project Director, NIES flanked by HE Adama Barrow, President of The Gambia (Left) and HE Vice President Kashim Shettima, GCON (Right) as he conducts them round the digital exhibition of the 9th edition of Nigeria International Energy Summit (NIES2026) held at State House Banquet Hall, Presidential Villa, Abuja.

Picture 3: HE Vice President Kashim Shettima, GCON, representative of HE President Bola Tinubu, GCFR, flanked by HE Adama Barrow, President of The Gambia (Left) and Mr. Domingo Mba Esono (Right), representative of HE Teodoro Mbasogo, President of Equatorial Guinea at the opening ceremony of the 9th edition of Nigeria International Energy Summit (NIES2026) held at State House Banquet Hall, Presidential Villa, Abuja.



Picture 4: The Group Managing Director, Nembe Exploration and Production Company Limited, Engr. Victor Okoronkwo; Commission Chief Executive, Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), Mrs. Oritsemeyiwa Eyesan; Group Chief Executive Officer, Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC Ltd), Engr. Bayo Ojulari, & the President, Nigerian Gas Association (NGA), Mr. Akachukwu Nwokedi, at the opening ceremony of the 9th edition of Nigeria International Energy Summit held in Abuja recently...



Picture 5: The Group Chief Executive Officer, Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited, Engr. Bayo Ojulari (Left) with Arise TV Anchor, Vimbai Mutinhiri during the Fireside Chat with the NNPC GCEO at the 9th edition of Nigeria International Energy Summit held in Abuja recently

Picture 6: A cross section of participants at the opening ceremony of the 9th edition of Nigeria International Energy Summit (NIES2026) held at State House Banquet Hall, Presidential Villa, Abuja.



supporting electricity generation, industrial expansion, and regional energy trade.

Delivering his State Industry Address, the Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Gas), Hon. Ekperikpe Ekpo, underscored the central role of gas in Nigeria's development strategy. As he stated: "The real value of our gas resources is not in reserves alone, but in megawatts delivered to homes and industries, jobs created, foreign exchange earned, and peace enabled through access to clean and reliable energy," Ekpo said.

Ekpo added that natural gas occupies a pivotal position within Nigeria's Energy Transition Plan, serving both as a transition fuel and as an industrial feedstock capable of driving economic diversification. Speaking during her presentation, the Commission Chief Executive of the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), Oritsemeyiwa Eyesan, stressed the importance of stronger regulatory coordination across Africa.

Eyesan said that "our energy and mineral wealth can either remain fragmented, leaving each nation to struggle alone, or they can serve as the bedrock of a new era of continental prosperity. The difference between these two futures is unity."

Similarly, the Authority Chief Executive of the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA), Engr. Saidu Aliyu Mohammed, highlighted the impact of recent sector reforms, stating that "Nigeria's downstream petroleum sector is witnessing an irreversible renaissance driven by the implementation of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) and renewed investments across the value chain."

Across discussions, participants emphasized expanding gas infrastructure, strengthening the gas-to-power value chain, increasing domestic refining capacity, and encouraging new upstream exploration under stable regulatory frameworks.

Investment outlook and industry perspectives

Investment remained a dominant theme throughout the summit, with industry leaders highlighting Nigeria's vast resource base and growing domestic demand as key factors positioning the country among Africa's most attractive energy investment destinations.

During a fireside chat, the Group Chief Executive Officer of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC), Engr. Bayo Ojulari, stressed the importance of sustained reforms and strategic partnerships in attracting global capital.

"Nigeria's energy sector is entering a new phase of transformation driven by policy reforms, strategic partnerships, and renewed investor confidence. Our focus at NNPC is to unlock value across the entire energy value chain while positioning Nigeria as a reliable energy supplier to Africa and the global market," Ojulari said.

Upstream oil and gas development remains a major opportunity, supported by improved fiscal frameworks under the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA). Gas infrastructure expansion, including pipelines and processing facilities, alongside power generation, renewables, and emerging technologies such as carbon capture and hydrogen, also presents significant investment potential.

Regional cooperation and integration

A central theme at NIES 2026 was the need for deeper regional cooperation across African energy markets. Despite abundant resources, including oil, gas, solar, and hydropower, the continent continues to face significant energy deficits.

Participants stressed that stronger cross-border integration could improve energy access, with regional gas pipelines enabling supply to neighboring markets and expanded electricity interconnections allowing countries to share generation capacity. Discussions also highlighted the importance of harmonizing regulatory frameworks and strengthening regional institutions.

Greater coordination, stakeholders noted, would boost investor confidence, accelerate large-scale infrastructure development, and enhance Africa's collective position in global energy markets.

Technology, innovation, and local content

The summit's exhibition segment showcased a broad range of technologies shaping the future of the energy industry. Companies presented innovations in digital oilfield systems, artificial intelligence for reservoir management.



Medland Hospital Provides More than **HEALTHCARE**

Experience the fusion of
medical expertise, compassion,
and hospitality that sets us apart.

