

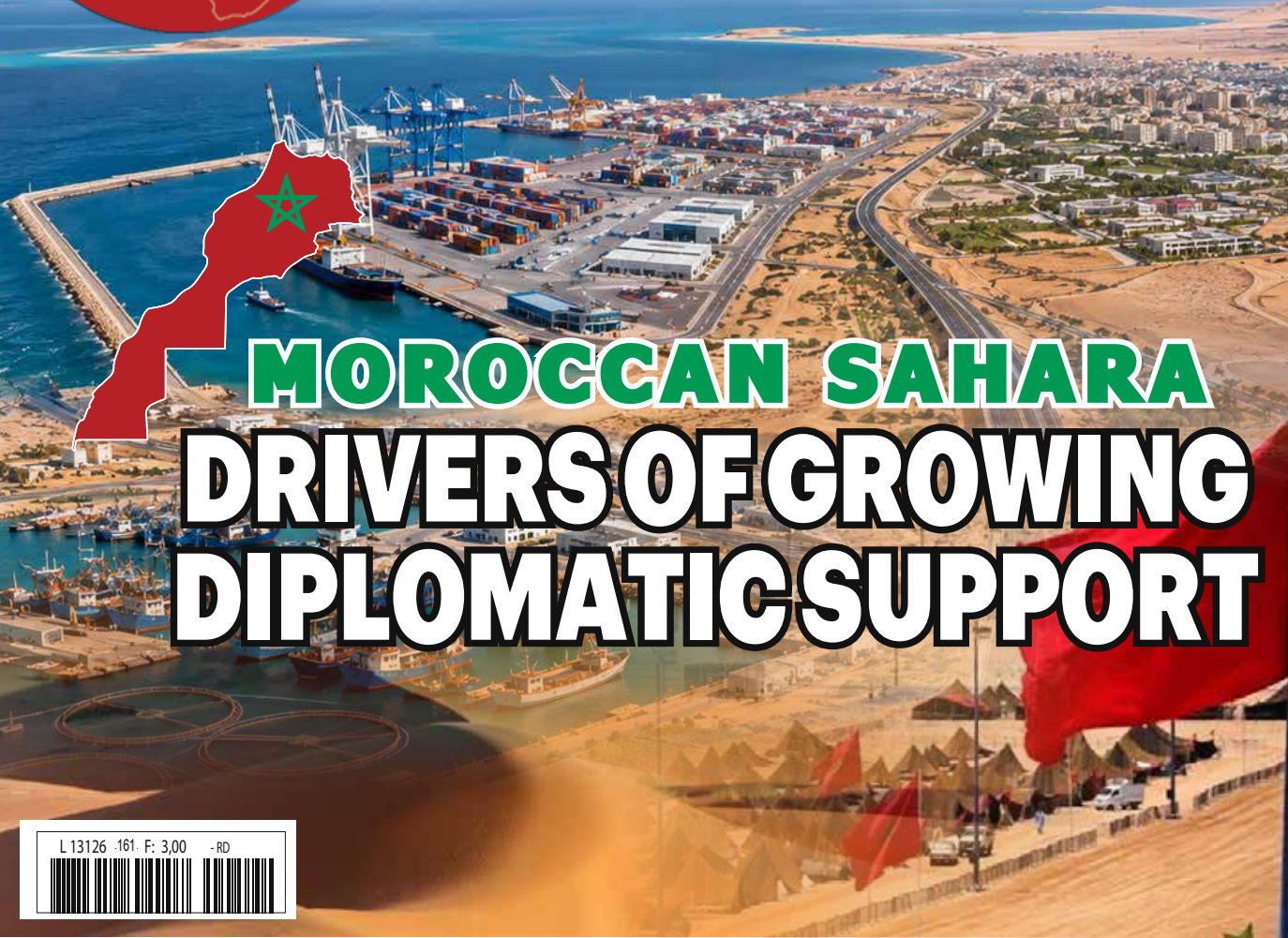
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**AFRICA WANTS TO HAVE AN IMPACT
ON THE NEW WORLD ORDER**

MENSUEL DE L'ACTUALITÉ DES PERSONNALITÉS AFRICAINES

THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING AFRICA

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MOROCCAN SAHARA **DRIVERS OF GROWING** **DIPLOMATIC SUPPORT**

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AFRICA UNDER THE LENS OF HISTORY: BREAKING FREE FROM FATALISM, ASSERTING OUR SOVEREIGNTY

As the world's spotlight shifts to the United Nations headquarters in New York for the opening of the 81st General Assembly, the African continent can no longer afford to remain a stoic observer or a resigned victim of global geopolitical upheavals. The pages of this 161st issue of *Hommes d'Afrique* demonstrate this with striking clarity: a new era, defined by strategic intransigence and unreserved pragmatism, is now sweeping across our continent, from Malabo to Luanda, and from Gaborone to Rabat.

