



| 16 - 17 FEBRUARY 2026 |

AFRICA BUSINESS FORUM 2026

FINANCING THE FUTURE OF AFRICA
Jobs and Innovation for sustainable
transformation



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Jobs and innovation for sustainable transformation

16 - 17 February 2026 | Addis Ababa

PROGRAMME OF WORK (ABRIDGED)



United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa



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Africa Hall | Addis Ababa

MONDAY, 16 FEBRUARY

9–9.30 a.m.

Arrival, registration and visit to knowledge fair

Coffee, speed networking, visit to the knowledge fair and engagement with youth enterprises, innovation partners and representatives of the creative sector

9.30–10 a.m.

Opening of the Forum

Moderated by Mark Eddo

Opening remarks by the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, Claver Gatete

Keynote speech

Remarks

Remarks

10–11.30 a.m.

Presidential dialogue of Heads of State and youth entrepreneurs: “From youth enterprise to national prosperity: what works, what can be implemented at scale and what Governments must do”

The following two spotlight presentations will precede the dialogue:

Spotlight on the Diakite brothers: a three-minute video on Diakite Cocoa and its cocoa processing factory in Divo, Côte d'Ivoire, where 36,000 tons, of a target of 80,000 tons, of cocoa are processed annually and some 1,000 direct and indirect jobs have been created for local young people, demonstrating African entrepreneurs' ability to compete with global industry giants.

Spotlight on the Government of Morocco and the automotive value chain and jobs pipeline: a three-minute video on the way in which an integrated automotive value chain has been built in Tanger Med and Kenitra, Morocco, through a combination of industrial policy, logistics infrastructure and skills development. Under the country's industrial acceleration plan, more than 220,000 jobs were created in the automotive sector between 2014 and 2021, supported by a network of 230–270 suppliers and large anchor investments by vehicle manufacturers Renault and Stellantis. Efforts are now being made to expand into electric vehicles and use higher levels of local content.

The dialogue will be a moderated conversation on the ways in which Governments can deliberately enable enterprises that are led by young people to grow into job-creating industries. The moderator will lead an interactive exchange and a question and answer session, and provide a summary of core insights.

Moderator: Founder, Mark Eddo Media, Mark Eddo



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Centre-stage address by the African business sage, Aliko Dangote

In this segment, Aliko Dangote will have the stage to himself to share strategic reflections on building, expanding and sustaining large African enterprises over the long term. Drawing on decades of experience across manufacturing, infrastructure, energy, logistics and regional markets, Mr. Dangote will offer his perspective as a business leader on the requirements for large-scale industrialization in Africa.

11.30–11.50 a.m.

The address will be focused on the practical realities of deploying long-term capital, managing risk across diverse operating environments, navigating policy and regulatory environments and building competitive firms that can anchor value chains and create jobs at scale. Mr. Dangote will reflect on the role of champions of industrial development in Africa in shaping markets, investing through cycles and partnering with Governments and development finance institutions to deliver transformative projects.

The segment is intended to reinforce the business-first orientation of the Forum, serving as a bridge that connects political ambition with entrepreneurial execution, grounding high-level policy discussions in business experience and setting the tone for the subsequent investment- and deal-focused conversations.

11.50 a.m.–12.10 p.m.

Health break, Knowledge Fair visit, and speed networking



Presidential dialogue of Heads of State and leaders of development finance institutions and private sector entities: “Mobilizing capital for jobs at scale: presidential leadership on corridors, value chains and industrial platforms”

The following two spotlight presentations will precede the dialogue:

Spotlight on the Africa Finance Corporation: a three-minute video highlighting the partnership between the Africa Finance Corporation and African Governments in efforts to deliver transformative infrastructure. An example of such partnership is the joint development of the Lobito Corridor to unlock regional mineral and trade routes, which involved attracting capital from multilateral development banks and private investors, and supporting local jobs and value addition along the Corridor and the associated industrial zones. The Corridor project is an illustration of how fit-for-purpose capital, patient partnership and disciplined project preparation can result in the transformation of strategic corridors into engines of youth employment and regional integration.