Located in the heart of Lusaka, Zambia,
Medland Hospital provides patient
centered-care in a environment where
safety, comfort, convenience, compassion,
and medical ethics come together.

www.medlandhospital.com



G. M. Ibru & Co.

SOLICITORS & ARBITRATORS

Trusted Legal Partners for Complex Business Solutions

Established in 1968, G. M. Ibru & Co. is a distinguished Nigerian law firm with a long-standing reputation for delivering strategic, commercially focused legal services. With over two centuries of combined professional experience, the firm provides comprehensive advisory and representation across a wide spectrum of legal practice areas.

From its offices in Lagos—within the Sheraton Lagos Hotel (Ikeja) and Federal Palace Hotel (Victoria Island)—and a representative presence in Abuja, the firm is well-positioned to serve both local and international clients operating in Nigeria's dynamic business environment.



COMPREHENSIVE LEGAL EXPERTISE

The firm offers tailored legal solutions in key practice areas, including:

- Commercial & Corporate Law
- Banking & Finance
- Labour & Employment Law
- Property & Real Estate
- Maritime Law
- Intellectual Property
- Environmental Law
- Media & Libel
- Alternative Dispute Resolution



STRATEGIC BUSINESS ADVISORY

G. M. Ibru & Co. is particularly noted for its role in:

- ✓ Structuring joint ventures and strategic alliances
- ✓ Drafting and negotiating commercial contracts
- ✓ Preparing management agreements and memoranda of understanding
- ✓ Advising on regulatory and compliance matters

Clients rely on the firm not only for legal representation but also for pragmatic business insight that aligns legal strategy with commercial objectives.



EXPERIENCED LITIGATION & DISPUTE RESOLUTION

The firm's litigation team—comprising seasoned partners and associates with an average of over two decades of experience—has successfully represented clients across Nigeria's High Courts and appellate courts.

Whether in courtroom advocacy or alternative dispute resolution proceedings, the firm is committed to achieving efficient and effective outcomes.



WHY CHOOSE G. M. IBRU & CO.?

- ✓ Over 50 years of proven legal excellence
- ✓ Strong commercial orientation and industry insight
- ✓ Experienced, responsive, and client-focused legal team
- ✓ Nationwide presence with international outlook

YOUR LEGAL PARTNER IN GROWTH

In an evolving business landscape, G. M. Ibru & Co. stands as a reliable partner for organizations seeking clarity, protection, and strategic advantage through expert legal counsel.

**Engage a firm that understands
both law and business.**

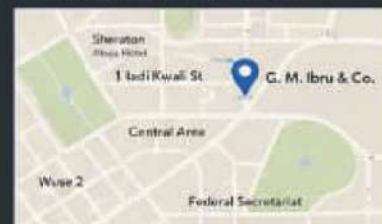


Suite 184 Sheraton Abuja Hotel,
1 Iadi Kwali St, Abuja,
Federal Capital Territory



94612000

MAP OF G.M. IBRU & CO.



LAGOS (IKEJA)

LAGOS (VICTORIA ISLAND)

ABUJA

www.gmibruco.com



AFRICA BETWEEN FIRE AND OPPORTUNITY

How the US–Israel–Iran Conflict Is Reshaping African Economies, Markets and Global Alliances

By Anayo Ude

Across African capitals, from Lagos to Nairobi, Cairo to Johannesburg, the effects of the escalating US–Israel–Iran conflict are no longer distant geopolitical abstractions.

They are visible in fuel queues, rising transport fares, food inflation, weakened currencies, and nervous financial markets. For millions of Africans, the war is being experienced not through missile exchanges in the Middle East, but through the cost of bread, petrol, fertilizer, electricity and imported goods.

At the same time, the crisis is accelerating a broader restructuring of the global economic order — one increasingly shaped by strategic rivalry between the United States and China, weakening multilateral institutions, and the return of economic nationalism.

The recent summit between Donald Trump and Xi Jinping in Beijing underscored this transition. Though both leaders projected diplomatic calm, the meeting ended with few concrete breakthroughs. Analysts described it as a “stalemate summit” that reflected a world moving from cooperation toward managed rivalry.

For Africa, this emerging global fragmentation may become one of the defining economic tests of the decade.

The War Africans Feel At The Fuel Pump

The most immediate impact of the conflict has come through energy markets. Fears over disruptions around the Strait of Hormuz — through which a substantial share of global oil passes — have triggered volatility in global energy prices. African

economies, many heavily dependent on imported refined petroleum, have felt the pressure almost immediately. In Somalia, rising fuel costs have reportedly forced many tuk-tuk operators off the roads, affecting livelihoods and daily urban mobility.

In South Africa, motorists rushed to petrol stations amid fears of another round of increases as governments struggled to cushion consumers from higher global prices.

A continent-wide fuel price comparison circulating widely across African media platforms this year showed sharp disparities in energy affordability, with many fragile economies facing some of the world’s highest transport-adjusted fuel costs.

For ordinary citizens, the consequences extend far beyond transportation. When fuel prices rise: food becomes more expensive, electricity costs increase, public transport fares climb, manufacturing slows, and inflation spreads rapidly through entire economies.

“Every time there’s an increase in oil prices, a lot of things also adjust in prices,” economic analyst Bertha Chikadza observed recently while discussing the African inflation outlook.