On the diplomatic front, Africa is methodically reshaping its alliances, refusing to accept the status quo inherited from the previous century. The virtuous momentum surrounding the Moroccan Sahara provides the most compelling evidence of this shift. By establishing the recognition of its territorial integrity and its autonomy plan as a fundamental benchmark for evaluating international partnerships, the Kingdom of Morocco has transformed a frozen geopolitical dispute into a powerful engine for Atlantic integration, infrastructural connectivity, and shared economic development across the Sahel region and the wider continent.

This insistence on sovereignty and self-reliance resonated powerfully at the 21st Extraordinary Session of the African Union Conference in Luanda. The diagnosis delivered by the Heads of State was uncompromisingly clear: Africa lacks neither peace architectures nor foundational texts; rather, it suffers from a critical deficit in operational responsiveness and financial independence. The gap between early conflict warnings and actual deployment on the ground must be closed with a speed that matches the severity of the crises facing us. The same imperative applies to the UN Security

Council, where the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration are no longer mere theoretical diplomatic demands, but an urgent requirement for historical justice. Africa categorically refuses to remain a passive bystander in global decision-making bodies while being denied veto power.

Yet, we must be honest enough to admit that political sovereignty remains a pipe dream without genuine economic and industrial independence. In this regard, the historic handshake captured in Gaborone between Botswana's President Duma Boko and industrialist Aliko Dangote symbolizes a fundamental paradigm shift. Continuing to export raw mineral and agricultural resources only to re-import processed goods at exorbitant costs is a centuries-old economic absurdity that our youth will no longer tolerate.

Similarly, the emergence of the New African Financial Architecture for Development (NAFAD), driven by the African Development Bank, gives concrete form to the vision set out in the Abidjan Consensus. With an estimated pool of over \$4 trillion in domestic institutional savings, Africa is not capital-poor; it suffers from a lack of innovative mechanisms for capital transformation and risk mitigation. The time has come to finance Africa's development with Africa's own resources.

In the face of drastic cuts to international aid, severe climate emergencies championed resolutely by leaders such as William Ruto, and complex regional fractures within ECOWAS, there is no longer room for hesitation. African decision-makers must realize that our continent's international credibility will be measured neither by eloquent speeches nor by the proliferation of symbolic resolutions, but by our collective ability to execute, finance, and unapologetically own our choices. The era of sovereign action has arrived.



MOROCCAN SAHARA **DRIVERS OF GROWING DIPLOMATIC SUPPORT**



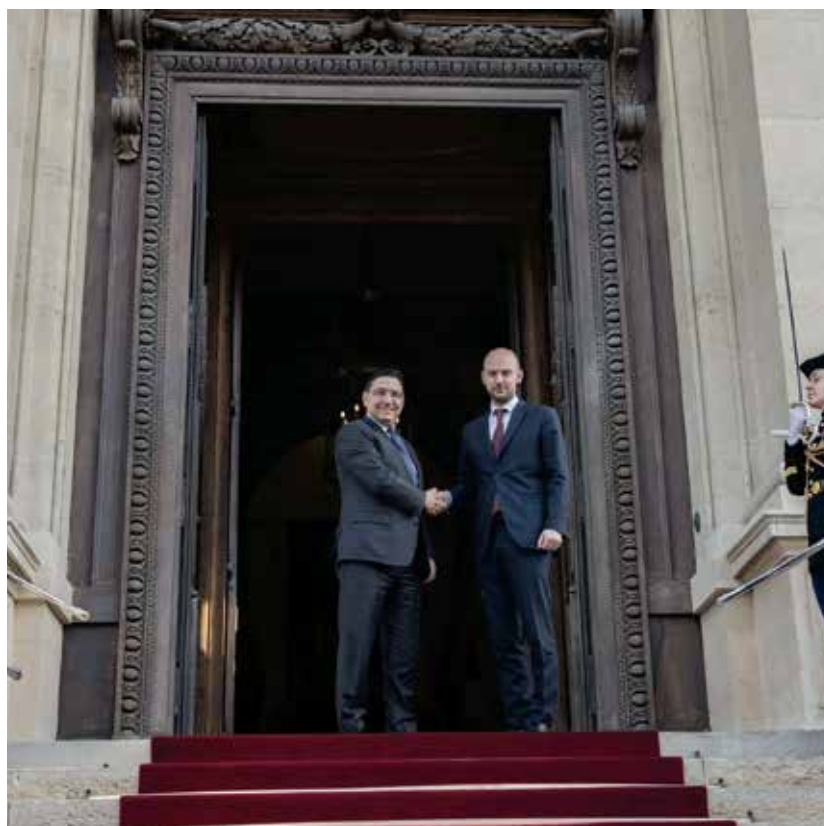
For nearly half a century, the Moroccan Sahara issue appeared locked in a diplomatic stalemate, in which every step forward seemed immediately neutralised by the constraints of the UN process.

