Africa Internet Governance Forum (AfIGF 2026)

Accra, Ghana, 2 - 5 November 2026

ECA Innovation Café: Advancing Sustainable Development Through African AI Solutions

Innovation-to-Policy Exchange Session

Date: Tuesday, 3 November 2026

Time: 9:40 am - 12:30 pm

Venue: Labadi Suite 2

1. Background

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in partnership with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and Research ICT Africa (RIA), has launched a continental call to identify African-led artificial intelligence (AI) innovations for the inaugural ECA Innovation Café.

The initiative seeks to highlight innovations that contribute to the implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Action Lines, advance the objectives of the Global Digital Compact (GDC), support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and contribute to the aspirations of the African Union Agenda 2063. By showcasing practical African solutions, the initiative will demonstrate how digital policy commitments are being translated into tangible development outcomes.

The call was open to African start-ups, universities, research institutions, innovation hubs, public and private institutions, social enterprises and individual innovators. Applicants should demonstrate a functioning prototype, pilot or deployed AI-enabled solution addressing an African development challenge.

The ECA Innovation Café will connect practical African innovation with policy and investment discussions, while generating evidence and partnerships to inform responsible, inclusive and locally relevant AI development across the continent.

The ECA Innovation Café is a core component of this year's African IGF, designed to crowdsource bold, practical, and evidence-based AI innovations for sustainable development across Africa. A call for applications was issued, with submissions due by 2 October 2026. A total of over 835 applications were received. Five outstanding AI innovations, one from each of Africa's five regions (Central, East, North, Southern, and West Africa), were selected to participate in the ECA Innovation Café during the Africa Internet Governance Forum (AfIGF) 2026. The selected innovators will showcase their work, demonstrate its real-world impact, and engage with policymakers, investors, development partners, academia, the technical community, civil society, and the private sector.

2. Objective

Designed as an interactive showcase rather than a traditional conference session, the ECA Innovation Café will provide a dynamic platform for innovators to demonstrate their technologies, share implementation experiences, discuss challenges, and exchange practical lessons with key stakeholders involved in shaping Africa's digital future.

The Innovation Café will feature:

- Live demonstrations of AI-enabled solutions
- Five innovation pitches;
- Interactive dialogue with policymakers and regulators;
- Question-and-answer sessions with participants;
- Networking opportunities with governments, investors, development partners, academia, and the private sector; and
- Knowledge sharing on implementation experiences, lessons learned, and opportunities for scaling successful innovations.

3. Expected Outcomes

The Innovation Café is expected to:

- Showcase five high-impact African AI innovations with demonstrated socio-economic benefits;
- Facilitate dialogue between innovators, policymakers, investors, and development partners;
- Generate policy insights and practical recommendations to support responsible AI adoption across Africa;
- Promote partnerships that accelerate investment, scaling, and regional collaboration; and
- Increase the visibility of African AI solutions contributing to the implementation of the WSIS Action Lines, the Global Digital Compact, the SDGs, and Agenda 2063.
  Beyond showcasing innovation, the ECA Innovation Café aims to strengthen the connection between innovation, policy, and investment.

4. Format of the Session

The moderator will introduce each innovator and invite them to speak for no more than ten minutes, presenting their solution using the agreed template.

The moderator will then introduce the discussants and invite them to provide feedback on the solutions presented, giving each 10 minutes.

The moderator will then open the floor for general discussion and close the meeting with a summary of actionable outcomes.

Moderator: Mactar Seck, Chief of Emerging and Frontier Technologies, Innovation and Digital Transformation Section, ECA

9:40 am – 9:50 am **Opening** remarks (2-3 minutes each)

Kola Ljisan, Research Director, Research ICT Africa

Christine Sund, Senior Advisor, ITU Regional Office for Africa

Robert Lisinge, Director of the Innovation, Connectivity and Infrastructure Division (TICID), ECA

9:50 am – 11:15 am **Presentations by five innovators** (10 minutes each)

1. **Afopezi Moses, AgricFresh**
   Cameroon, Central Africa subregion; Sector: Agriculture
   Feedback from all discussants and response from innovator: 7 minutes

2. **John Mwangi Wandeto; AI Barabara**
   AI-Driven Road Project Management Assistant (AI-RPMA); Kenya, Eastern Africa subregion; Sector: Transport
   Feedback from all discussants and response from innovator: 7 minutes

3. **Mahmoud AbdelAziz; DevisionX Sovereign AI Platform**
   Egypt, Northern Africa subregion; Sector: Digital
   Feedback from all discussants and response from innovator: 7 minutes

4. **Nolwazi Dlamini; Solarshare**
   Eswatini, Southern Africa subregion; Sector: Energy
   Feedback from all discussants and response from innovator: 7 minutes

5. **Ibrahim Akorede Jimoh**
   CoreHealth; Nigeria; Western Africa subregion; Sector: Health
   Feedback from all discussants and response from innovator: 7 minutes

11:15 am – 11:35 am **Discussants:**

1. Dr. Lebsework Negash, Assistant Professor, School of Electrical and Computer Engineering; Chair, Control Engineering; Director, AAU STARTUPS; College of Technology and Built Environment (formerly AaiT), Addis Ababa University (AAU), Ethiopia

2. Prof. Paul Ndirangu Kioni, Ag. Head, Research-Innovation Ecosystems and Entrepreneurship Education Office, Dedan Kimathi University of Technology (DeKUT), Kenya.
3. Dr. Edwell Gumbo, Director of Entrepreneurship, University of South Africa.
4. Diana Nyakundi, AI Researcher, Research ICT Africa.

11:35 am - 12:20 pm **Multi-stakeholder reflection** on the pathway to scale

The moderator invites targeted feedback from the floor, particularly from policymakers, the private sector, financial institutions, academia, CSOs and development partners.

12:20 pm – 12:30 pm **Closing**

5. Contacts for inquiries related to the session:

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