According to the African Export-Import Bank, Afreximbank, the war poses a serious and immediate threat to African economies through rising energy prices, supply-chain disruptions, inflationary pressure, weakened currencies, and declining trade confidence, and believes that adopting a crisis-containment and economic-shielding approach rather than a purely diplomatic response is the right way to respond to the situation.

The Bank argues that Africa is highly vulnerable because many countries depend heavily on imported fuel, fertiliser, wheat, pharmaceuticals, and maritime shipping routes linked to the Gulf region and the Strait of Hormuz.

Perhaps, Afreximbank’s most concrete intervention has been the launch of a US\$10 billion Gulf Crisis Response Programme (GCRP) announced in April 2026. According to the Bank, the programme is intended to “insulate African and Caribbean economies from the shocks caused by the war.”

Also, the African Development Bank has warned that despite encouraging growth projections, external shocks linked to Middle East tensions remain major threats to the continent’s economic stability.

Winners, Losers And The Illusion Of Oil Wealth

Ironically, not all African countries are losing equally. Oil exporters such as Nigeria, Angola and Algeria have enjoyed temporary windfalls from higher crude prices.

Yet even these gains come with complications. Most African oil producers still import refined petroleum products, meaning higher crude revenues do not always translate into lower domestic fuel prices.

Moreover, governments often face renewed pressure to increase subsidies, stabilize currencies and absorb inflation shocks.

Nigerian industrialist Aliko Dangote recently warned that rising oil prices were threatening to “devastate African airlines and farmers,” emphasizing how fuel shocks rapidly spread

through entire economies. Dangote has also argued that “energy security is no longer optional but foundational to economic stability.” That message is becoming increasingly urgent across the continent.

The crisis has exposed a longstanding structural weakness: Africa produces raw commodities but remains dangerously dependent on imported industrial and consumer goods.

Supply Chains Under Pressure

The conflict is also disrupting global shipping and logistics systems. Insurance premiums on cargo moving through strategic maritime corridors have risen sharply. Shipping routes are becoming longer and more expensive. Delays at ports are affecting global manufacturing chains.

Africa, heavily dependent on imports from Asia, Europe and the Gulf, is particularly vulnerable. Manufacturers across the continent now face:

delayed industrial inputs
rising freight costs
shortages of machinery and components
increased pressure on already fragile currencies.

Countries with growing manufacturing ambitions — including Egypt, Morocco, Kenya, South Africa and Nigeria — are especially exposed to these disruptions. At African ports, congestion and shipping delays are increasingly viewed not simply as infrastructure problems, but as strategic economic vulnerabilities.

Trump, Xi And The New Global Economic Chessboard

While the war in the Middle East

intensifies, another geopolitical drama is unfolding quietly but decisively: the reordering of US–China relations.

The Trump–Xi summit in Beijing revealed how deeply global economics and geopolitics are now intertwined. Although both leaders pledged “strategic stability,” the summit produced few substantive agreements on tariffs, trade barriers, Taiwan, rare earth minerals or technology restrictions.

Yet beneath the diplomatic symbolism lay a profound reality. Washington increasingly wants to reduce depen-



dence on Chinese supply chains. Beijing, meanwhile, seeks greater resilience against Western sanctions and geopolitical pressure.

The result is a world shifting toward:

- regional trade blocs
- strategic protectionism
- supply-chain nationalism
- politically aligned trading partnerships.

For Africa, this carries both danger

and opportunity.

Danger, because weaker economies risk marginalization in a fragmented world economy.

Opportunity, because global powers are now searching for:

alternative manufacturing hubs
strategic mineral suppliers
new logistics corridors
diversified energy partners.

Africa possesses many of the resources central to the future global economy: cobalt, lithium, manganese, copper, rare earth minerals,

and enormous renewable energy potential. The question is whether African countries can negotiate from positions of collective strength rather than fragmented dependence.

The Crisis Of Multilateralism

The conflict is also accelerating a deeper crisis within multilateral institutions such as the World Trade Organization and the United Nations.

Increasingly, major powers are bypassing traditional global consensus mechanisms in favor of unilateral sanctions, strategic tariffs and geopolitical alliances.

The rules-based trading system that many developing economies relied upon is weakening.

African leaders have grown more vocal about this imbalance. At recent continental economic forums, leaders stressed the need for Africa to move beyond being merely an extraction economy.

Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu declared: “We don’t want scavengers. We don’t want extractors. We want people to add value.”

That statement captures the broader African frustration with decades of unequal participation in global trade systems.

As the authority of global institutions weakens, Africa increasingly faces pressure to strengthen its own regional structures.

What Africa Must Do Now

- Accelerate AfCFTA implementation
- Invest in energy sovereignty
- Prioritize food security
- Deepen regional financial cooperation
- Negotiate strategically in the US-China rivalry



A man in a dark suit and glasses is seen from the back, looking towards a modern city skyline. In the foreground, a large green flag with the African Union emblem (a map of Africa surrounded by 53 yellow stars) flies on a tall pole. To the right, a building with the words "AFRICAN SOVEREIGN WEALTH FUND" is visible. In the background, several skyscrapers and construction cranes are visible against a blue sky with scattered clouds. In the bottom foreground, a book titled "SOVEREIGN WEALTH STRATEGY FOR AFRICA" is partially visible.