UN Security Council resolutions followed one another, successive Personal Envoys of the United Nations Secretary-General took up the task, and rounds of negotiations repeatedly stalled without yielding a definitive political settlement.

"In Rabat, however, the strategy was gradually evolving," notes Collins Mpolo Ebende, a political scientist. "Rather than confining its efforts to the traditional diplomatic arena, the Kingdom chose to build its Sahara policy around several complementary levers: the economic development of the Southern Provinces, the expansion of African partnerships, stronger security cooperation with Western powers, and, since 2007, the promotion of an autonomy initiative presented as a political solution under Moroccan sovereignty."

For a long time, this approach benefited from significant support, without nevertheless producing any major shift in the positions of the great powers. This is what makes the sequence of events that began at the end of 2020 so decisive.

"On 10 December 2020, the United States announced that it recognised Morocco's sovereignty over the Sahara," points out Anaëlle Kwemo, a specialist in African geopolitics. "This decision, taken by the administration of President Donald Trump, represented a major diplomatic breakthrough. For the first time, a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council explicitly recognised Moroccan sovereignty over the territory," she continues. Kwemo adds: "Beyond its symbolic significance, this decision fundamentally altered the international reading of the issue. It did not bring an end to the process conducted under United Nations auspices, but it demonstrated that a global power was now prepared to place the



Sahara issue within a broader strategic realignment, where regional security, economic cooperation and geopolitical partnerships intersect."

Recognition That Validates Years of Diplomatic Efforts

Following the US decision, a few weeks later, King Mohammed VI stated that "the Moroccan identity of the Sahara will never be on the agenda of any negotiations," reaffirming that the autonomy initiative constituted "the only basis" for a poli-

tical settlement that the Kingdom considers realistic and lasting. Since then, this position has become the consistent doctrine of Moroccan diplomacy.

Nasser Bourita, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, has been its principal architect on the international stage. At international forums, he repeatedly stresses that "the Sahara issue is the prism through which Morocco views its international environment and assesses the sincerity of its partnerships." This formulation, frequently echoed by Moroccan diplomacy, reflects a change in method: the Sahara issue is no longer one issue among many; it has become the central criterion for deepening bilateral relations.

"This strategy is gradually producing results," says Abakar Oumoul, a political observer. "In Africa, numerous states are opening general consulates in Laayoune and Dakhla."

Beyond their administrative function, these diplomatic missions are viewed by Rabat as gestures of reco-

"ON DECEMBER 10, 2020, THE UNITED STATES ANNOUNCED THAT IT RECOGNIZED MOROCCO'S SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE SAHARA."

gnition of its administration over the Southern Provinces. Several African leaders have consequently emphasised that Morocco has become a major partner in investment, training, agriculture, finance and security—areas that have further strengthened its influence across the continent.

The European Position Is Shifting

In March 2022, Spain described the Moroccan autonomy initiative as “the most serious, realistic and credible basis” for resolving the dispute, bringing to an end several decades of a more cautious position. Two years later, another turning point came when French President Emmanuel Macron wrote to King Mohammed VI that, for France, “the present and future of Western Sahara fall within the framework of Moroccan sovereignty.” He added that the autonomy plan put forward by Rabat in 2007 now constituted “the only basis” for achieving a just, lasting and negotiated political settlement.

Paris’s shift carries particular significance. As a former administering power in the region, a permanent member of the UN Security Council and a historic partner of Morocco, France is sending a political signal that extends well beyond the bilateral framework. It reinforces a dynamic already set in motion by several other European partners, while the United Kingdom, in turn, describes the autonomy plan as “the most credible, viable and pragmatic basis” for a lasting settlement.

That said, this momentum does not mean that the dispute has been resolved. The United Nations continues to regard Western Sahara as a Non-Self-Governing Territory and reiterates that its final status must be determined within the framework of the political process conducted under the authority of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy. Security Council resolutions continue to support a “realistic, pragmatic, enduring and compromise-based political solution.”



