

ROUND TABLE 2

Financing the innovation economy in Africa through financial, agricultural, industrial and health technology



FINANCING THE FUTURE OF AFRICA
Jobs and innovation for sustainable transformation
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Ahunna Eziakonwa

Ms. Ahunna Eziakonwa, UN Assistant-Secretary General, UNDP Assistant Administrator and Regional Bureau for Africa Director, is a global development leader and dedicated Afro-optimist who champions African agency, innovation, and leadership. As UNDP's Regional Director for Africa, she oversees operations in 46 countries and manages a \$1.2 billion development portfolio. She leads bold initiatives like timbuktoo, UNDP's flagship effort to build Africa's startup ecosystem, and the African Influencers for Development platform, mobilizing leading African voices for sustainable change. A steadfast advocate for youth and women, she spearheaded the Africa Facility to Support Women in Political Leadership and launched the African Young Women Leaders Fellowship Programme, empowering over 96 young African women across the UN system. Advancing resilience and inclusive governance, she established the Africa Facility for Inclusive Transitions to promote African-led transitions and national ownership, and shaped the UNDP Africa Borderlands Initiative and #IAMSAHEL campaign to tackle fragility through investment and resilience. She also drives economic transformation through Africa's Money for Africa's Development agenda and systemic reforms like the Credit Rating Initiative. She previously served as UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Ethiopia, Uganda, and Lesotho. She is a graduate of Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs, she also holds a Bachelor's in Education from the University of Benin, Nigeria, and has completed executive programs at the Harvard Kennedy School.



Zemedeneh Negatu

Zemedeneh Negatu is the Global Chairman of the American investment firm Fairfax African Fund, LLC, based in Washington D.C. He is also the co-founder and CEO of CBE Capital, a pioneering investment bank in Ethiopia.

Previously he was a Managing Partner with Ernst & Young (EY) and Head of EY's East Africa Transaction Advisory business. Prior to EY he was with PricewaterhouseCoppers (PwC) in the U.S.

Zemedeneh is widely recognized as one of Africa's top business leaders and influencers and has received numerous global recognitions including:

- "Africa Leadership Impact Award 2025"
- "Top 10 Most Influential Africans 2018"
- "100 Most Influential Africans of 2013"
- "Who-is-Who of African Finance 2015"
- "Titans Building Nations 2014"

Zemedeneh regularly provides influential thought leadership and has appeared on CNN, BBC, Financial Times, Bloomberg, CNBC. Furthermore, he has spoken at high profile global events such as the World Economic Forum (WEF) and the Milken Global Summit and GBF Dubai.

He serves on numerous boards including InvestAfrica advisory board, based in London (UK), board member of a successful Fintech based in the Netherlands, Chairman of Calzedonia Ethiopia (ITACA), the multinational Italian fashion apparel manufacturer and retailer, University of Texas at Dallas (UTD) business school global advisory board, board member of East Africa-Isreal Chamber of Commerce (EAICC) and is member of the Harvard Business Review (HBR) advisory board.

Zemedeneh has a BBA from Howard University, completed the LSE program at the Harvard Business School and is a U.S. C.P.A.



Oluyemisi Iranloye

Oluyemisi Iranloye is the Founder/CEO of Psaltry International Company Limited, a leading agro-allied company in Africa that serves multinationals, such as Unilever and Nestlé. Psaltry produces cassava starch, flour, glucose, hydrogen, and Africa's first cassava-based sorbitol. By firmly rooting the company in the rural community of Alayide Village, Ado-Awaye, Oyo State, Nigeria, she has boosted smallholder incomes from less than \$1 to about \$10 per person per day, creating lasting impact across the local economy. The company has supported 16,000 smallholder farmers through capacity building, access to inputs, funding, and a guaranteed market. It provides about 1,000 direct and indirect jobs and contributes significantly to Nigeria's economy. Psaltry champions environmental sustainability through renewable energy use and circular economy.

Through the Psaltry Foundation, Oluyemisi promotes girls' education and gender equality in the rural community. The foundation has awarded 19 scholarships, including one to Robiat Fasasi, a young woman living with a disability. Her mentorship program, launched in 2023, has helped over 1,000 aspiring agripreneurs build practical skills for modern, sustainable farming.