CAPITAL

THE AFRICAN CAPITAL FOR GROWTH: BUILDING SOVEREIGN WEALTH

By Zainab Bello

SOVEREIGN WEALTH
STRATEGY FOR AFRICA
BUILDING WEALTH-DRIVING FUTURES

I have spent years observing the African economic story from multiple angles — from bustling markets in Aba and Lagos to policy conversations in boardrooms and development conferences.

Across the continent, one truth continues to stand out clearly to me: Africa is not poor in resources, talent, energy, or ambition. What Africa has lacked historically is the structured accumulation and strategic deployment of sovereign capital.

Today, however, a new possibility is emerging. As global economic power gradually shifts toward emerging regions, Africa has an opportunity to rethink wealth beyond raw commodity exports and foreign aid dependence.

The continent now has the chance to build sovereign wealth systems capable of financing industrialization, infrastructure, innovation, energy transition, manufacturing, food security, and intergenerational prosperity.

For me, this conversation is no longer theoretical. It is urgent. The future of Africa will not merely depend on how much wealth is generated, but on how much wealth is retained, managed, invested, protected, and multiplied for future generations.

Africa's Untapped Financial Power

Africa possesses some of the world's most valuable economic assets:

- Over 30% of the world's mineral reserves
- The youngest population globally
- Vast agricultural potential
- Growing urban markets
- Expanding digital economies
- Strategic maritime and logistics

corridors

- Massive renewable energy potential

Yet despite these advantages, much of the continent's wealth still exits Africa in raw or undervalued forms. Oil leaves unrefined. Minerals leave unprocessed. Agricultural commodities leave with minimal value addition. African creative industries often scale globally without African ownership structures.

The result is that Africa generates value but captures only a fraction of the long-term wealth created from it. This is why sovereign wealth matters. Sovereign wealth is not simply about having money in reserve accounts. It is about building national and continental investment capacity that can shape Africa's future independently.

What Sovereign Wealth Really Means

In many policy discussions, sovereign wealth funds are often presented as technical financial institutions. But from my perspective, sovereign wealth is far more than that. It is strategic patience. It is a nation deciding that temporary resource income must become permanent national strength.

Countries such as Norway, the United Arab Emirates, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar transformed resource revenues into long-term global investment portfolios, infrastructure systems, innovation ecosystems, and national resilience.

Africa can do the same — but in an African way. Our sovereign wealth strategy must go beyond oil revenues alone. It must include:

- Mining and critical minerals
- Agriculture and food systems

- Technology and digital platforms
- Diaspora investment capital
- Infrastructure investment pools
- Renewable energy assets
- Maritime trade and logistics
- Creative industries and intellectual property

The African sovereign wealth model of the future should be diversified, innovation-driven, and continentally connected.

The Rise of African Sovereign Wealth Funds

Several African nations have already begun important experiments in sovereign wealth development. Nigeria, Angola, Botswana, Libya, Egypt, Rwanda, Ghana, and Algeria have all established forms of sovereign wealth or strategic investment structures.

Botswana's long-term diamond management strategy remains one of Africa's strongest examples of converting natural resources into national financial stability.

Rwanda has demonstrated how strategic state-led investment can accelerate national transformation even without massive natural resource reserves. Meanwhile, Nigeria's sovereign investment initiatives continue to show potential in infrastructure, healthcare, agriculture, and stabilization mechanisms.

Still, the broader continental challenge remains scale. Most African sovereign funds remain relatively small compared to global peers. Many are also constrained by political instability, debt burdens, governance weaknesses, foreign exchange volatility, and short-term fiscal pressures. Yet despite these limitations, the foundation is being laid.

Africa's Diaspora: The Hidden Sovereign Asset

One of the most overlooked pillars of African capital formation is the African diaspora. Every year, Africans abroad send tens of billions of dollars back home through remittances. In several countries, remittance flows exceed foreign direct investment and development assistance.

But I believe the next phase must move beyond remittances toward structured diaspora investment ecosystems. The African diaspora is not simply a source of emotional connection. It is a global financial network. Doctors, engineers, entrepreneurs, academics, creatives, investors, athletes, and technologists of African descent already participate in major global industries.

The challenge is how Africa creates trusted vehicles through which diaspora capital can help finance:

- Industrial parks
- Housing developments
- Energy infrastructure
- Technology startups
- Agricultural processing
- Logistics corridors
- Media and cultural institutions
- Educational systems

This is where sovereign thinking becomes transformative. Africa must create mechanisms where diaspora wealth becomes part of long-term continental capital accumulation.

Why Africa Must Invest in Itself

One issue I continue to reflect upon is how dependent many African economies remain on external financing structures. Foreign investment is important. Development partnerships

matter. International trade remains essential. But Africa cannot permanently outsource its economic destiny.

Nations that control their future usually possess strong domestic capital systems. This is why pension funds, sovereign wealth funds, development banks, insurance pools, infrastructure funds, export-import institutions, and regional investment platforms are so critical.