It is precisely within this space - between the significant evolution in the diplomatic positions of numerous states and the continuation of the UN framework - that the future

of the issue is now being shaped.

In less than six years, the Sahara has become a major geostrategic issue. It now lies at the intersection of security interests in the Sahel, Morocco’s Atlantic ambitions, emerging African trade routes, and the diplomatic realignments taking place between Africa, Europe, the Gulf and the United States.

More than a change in terminology, what appears to be underway is a transformation in the international perception of the issue: the Sahara is increasingly being approached not only as a question of sovereignty, but also as a factor of stability, connectivity and regional development.

Sylvestre Tetchiada

**IN MARCH 2022,
SPAIN DECLINES
THE MOROCCAN
AUTONOMY
INITIATIVE AS «THE
MOST SERIOUS,
REALISTIC, AND
CREDIBLE BASIS.»**

DOMINO EFFECT

Why More and More States Support Morocco's Position

For a long time, the Moroccan Sahara was viewed primarily through a legal or historical lens. The international context, however, has shifted profoundly. Security crises in the Sahel, global energy tensions, new trade routes, power struggles among major global players, and Africa's rising influence in international balances have completely reshuffled the deck.

In this new environment, Morocco stands out in the eyes of numerous partners as a guarantor of regional stability and a vital bridge connecting Europe, Africa, and the Arab world.

«To understand this evolution, one must look back at the vision championed for several years by King Mohammed VI,» notes Anaëlle Kwemo, a geopolitical analyst. «Through his addresses to the Nation and at African summits, the sovereign has progressively framed the Southern Provinces not as a peripheral margin, but as the Atlantic gateway for African development.»

This approach gained momentum with the Royal Initiative aimed at facilitating Atlantic access for Sahelian states. By proposing to grant landlocked nations—notably Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Chad—logistic access through Moroccan infrastructure, Rabat sought to anchor the Sahara within a framework of continental connectivity rather than a purely territorial dispute.

From this perspective, Dakhla and Laâyoune are no longer merely administrative hubs, as Ahmed

Kathir, an economic intelligence expert and Director of the Regional Investment Centre (CRI) for Dakhla-Oued Eddahab, recently explained to Hommes d'Afrique: «They are becoming platforms designated to play a pivotal role in commercial trade, investment, energy cooperation, and logistical corridors between West Africa, the Sahel, and international markets.»

THE EVOLUTION OF THE POSITIONS OF SEVERAL STATES DOES NOT STEM SOLELY FROM POLITICAL SOLIDARITY. IT ALSO REFLECTS A CONVERGENCE OF INTERESTS.

Economic Diplomacy Aligns with Political Strategy

«The Kingdom has not restricted its actions to the diplomatic sphere alone,» recalls Albert Yonn, a Cameroonian economist. «For nearly two decades, it has considerably strengthened its economic footprint across the continent. Major Moroccan banks are now among the primary financial investors in Francophone Africa.

Companies specializing in telecommunications, fertilizers, insurance, real estate, infrastructure, and renewable energy have established a presence in numerous African nations.»

For several states, this presence extends far beyond a simple commercial partnership. It is accompanied by major structural projects, skill transfers, training initiatives, agricultural and industrial investments, as well as heightened cooperation in healthcare, education, and food security.

This economic diplomacy naturally bolsters Rabat's political capital. As one West African diplomat observed during an economic forum in Casablanca: «States are far more inclined to support partners who invest sustainably in their development.» This viewpoint, widely shared across several African chancelleries, sheds light on the evolving diplomatic stances regarding the Sahara.

Another key driver behind this rapprochement is security. Over the past decade, the deteriorating situation in the Sahel has radically reshaped the priorities of international partners. Terrorism, trans-border crime, illicit trafficking, irregular migration, and political instability now dominate government agendas.

In this context, Morocco has progressively established itself as a trusted partner in security cooperation, intelligence sharing, and counter-terrorism efforts.

Numerous European officials have publicly commended the quality of this cooperation, particularly following the dismantling of

terrorist networks and the prevention of attacks made possible through intelligence exchanges with Moroccan security services.

Convergence Between Diplomacy and Economic Interests

The shifting stances of several states do not stem solely from political solidarity; they also reflect a convergence of interests.

«The future port of Dakhla Atlantic, investments in road and rail infrastructure, green hydrogen production projects, renewable energy plants, seawater desalination units, and industrial zones all enhance the economic appeal of the Southern Provinces,» notes Khatir.