12.10 p.m.–1.20 p.m.

Spotlight on the Eastern and Southern African Trade and Development Bank: a three-minute video on the role of the Eastern and Southern African Trade and Development Bank as a catalytic regional development finance institution through which financing is provided for cross-border trade, industrialization and enterprise growth throughout East and Southern Africa. The video shows how long-term, sustained capital is deployed by the Bank to support regional value chains, strategic industries and infrastructure that underpin private sector-led job creation. It will provide practical insight on the ways in which regional development finance institutions can work with Governments and the private sector to increase investment, deepen markets and translate financing into sustainable enterprise growth and jobs in multiple countries.

After an opening statement by the President of the African Development Bank, Heads of State will engage with leaders in the private sector and development finance institutions to discuss capital, partnerships, investments, markets and the way in which coalitions of Governments and capital providers can be used to convert large-scale investments into sustained, inclusive job creation. The moderator will lead an interactive exchange and a question and answer session and provide a summary of core insights.

Moderator: Aboubakri Diaw



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Presentation of major initiatives

1.20-1.50p.m.

Ceremonial introduction of the jobs wall of commitments: a short introduction of the jobs wall, one of the flagship delivery mechanisms of the Forum, to explain areas to be tracked – including capital mobilized and disbursed, enterprises supported, jobs created and sustained, and related outcomes – and the mechanisms for partners to report progress.

Launch of the 2025 edition of the Least Developed Countries Report, by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

Renewal of Memorandum of Understanding between ECA and Google LLC.

1.50p.m.

Networking lunch and private tour for Heads of State and special guests of Africa Hall and the permanent exhibition halls



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TUESDAY, 17 FEBRUARY

Arrival, registration and visit to knowledge fair

9–9.30 a.m.

Coffee, speed networking, visit to the knowledge fair and early engagement with youth enterprises, innovation partners and representatives of the creative sector

Opening of the second day of the Forum

9.30–10 a.m.

Moderator: Mark Eddo

Opening remarks by the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, Claver Gatete

Round table 1: Creating jobs at scale – aligning philanthropy, enterprise growth and market expansion in Africa

The following two spotlight presentations will precede the round table:

Spotlight on Kabana Leather: a three-minute video on Kabana Leather, a Made-in-Africa leather goods company transforming locally sourced materials into premium products while creating dignified jobs especially for women and young people across the design, craftsmanship, and light manufacturing value chain. From a small enterprise, Kabana has grown into a respected African brand supplying both local and international markets, contributing to inclusive industrialisation, women's economic empowerment, and creative industry development. The story illustrates how inclusive entrepreneurship, skills transfer, and African brand building can generate sustainable jobs, empower women, strengthen creative manufacturing ecosystems, and show that African products can compete successfully in high-value global markets.

Spotlight on Psaltry International Limited: a three-minute video on Psaltry International Limited, a Nigerian agro-industrial venture transforming cassava into high-value industrial and food-grade products while integrating thousands of smallholder farmers into modern value chains. Starting from a modest processing operation, Psaltry has grown into a leading cassava derivatives company addressing food security, import substitution, rural incomes, and industrial development, while creating jobs across farming, aggregation, logistics, and processing. The story illustrates how agro-industrial value addition, inclusive supply chain models, and market-driven innovation can generate sustainable jobs, raise farmer incomes, strengthen local manufacturing, and demonstrate that African agribusinesses can compete in sophisticated global markets.

10–11.10 a.m.

Participants in the round table are expected to examine the ways in which African enterprises can scale up from early-stage ventures to competitive, job-creating firms, and to analyse the enabling role of philanthropy, foundations and other forms of catalytic capital, exploring how philanthropists and philanthropic entities can support entrepreneurship, skills development, innovation and market access; de-risk enterprise growth; and encourage commercial finance. In addition, participants will be invited to discuss the factors that help to translate philanthropic partnerships into sustainable jobs, competitive firms and the emergence of the next generation of African business leaders.