Africa must increasingly finance African roads, African ports, African railways, African startups, African media, African manufacturing, and African innovation.

This shift is already beginning. Institutions such as Afreximbank, the African Development Bank, regional financial institutions, and emerging private investment ecosystems are helping build continental financial architecture capable of supporting African-led growth. But far more coordination is required.

The Strategic Industries of the Future

If Africa is to build meaningful sovereign wealth, it must aggressively position itself within the industries shaping the next global economic era.

1. Critical Minerals and Battery Value Chains

Africa holds significant reserves of lithium, cobalt, manganese, graphite, and rare earth minerals essential for electric vehicles and renewable energy systems.

The opportunity is not merely extraction. The opportunity is industrial participation. Africa must move toward refining, battery assembly,





advanced manufacturing, and supply chain integration.

2. Renewable Energy

Africa possesses extraordinary solar, hydro, wind, and natural gas potential. Future sovereign wealth could emerge not only from oil, but from electricity exports, green hydrogen, energy storage systems, and regional power infrastructure.

3. Agriculture and Food Processing

Africa contains over half of the world's uncultivated arable land. Food security will become one of the defining global issues of the 21st century. Countries capable of producing and processing food at scale will hold strategic power.

4. Digital Infrastructure

Africa's digital economy continues to grow rapidly. Fintech, e-commerce, artificial intelligence, cloud systems, mobile banking, education technology, and digital identity systems are creating entirely new economic layers. The next generation of African sovereign wealth may partly emerge from digital ecosystems rather than purely natural resources.

5. Creative and Cultural Industries

African music, fashion, film, sports, cuisine, and storytelling are becoming globally influential. The challenge now is ownership. Africa must build stronger intellectual property systems, distribution infrastructure, production financing, and continental media institutions capable of retaining greater economic value from African creativity.

Governance: The Foundation of Sovereign Trust

No sovereign wealth strategy can succeed without public trust. Transparency, accountability, institutional discipline, and long-term thinking are essential.

The danger for many resource-rich nations is the temptation to prioritize short-term political spending over long-term strategic investment. But sovereign wealth requires discipline across generations. Future-focused governance means:

- Independent oversight structures
- Clear investment mandates
- Transparent reporting systems
- Anti-corruption safeguards
- Intergenerational savings strategies
- Strong legal frameworks
- Professional fund management

Without trust, capital flees. With trust, capital compounds.

Building a Continental African Capital Market

I believe Africa's greatest long-term advantage may ultimately emerge through continental integration. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) presents one of the largest economic integration opportunities in modern history. If properly implemented, Africa could gradually build:

- Integrated capital markets
- Cross-border infrastructure financing
- Continental logistics systems
- Pan-African manufacturing corridors
- Unified digital payment systems
- Regional stock exchanges
- Shared innovation ecosystems

This would significantly increase Africa's bargaining power within the global economy. A fragmented con-

continent struggles to accumulate strategic wealth. A connected continent becomes an economic force.

The Psychological Shift Africa Must Make

Beyond economics, I believe Africa must also undergo a psychological transformation. For too long, many African societies have been conditioned to think primarily in terms of scarcity, dependence, and survival. But sovereign wealth begins with a different mindset: Ownership. Patience. Scale. Long-term planning. Institution building.

Africa must increasingly think not only about consumption, but about capital formation. Not only about extraction, but about value chains. Not only about politics, but about economic systems that outlive political cycles.

The nations that dominate the future will likely be those capable of organizing capital strategically over decades. Africa still has time to become one of them.

Conclusion

As I reflect on Africa's future, I remain cautiously optimistic. The continent faces real challenges — debt pressures, infrastructure gaps, governance concerns, unemployment, insecurity, and global competition. Yet beneath these challenges lies extraordinary untapped potential.

Africa's next chapter may not simply be defined by natural resources. It may be defined by how intelligently Africa converts those resources into sovereign wealth, strategic industries, resilient institutions, and intergenerational prosperity.

The real question before Africa today is no longer whether wealth exists. The question is whether Africa can organize that wealth into systems powerful enough to shape its own future. I believe it can. And perhaps for the first time in modern history, the foundations for that future are already beginning to emerge.



“The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) presents one of the largest economic integration opportunities in modern history. If properly implemented, Africa could gradually build: Integrated capital markets, Cross-border infrastructure financing, Continental logistics systems, Pan-African manufacturing corridors, Unified digital payment systems, Regional stock exchanges, Shared innovation ecosystems.”

An aerial, high-angle view of a futuristic African city. The city is built on a coastal plain with a large, arid, sandy area in the background. The foreground and middle ground are lush with greenery, featuring a winding river, a waterfall, and numerous wind turbines. Modern skyscrapers and industrial structures are interspersed with the green spaces. The city is surrounded by the ocean, with several large ships and smaller boats visible. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm, golden glow over the scene.

FUTURE OF WORK

AFRICAN CITIES, INDUSTRY & THE FUTURE OF WORK

By Sibusiso Dlamini

How African Urban Centres are Becoming the New Factories, Innovation Labs and Talent Engines of the 21st Century



African cities are rapidly transforming into innovation corridors connecting finance, manufacturing, technology and urban mobility”

“I arrived in Kigali at sunrise.” The streets were already alive. Motorcycle taxis flowed through organised traffic corridors. Construction cranes stood above emerging commercial districts.