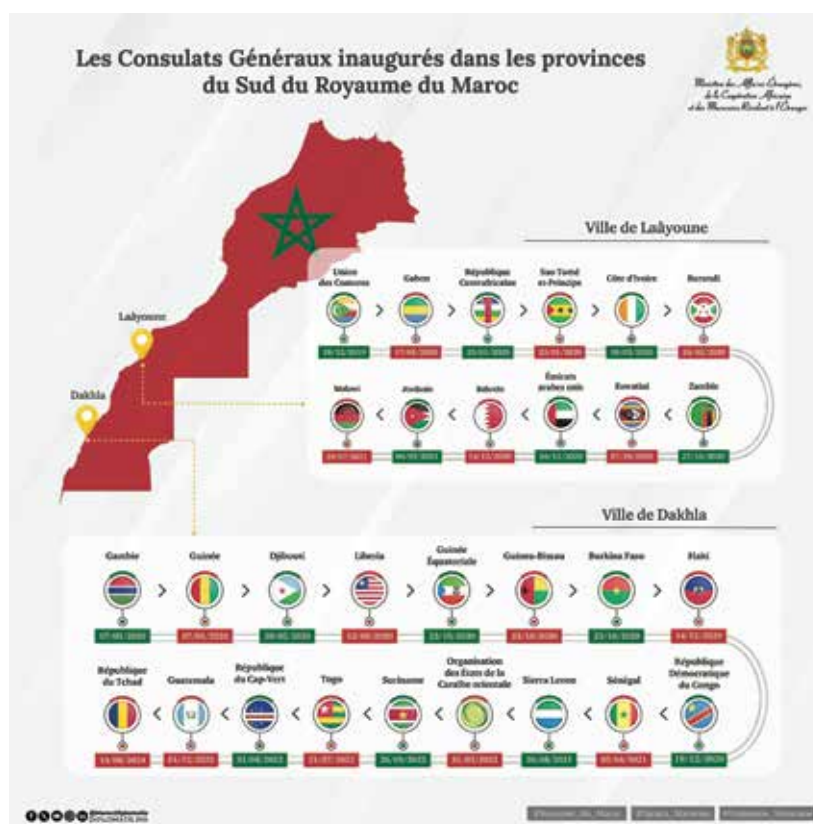
For international investors, these projects are gradually outlining a new economic geography oriented toward the African Atlantic, adds Yonn. She further points out that this aligns with Morocco's ambition to transform this coastline into a hub connecting Africa, Europe, and the Americas.

In economic circles, some observers now speak of a «geopolitics of Atlantic corridors,» in which the Sahara acquires newfound significance far beyond its territorial status. While the U.S. recognition in December 2020 marked a turning point, it did not remain an isolated act.

«Over the years, several Western partners have adjusted their diplomatic language. While not all adopting the exact same formulation, many now regard the autonomy plan presented by Morocco in 2007 as the most credible proposal for reaching a political settlement,» acknowledges Yonn.

This evolution is particularly evident in successive statements from Spain, France, and the United Kingdom, as well as other European partners emphasizing the «serious,» «credible,» or «realistic» nature of the initiative.

These lexical choices, often meti-



culously negotiated in diplomatic communiqués, are never incidental. In international relations parlance, every word signals a political trajectory.

For Rabat, this gradual alignment represents a major diplomatic triumph. For the states adopting it, it primarily reflects a pragmatic assessment of the prospects for resolving the dispute.

According to diplomat Abdoulaye Tissene, the opening of consulates

general in Laâyoune and Dakhla by numerous African, Arab, and Caribbean states stands as one of the most visible symbols of this shift.

«In diplomacy, establishing a consular representation in a state-administered territory is an act laden with meaning,» says Tissene. «Morocco sees this as confirmation of de facto recognition of its administration over the Southern Provinces.»

He added: «These successive openings contribute to a momentum that Rabat routinely highlights as the tangible expression of growing international support.» «Beyond their political scope, they also accompany an intensification of economic, academic, cultural, and consular exchanges with the regions of Laâyoune-Sakia El Hamra and Dakhla-Oued Eddahab,» he concluded.

S.T.

“IN DIPLOMACY, THE INSTALLATION OF A REPRESENTATION CONSULAR IN A TERRITORY ADMINISTERED BY A STATE IS A HEAVY ACT OF MEANING”.

21ST EXTRAORDINARY SESSION OF THE AFRICAN UNION

Africa Seeks to Move from Early Warning to Action



In Luanda, on 30 August 2026, the African Union (AU) held its 21st Extraordinary Session, which was far more than yet another gathering devoted to Africa's crises. It raised a much more uncomfortable question: why does Africa see so many crises coming, yet fail to prevent them?