The round table will be focused on practical models through which philanthropy, investment, policy and markets can be aligned to accelerate the growth of enterprise and boost employment outcomes. The moderator will lead an interactive discussion and a question and answer session and provide a summary of core insights.

Moderator: Yuko Naab

Round table 2: Financing the innovation economy in Africa through financial, agricultural, industrial and health technology

The following two spotlight presentations will precede the round table:

Spotlight on Made For A Woman: a three-minute video from Made For A Woman, an ethical fashion and accessories enterprise from Madagascar built around raffia value chains. The number of craftspeople employed by the business has grown from some 350 to about 750, primarily women from vulnerable communities, including survivors of gender-based violence, single mothers and persons with disabilities, providing fair wages, healthcare, education, childcare and mental health support while supplying global luxury markets. The business's story illustrates how, through a woman-led African brand, local materials and skilled craftwork can be used to build an export-oriented, creative business, thereby creating hundreds of decent jobs.

Spotlight on the Government of Algeria and its progress in building a start-up nation: a three-minute video focused on the rapid transformation of the start-up landscape of Algeria. In 2019, Algeria had fewer than 200 officially registered start-ups; by 2024 the number had grown to more than 10,000. The growth was driven by a deliberate, system-wide effort to strengthen the enabling environment, simplify registration, expand support instruments and promote youth entrepreneurship. The country has now set a new target of establishing a further 10,000 start-ups by 2029 and expects to achieve it ahead of schedule. As the host of the African Startup Conference, in December 2025, Algeria is increasingly positioning itself as a regional convening hub. Authorities are focused on the ways in which African initiatives can be used to help Algerian and other African start-ups to expand across borders and tap into the vibrant innovation dynamics of the continent.

Participants in the round table are expected to examine the ways in which digital and industrial innovation in financial, agricultural, industrial and health technology and related platforms is transforming productivity, enterprise competitiveness and job creation. The moderator will lead an interactive discussion and a question and answer session and provide a summary of core insights.

Moderator: [to be confirmed]

11.10 a.m.–12.20 p.m.

12.20–12.50 p.m.

Break, knowledge fair visit and speed networking

Round table 3: Afrofuturism – scaling up African creativity through investment, partnerships and inclusive markets

The following two spotlight presentations will precede the round table:

Spotlight on Afreximbank and the Creative Africa Nexus: a three-minute video on the Creative Africa Nexus, the flagship Afreximbank programme for creative and cultural African industries, describing how some \$2 billion has been committed through the programme to support creative ventures in fashion, film, music and digital content, including under such equity partnerships as the recent investment in an African talent discovery and monetization platform. The video explains the way that the financing is used to help to build regional value chains, generate export earnings and create jobs for young people in multiple countries.

Spotlight on EbonyLife Media and the monetization at scale of African stories: a two-minute video on the growth of EbonyLife from a single television network to a multiplatform studio with global co-production and licensing deals, turning locally grounded stories into internationally distributed content. The video highlights the way in which strategic partnerships with global platforms, investment in writers' rooms and deliberate talent pipelines for young creatives have led to the creation of high-value jobs in scriptwriting, production, post-production and ancillary services, demonstrating that, when matched with fit-for-purpose capital and distribution, African creativity can generate export earnings, build brands and ensure the positioning of young people as owners of their intellectual property. Following the video, Mo Abudu, the founder and Chief Executive Officer of EbonyLife Media, will speak about building an integrated African storytelling and content powerhouse that spans film, television, streaming, studios and talent development.

The round table will be focused on the African creative economy as a bankable growth frontier, highlighting opportunities to drive investment, create jobs and generate scalable returns through strategic partnerships and innovative financing. The moderator will lead an interactive discussion and a question and answer session and provide a summary of core insights.

Moderator: Mark Eddo

Closing of the Forum

During the closing of the Forum, a summary of outcomes and major commitments announced throughout the two days will be shared among the participants, including information on how they will be structured in order to maximize visibility and ensure their follow-up through the jobs wall and reporting by ECA.

Closing remarks will be delivered by [to be confirmed].

Lunch and closing reception

12.50–2 p.m.

2–2.20 p.m.

2.20 p.m.



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