Young software developers carrying laptops occupied coffee shops before 8 a.m. Logistics riders moved between digital commerce hubs while

government officials discussed smart-city planning in modern conference centres.

A decade ago, many global conversations about Africa focused almost entirely on extraction — oil, minerals, commodities and aid.

Today, a different story is emerging. Across Africa, cities are becoming industrial ecosystems. Lagos is becoming a digital and financial powerhouse. Nairobi is evolving into East Africa’s technology nerve centre. Kigali is positioning itself as a smart

governance and innovation hub. Cairo continues to expand industrial manufacturing.

Casablanca is deepening automotive production. Addis Ababa has developed textile and industrial parks. Johannesburg remains a sophisticated corporate and financial centre. Accra is strengthening startup ecosystems while Cape Town is building global technology relevance.

The future of African work is no longer only about offices, factories or government jobs. It is about ecosys-

tems. And increasingly, Africa's cities are where those ecosystems are being built.

The Rise Of The African City Economy

I spent several weeks speaking with entrepreneurs, logistics operators, developers, industrial planners, creatives and policy analysts across multiple African markets.

What became increasingly clear was this: Africa's future economy will be deeply urban. By 2050, Africa is expected to become home to one-quarter of the global population. Much of that population growth will occur inside cities.

But unlike the industrialisation models of Europe or North America, Africa's urban transformation is developing simultaneously across:

- Digital infrastructure
- Mobile finance
- Informal commerce
- Renewable energy
- Manufacturing clusters
- Creative economies
- E-commerce ecosystems
- Remote work platforms

The New African Workforce

Key Trends Reshaping Employment Across African Cities

- Remote and hybrid work expansion
- AI-assisted digital services
- Youth-led entrepreneurship
- Creator economy growth
- Fintech-driven commerce
- Electric mobility ecosystems
- Logistics and mobility systems

In many African cities, innovation is

not replacing informality. It is digitising it. A trader in Aba can now source goods through online marketplaces, receive payments digitally, coordinate interstate logistics with mobile apps and market products globally through social media.

A software engineer in Nairobi can work remotely for firms in London, Dubai or Toronto while remaining physically located in East Africa. A designer in Accra can sell products internationally without owning a physical storefront. African cities are becoming platforms.

- Cross-border digital freelancing
- Smart logistics and warehousing
- Renewable energy jobs
- Local manufacturing revival
- Digital public infrastructure
- Urban informal sector digitisation

Lagos: The Commercial Giant Reinventing Itself

There are few cities in the world with the energy of Lagos. It is loud, relentless, ambitious and commercially aggressive. But beneath the traffic and density lies one of Africa's most powerful economic transformations. Nigeria's commercial capital is increasingly becoming a convergence point for:

- Fintech
- Banking
- Entertainment
- Advertising
- E-commerce
- Real estate
- Cloud services
- Mobility platforms
- Digital media
- Startup financing

Companies such as: Flutterwave, Paystack, Interswitch and Moniepoint

have helped position Nigeria as a fintech powerhouse.

Meanwhile, large telecommunications firms including MTN Nigeria and Airtel Africa continue investing heavily in digital infrastructure. The city's future-of-work ecosystem is also being shaped by coworking spaces, creative studios, podcasting networks, independent media firms and remote service agencies.

In Yaba — often called Nigeria's "Silicon Lagoon" — technology startups coexist alongside universities, venture investors and software talent.

Yet Lagos also reveals Africa's biggest urban challenge. Growth is happening faster than infrastructure. Traffic congestion, housing shortages, energy instability and urban planning gaps remain significant barriers.

Still, Lagos continues to attract talent because opportunity itself has become the city's greatest infrastructure.

Mini feature Silicon lagoon

Nigeria's Startup Boom

Nigeria's technology ecosystem has produced some of Africa's largest venture-backed companies.

Notable Companies:

- Flutterwave
- Paystack
- Moniepoint
- Andela
- Interswitch
- Jumia Nigeria
- Opay

Key Sectors:

- Fintech
- Logistics

E-commerce
Cloud services
Digital media
Creator economy

Why It Matters:

Nigeria's youthful population and mobile-first economy are accelerating demand for digital financial services and online commerce. Africa's future workforce is increasingly digital, mobile and globally connected.

Kigali: The Smart City Experiment

Kigali feels different. Clean streets. Organised planning. Strong digital governance. Rwanda has intentionally positioned Kigali as a model African smart city.

Government services are increasingly digitised. Drone logistics networks have been deployed for medical delivery systems. Innovation hubs are attracting startups in health technology, fintech and data services.

The Kigali International Financial Centre initiative is also part of Rwanda's broader strategy to position itself as a continental business and investment gateway.

What makes Kigali particularly important is not only its technology ambitions.

It is governance efficiency. Many investors increasingly view African competitiveness through the lens of execution speed. And Kigali has become symbolic of administrative efficiency in urban Africa. Still, Rwanda's market size remains relatively small compared to giants like Nigeria, Egypt or South Africa. Its strength lies in becoming a regional coordination and innovation hub.