Convened at the initiative of João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola and AU Champion for Peace and Reconciliation in Africa, the 21st Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government was specifically aimed at strengthening continental mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution. Ministerial-level deli-

berations preceded the summit of Heads of State on 29 August.

The diagnosis made in Luanda was unequivocal. In his opening address, Evariste Ndayishimiye, President of Burundi and Chairperson of the AU, recalled that Africa “does not lack peace and security mechanisms”: the Peace and Security Council, the Continental Early Warning System, the Panel of the Wise, the African Standby Force, the Peace Fund and mediation instruments. The real deficit lies elsewhere: in moving from early warning to response.

This idea is probably the strategic key to understanding the summit. Africa has an architecture in place. It must now learn to make that architecture function at the speed demanded by a crisis. As

Ndayishimiye observed, early warning signs are often identified while African intervention comes only when the situation is “almost out of control”. His image was particularly telling: it is better to bring the goat back before it crosses the hills than to chase after it once it has escaped. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, Chairperson of the AU Commission, gave this imperative an institutional dimension: “Prevention must become our priority,” he said, calling for the strengthening of the Continental Early Warning System, better implementation of AU decisions, sustainable financing for peace operations and a fully operational Peace Fund.

Luanda is therefore seeking to bring two different timelines closer toge-

ther: the timeline of intelligence, which detects; and that of decision-making, which acts. The new Trigger Model moves in this direction by seeking to establish a more structured link between levels of risk and preventive responses. The Peace and Security Council had endorsed the model, together with the continental threat assessment and risk-mapping tool, just days before the summit.

The Lifeblood of Peace: Building a Financial Architecture

But a peace architecture is only as effective as the resources at its disposal. This is why the financial dimension runs through the entire Luanda initiative.

John Dramani Mahama, President of Ghana, summed up the challenge in a formulation that goes beyond the budgetary debate alone: “African ownership of peace and security must be matched by African ownership of its financing.” He called for a financial architecture that is predictable, flexible and sustainable.

The Angolan President himself had called for Luanda to become a “turning point”, with concrete measures, clearly defined responsibilities and effective monitoring mechanisms. For him, peace is not merely a condition for development; it is indispensable to the achievement of Agenda 2063, “The Africa We Want.”

The Real Test Will Be Political, Not Diplomatic

This is where the true legacy of Luanda will be determined. The credibility of the African Union will not be measured by the number of decisions adopted, but by the number of crises prevented.

The Luanda Decision, the Action Plan, the Implementation Matrix and the Trigger Model now give the continent a rare opportunity: to turn conflict prevention into a measurable, monitored and adequately financed public policy.

The next test will therefore be less diplomatic than political: will Member States agree to collectively



finance, implement and take ownership of the decisions they have just adopted?

In Luanda, Africa may have changed the question. It is no longer

asking only how to resolve its wars. It is beginning to ask how to prevent them from starting in the first place.

Sylvestre Tetchiada

BOKO & DANGOTE

Alliance of the Bold for an Industrial and Sovereign Africa

September 3, 2026, marks a decisive milestone in the contemporary economic history of Southern Africa. In the hushed offices of the Presidential Cabinet in Gaborone, a historic handshake reaffirmed an unprecedented continental ambition: that of Botswana's President, His Excellency Advocate Duma Gideon Boko, receiving African industrial powerhouse and founder of the Dangote Group, Aliko Dangote.

This high-level meeting, following an initial strategic encounter on February 15, 2025, on the sidelines of the 38th African Union Summit in Addis Ababa, goes far beyond the realm of diplomatic protocol. It marks a decisive shift from intent to action. Confronted with the structural challenges of globalization and the pressing need to build sustainable economic independence, the two statesmen and business leaders share the same paradigm-shifting vision: Africa must stop exporting its raw substance and become the nerve centre of its own industrial transformation.

The Continuity of a Strategic Ambition

The history of major economic transformations is often written through the consistency of shared visions. When Duma Gideon Boko met Aliko Dangote in Ethiopia in early 2025, during the gathering of African Union heads of state, the framework was already taking shape: attracting home-grown African capital to Botswana, capable of triggering vital economic diversification.

For decades, Botswana has stood as a model of macroeconomic stability and prudent economic management, largely on the strength of its diamond wealth.