She earned a B.Sc. in Biochemistry from Federal University of Technology, Minna, Nigeria and later obtained an M.Sc. from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. She further honed her leadership and management skills at the Stanford Graduate School of Business, California; the Nigerian SME Equity Investment, Trade and Development Program at El Camino College, California; and the African Women Entrepreneurship Program (AWEP) in Washington, D.C., where she later became the first female president of the Nigeria chapter.

She has received several national and international recognitions for her work, including honours from the Office of the U.S. Secretary of State, the Nigerian Federal Government, and the AGRA Women Agripreneurs of the Year Award (WAYA). She has contributed to shaping the global cassava industry by serving on Nigeria's Presidential Committee on Cassava Development and Utility (2005–2007), the UNIDO–Ministry of Commerce Committee (2006), participating in the FAO expert consultation on cassava processing (2008), and serving on the steering committee of the USAID/IITA "Unleashing the Power of Cassava in Africa" project (2009).

Her journey reflects vision, resilience, and a deep commitment to inclusive and sustainable agricultural development.



Sharon Mutwiwa

Sharon Mutwiwa is a Zimbabwean farmer and agripreneur operating at the intersection of agriculture, innovation, and enterprise development. She is actively involved in large-scale commercial farming, producing both greenhouse and open-field horticultural crops, while expanding into tobacco production and exploring blueberry farming for export markets.

Sharon began her farming journey by joining her family's agricultural enterprise Teryden Farm & Investments, which has been among Zimbabwe's leading commercial producers for over 20 years. Building on this legacy, she is part of a new generation of African agripreneurs focused on modernising farming systems, improving productivity, and positioning agriculture as a scalable, investable business. Sharon's work reflects the realities and opportunities within Africa's innovation economy, particularly how access to finance, agritech solutions, and efficient value chains can unlock growth, jobs, and export competitiveness.

She brings a practitioner's perspective to discussions on financing Africa's innovation economy, grounded in hands-on experience navigating capital constraints, market access, and technology uptake in emerging agricultural markets.

Teryden Farm & Investments is a family-owned commercial agribusiness in Zimbabwe with over 20 years of large-scale farming experience, operating across greenhouse and open-field systems. The business produces diversified crops across more than 250 hectares, with annual production of over 200 hectares of wheat and maize. Teryden Farm was recently awarded Best Commercial Tobacco Farmer in 2025. The enterprise is also positioning for blueberry production and export, aligning with high-value global markets.

The farm integrates innovation and sustainability at scale, including operating on a 1-megawatt solar power system that supports energy-efficient irrigation, mechanisation, and smart farming practices. Its operations demonstrate the role of patient capital, agritech adoption, and innovative financing in driving productivity, climate resilience, and export competitiveness.

As a generational agribusiness, the enterprise is directly relevant to discussions on financing Africa's innovation economy, offering a practical case study on how investment, technology, and policy alignment can unlock agricultural growth, job creation, and sustainable industrial transformation.



Hayat Abdulmalik

Hayat Abdulmalik is Deputy Chief Executive Officer at Kifiya Financial Technology PLC. She leads strategy and operational execution to expand economic opportunities for MSMEs, smallholder farmers, and underserved communities through AI-enabled risk decisioning and digital technology infrastructure. With over 15 years of experience across economic development and private sector innovation, she focuses on building scalable ecosystems that unlock market access and sustainable growth in emerging economies.



Nouredine Ouadah

H.E. Nouredine Ouadah is the Algerian Minister of Knowledge Economy, Start-ups, and Micro-enterprises, appointed in November 2024. A PhD holder in Computer Engineering from the École Nationale Polytechnique in Algiers, he previously served as Director of Start-ups and Support Structures within the same ministry. Known for his strategic vision, Minister Ouadah is committed to transforming Algeria into a regional hub for innovation and entrepreneurship by advancing key sectors such as tech, digital economy, and scientific research. He has launched several initiatives, including national startup mapping, funding reforms for micro-enterprises, and diaspora engagement programs. Under his leadership, the ministry emphasizes inclusive development, youth empowerment, and international cooperation to build a sustainable knowledge-based economy. He is also the pioneer of the African Startup Conference, the continent's most prominent event dedicated to start-ups and innovation, bringing together entrepreneurs, investors, and policymakers from across Africa to shape the future of the digital economy. His leadership continues to drive inclusive, knowledge-based development and strengthen Algeria's position within the continental tech ecosystem.