"African cities are evolving through hybrid systems. Formal infrastructure exists alongside highly adaptive informal economies. The cities that succeed will not necessarily be the biggest. They will be the ones that successfully integrate mobility, energy, finance and digital governance."

Nairobi: East Africa's Digital Gateway

Nairobi has become one of Africa's most influential technology centres. The city's innovation culture was accelerated by the rise of mobile money through M-Pesa, widely considered one of the world's most successful fintech innovations. Today, Kenya's capital hosts:

Technology accelerators
International development labs
AI startups
Climate-tech ventures
Digital agriculture platforms
Logistics technology firms
Regional headquarters for multinational companies

Nairobi's startup ecosystem benefits from a combination of:

Strong mobile payment adoption
English-language business accessibility
Regional connectivity
Skilled youth talent
Growing venture capital interest

Kenya's future-of-work strategy is also increasingly tied to business process outsourcing, remote work

services and AI-enabled customer support industries. As global firms seek lower-cost but highly capable digital labour markets, African cities like Nairobi are becoming attractive alternatives.

Africa's Fastest-Growing Industries

Industries Expected to Expand Significantly Over the Next Decade

Financial Technology
Renewable Energy
Digital Media & Streaming
E-Commerce & Logistics
Artificial Intelligence Services
Data Centres & Cloud Infrastructure
Smart Agriculture
Health Technology
Real Estate Technology
Creative Economy & Gaming

Manufacturing Returns To The Conversation

For years, many economists argued that Africa had "missed" the industrialisation wave. But manufacturing is quietly returning to the discussion.

Morocco has emerged as a major automotive manufacturing hub with companies connected to European supply chains. Egypt continues expanding industrial capacity in construction materials, textiles, chemicals and engineering. Ethiopia invested heavily in industrial parks designed to attract textile and export manufacturing. South Africa retains advanced

"Africa's urban future will not look like Europe or China."

industrial capabilities in automotive production, mining technology, financial services and heavy industry.

Meanwhile, local manufacturing movements are emerging across West Africa as governments seek to reduce import dependence. The future African factory may not resemble the old factory model. It may combine:

Robotics

AI-assisted production

Small-scale distributed manufacturing

Digital supply chains

Renewable energy integration

Localised production hubs

This could allow African cities to industrialise differently from previous global industrial powers.

Mobility platforms are digitising transportation. Construction technology firms are exploring affordable housing solutions.

Telecommunications companies are expanding fibre infrastructure. Data centre investments are accelerating in Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa. Infrastructure itself has become one of Africa's biggest future industries.

The Future Of Work Will Be Hybrid

Africa's next workforce will likely operate across multiple income streams. A young professional may simultaneously:

Work remotely for an international company

Operate an online business

Trade digital assets

Manage a social media platform

Offer freelance consulting

Participate in e-commerce

Build a personal brand

This economic flexibility is becoming increasingly common. But it also introduces new pressures. Job security is changing. Traditional employment structures are weakening. Automation and AI will disrupt repetitive work. Cities that succeed will be the ones that:

Expand skills training

Improve digital infrastructure

Support entrepreneurship

Encourage industrial growth

Reduce energy instability

Improve mobility systems

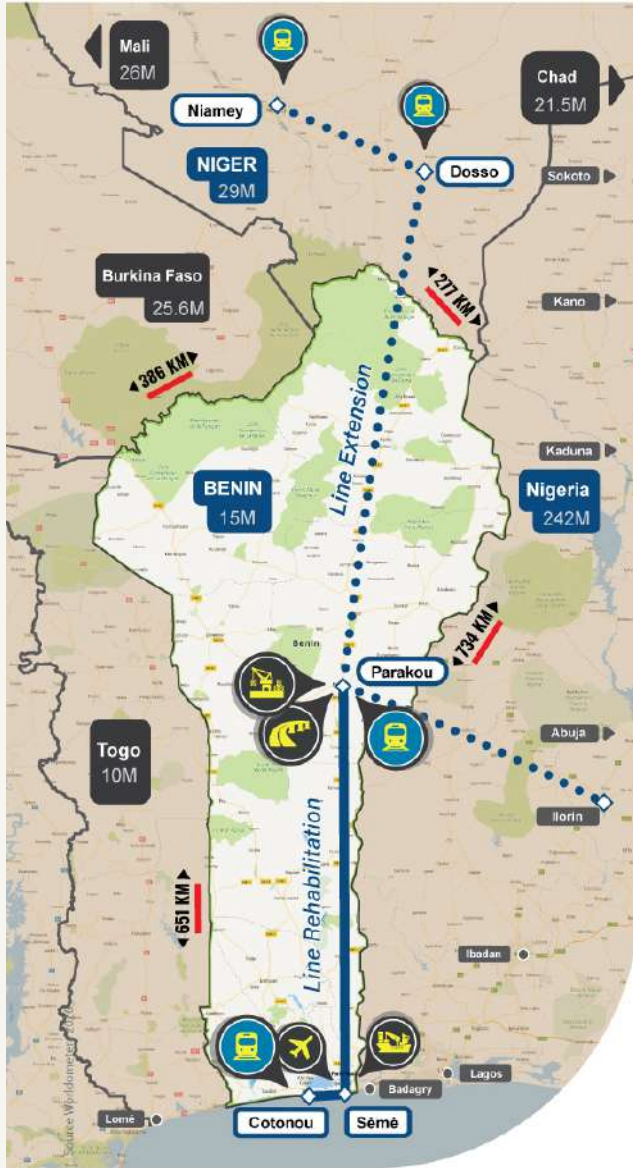
The future African worker may need to be more adaptable than any previous generation.