However, its exposure to global commodity cycles has convinced the administration of President Boko of the urgent need to pivot towards a resilient industrial model. The Dangote Group — a formidable conglomerate with proven achievements in cement, oil refining, fertilizers and agro-industry — naturally emerges as a leading African partner.

By receiving the Nigerian industrial titan in Gaborone on September 3, 2026, President Boko is taking the relationship to an operational level. The objective is to structure large-scale investments, stimulate the creation of sustainable jobs for the younger generation, and position Botswana as a premier logistics and industrial hub at the heart of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

"Africa must drive its own development," said Duma Gideon Boko. "We cannot continue exporting our raw materials and importing basic consumer goods. We must build, produce and create value on our own continent. Our greatest challenge lies in execution: the ideas are there; what we now need is to turn them into projects, jobs and industries," the President of the Republic of Botswana continued.

Industrialization and Local Processing: An Imperative of Sovereignty

The assessment articulated by President Boko closely echoes the industrial doctrine that Aliko Dangote has championed for more than three decades. Africa will only be able to free itself from external shocks by creating and capturing on its



own soil the added value generated by its resources.

The “Dangote model” epitomizes precisely this capacity for implementation at scale. By building the world’s largest single-train oil refinery in Nigeria and establishing state-of-the-art cement plants across the continent, the businessman has demonstrated that a pan-African enterprise can compete with the world’s largest multinational players.

For Botswana, the stakes are profoundly strategic. The immediate priority is to achieve vital economic diversification by reducing the country’s historic dependence on the extractive sector through the development of its manufacturing base and the local processing of critical minerals. This momentum is underpinned by Botswana’s strategic geographical position, which can facilitate deeper integration into the SADC market and enable the country to serve a rapidly expanding regional market driven by demographic and economic growth.

Ultimately, this industrial transformation is about creating sustainable value by generating a skilled employment ecosystem for Botswana’s youth while fostering the effective transfer of advanced technologies.

The Trans-Kalahari Railway and the Commitment of Financial Institutions

Beyond manufacturing, discussions

between President Duma Boko and Aliko Dangote addressed the crucial issue of major connectivity infrastructure. Industrial growth cannot deliver its full potential without modern and efficient transport networks.

Among the priority issues discussed was the strategic Trans-Kalahari railway project. Designed to connect Botswana’s landlocked areas to maritime corridors along the Atlantic coast, this rail infrastructure project could radically transform the logistics of cross-border trade in Southern Africa.

To finance these large-scale projects, the Botswana head of state has issued a strong call for the mobilization of domestic and regional capital, particularly encouraging pension funds and Botswana’s financial institutions to play their full role alongside major African investors.

**BEYOND
MANUFACTURING, THE
DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN
PRESIDENT DUMA BOKO
AND ALIKO DANGOTE
ADDRESSED THE CRUCIAL
ASPECT OF MAJOR
INTERCONNECTION
INFRASTRUCTURE.**

Duma Gideon Boko explains:

“Africa must build Africa. The success of the Dangote Group demonstrates the power of execution at scale. Botswana is ready to engage in transformative partnerships to set in motion a spectacular industrial trajectory.”

Mobilizing African Capital to Secure the Continent’s Future

This high-level encounter between Gaborone and Lagos lays a fundamental building block in the construction of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). By bringing together the financial strength of a leading private industrial group and the political determination of a sovereign state committed to reforming its economic framework, Africa is demonstrating that it possesses within itself the levers of its own economic advancement.

The initiative championed by President Duma Gideon Boko exemplifies the kind of leadership required to navigate the decade ahead: pragmatic leadership, focused on results, investment attractiveness and economic sovereignty.

For policymakers, public and private investors, and the business community, the message coming from Gaborone is unequivocal: the era of waiting and watching is over. The time has come for collective action and intra-African co-investment.

S.T.

UNITED NATIONS

Africa Divided Ahead of Secretary-General Election

Will we see, for the first time, an African take the helm of the prestigious United Nations Secretariat? It is a plausible prospect, given that two Africans have entered the race for the position. Macky Sall, former President of Senegal, and Uganda's Olara Otunnu are vying to replace António Guterres. But is that enough?

Two Africans are candidates for the post of UN Secretary-General. After initially going it alone and touring African capitals in an effort to build support for his candidacy, former Senegalese President Macky Sall will now have to contend with the candidacy of Olara Otunnu, a former senior UN official.

There is no need to mince words: at this important juncture, Africa is once again entering the race divided. In an increasingly competitive contest, the starting point is already undermined by a lack of cohesion and unity. Africa is not speaking with one voice. And that is precisely what could weaken its influence in an election in which the continent nevertheless has a major asset: its numerical and political weight within the United Nations.