Final Reflection

As I travelled through African cities, one thought remained constant. Africa is no longer waiting for the future. It is building one. Not perfectly. Not evenly. Not without risk. But undeniably.

The cranes rising across skylines from Lagos to Kigali, Nairobi to Casablanca, Accra to Johannesburg are not merely symbols of construction. They are symbols of transition.





An integrated infrastructure project

The Backbone Project® is a large-scale infrastructure development program in Benin, conceived by the promotor Petrolin Group in order to ensure the economic development for the neighbouring countries.

The Backbone Project® is integrated by many components namely Railway (won by an international bid round), Dry ports, Deep-water port, Airport as well as other auxiliary and ancillary infrastructures.



RAILWAY

The railway entail the rehabilitation of the existing section between Cotonou and Parakou in Benin and the construction of an international standard gauge line linking Parakou to Niamey through Dosso in Niger for the transport of goods and people to neighbouring countries and to landlocked regions.



DRY PORT

The dry port of Parakou is a multi-modal platform located 430 km away from the deepwater port of Cotonou and it is close to the railway. It gives the Backbone Project® a strategic position for imports and exports to hinterland countries -Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger- as well as landlocked regions of Nigeria and Togo.



DEAPWATER PORT

The deep water port of Sème-Podji is an Oil, Mineral and Commercial deep water port, will be built on a land area declared as public utility covering 1006 hectares. Its main activities will be the flow of goods: container traffic, import and export of bulk and general loads, etc.



INTL. AIRPORT

The new airport in Benin will become an international platform and a Pan-African hub. This new airport is ideally positioned near the southern Benin-Nigeria border with the aim of serve southern Nigeria and Benin passenger and freight markets.

BOOKS, REPORTS & IDEAS TO WATCH

IN AFRICA (2026–2027)

Africa's next decade will be defined by ideas as much as infrastructure, energy and trade. From Lagos to Nairobi, Kigali to Cape Town, a new wave of books and reports is shaping how the continent thinks about growth, industrialization and global competitiveness.



INFLUENTIAL READS TO FOLLOW

Billions at Play: The Future of African Energy and Doing Deals

by NJ Ayuk

Explores oil, gas & strategic energy deals shaping Africa's industrial future and African-led participation in global markets.

Trade Beyond Borders

Analyzes AfCFTA, manufacturing, logistics & intra-African value chains driving industrial transformation.

Digital Africa Rising

Deep dive into startup ecosystems, fintech, digital infrastructure & youth entrepreneurship across the continent.

Energy Transitions and the Future of the African Energy Sector

Edited by Victoria R. Nalule

A key resource on balancing energy access, fossil fuels & climate transition imperatives.



KEY REPORTS SHAPING 2026–2027

African Development Bank Group Economic Outlook 2026

Projections on growth, infrastructure, debt sustainability & industrial productivity.

Afreximbank Trade & Industrialization Update

Insights on export diversification, manufacturing ecosystems & African supply chains.

World Bank Africa Pulse Report

Tracking macroeconomic trends, inflation, urbanization & development priorities across the continent.



EMERGING IDEAS TO WATCH



Green Industrialization

Renewables, gas & mineral processing for manufacturing competitiveness.



Pan-African Payment Infrastructure

Cross-border systems to boost trade & financial sovereignty.



Sovereign Wealth & Long-Term Capital Pools

Mobilizing African-owned capital for infrastructure, energy & industry.



Creative Economy Exports

Scaling film, music, fashion, publishing & digital content as global export sectors.



Climate-Smart Agriculture & Food Security Systems

Tech, logistics & agro-processing to strengthen food resilience.



The battle for Africa's future will be won through the **strength of its ideas**, as much as through the **deployment of capital**.

AFRICAN BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE

TABLE RONDE DES HOMMES D'AFFAIRES D'AFRIQUE



CONTACT US



Email: Info@abrnetwork.org



Tel: +234 816 2320 139
+27 11 074 8484



www.abrnetwork.org

**Promoting investments
and private sector
development in Africa**

**Promouvoir les
investissements et le
développement du
secteur privé en Afrique**



www.abrnetwork.org





ACTIVITIES

- Energy, Oil & Gas
- Infrastructures
- Business Aviation
- Real Estate, Hospitality & Telecom
- Media
- NGO

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR AFRICA

PETROLIN, a pan-african group, is a catalyst for a number of key projects in Africa with strong international connections and first class local partners.

+
30
YEARS

Solidarité,
Discipline,
Affection

WWW.PETROLINGROUP.COM