Two African Candidacies: An Early Sign of Division

Former Senegalese President Macky Sall entered the race with the backing of Burundi, but the candidacy immediately exposed divisions. Senegal itself made it clear that it had not officially endorsed the Burundian initiative. Disagreements also emerged over Macky Sall's candidacy, which was rejected by the African Union, which criticized the methods employed by the Sall campaign team.



Uganda then officially put forward Olara Otunnu, a former senior UN official. Africa was therefore left with two candidates from the continent, with markedly different profiles.

This presents a strategic problem: if African states split their votes among several candidates, none of them will automatically benefit from the bargaining power that a broad, continent-wide endorsement could provide.

In such a scenario, how can African countries hope to secure meaningful reform of the multilateral system and stronger African representation in international institutions?

The first round of the Security Council's "straw poll" has already shown that Latin American candidates have considerable momentum. Rebeca Grynspan and Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett are among those best positioned, while several African candidates, or candidates associated with Africa, still need to consolidate their support.

And given that the UN Secretary-General is not elected simply by the 193 member states, efforts must be made to ensure that a veto from any one of the five permanent members of the Security Council does not prove decisive.

To achieve this, an effective African strategy needs to be put in place. Even if it may seem late in the process, Africa would benefit from unifying its vote behind the strongest-positioned candidate. At the same time, it would need to maintain an intensive dialogue with the five permanent members and with the other regional groups.

The situation therefore highlights a recurring weakness in African diplomacy: the continent's 54 states can form a formidable bloc when they act in concert, but their national, regional and geopolitical interests often make it difficult to rally behind a single standard-bearer.

Valéry FOUNGBE

UN BUDGET CRISIS

Consequences for Africa

The UN budget crisis could lead to particularly severe consequences in Africa, coming at a time when several African theaters are experiencing a convergence of conflicts, forced displacement, food insecurity, and weak state capacity. In the short, medium, and long term, here is what could transpire.

For 2026, the General Assembly approved a regular budget of approximately \$3.45 billion, roughly 7% lower than that of 2025. This budget drop is both quantifiable and noticeable. However, the core issue remains the delay in mandatory contribution payments by member states. Although the General Assembly adopted a reform in June 2026 allowing the UN to retain certain unspent resources - provided they do not correspond to funds actually collected - the underlying problem persists. This is despite a substantial gain of \$900 million for peacekeeping and around \$400 million for the regular budget.

On the Security Front...

Undoubtedly, the reduction in the UN budget will impact the security component of interventions across Africa. Nearly a year ago, the UN warned of cash flow constraints, representing what is likely the most direct security effect. In October 2025, the UN announced that financial constraints were forcing its peace operations to reduce activities by approximately 25%. The funding shortfall exceeded \$2 billion out of an annual budget of \$5.6 billion.

According to UN diplomats, scaling back peace missions will result in a reduction of transport, intelligence, and logistical capabilities, as well as a diminished capacity to monitor ceasefires. Consequently, regarding peace and security, delays in mediation and political stabilization will place heightened pressure on national militaries and regional African forces. For armed groups and terrorist networks



exploiting resource-rich regions, this reduction presents a major windfall, enabling them to expand their foothold in these areas.

In this context, the most vulnerable missions to date include MONUSCO in the DRC, UNMISS in South Sudan, MINUSCA in the Central African Republic, UNISFA in Abyei, and UN support for operations in Somalia. In the case of Somalia, reduced international backing risks creating a vacuum that armed groups, notably Al-Shabaab, will seek to exploit.

On the Humanitarian Front...

The situation in Somalia presents a complex dilemma, driven by a severe humanitarian crisis. According to UN estimates, approximately 6.5 million people faced crisis levels of hunger in 2026, leaving the World Food Programme (WFP) facing the risk of operational disruption. However, it is important to distinguish the budget crisis of the UN Secretariat from humanitarian aid funding. A large portion of assistance provided by the WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF, and other agencies relies on voluntary donor contributions. Yet these funding streams are

equally under strain.

For example, in West and Central Africa, the WFP projected in January 2026 that 55 million people could experience crisis levels of hunger during the June-August lean season. In Nigeria, the agency warned that over one million people in the northeast were at risk of losing food and nutrition assistance. Similarly, in Chad, over one million Sudanese refugees faced drastic cuts in food, water, protection, and healthcare due to a \$428 million funding gap for UNHCR and the WFP.

The UN notes that in Sudan, nearly 19.5 million people were facing acute food insecurity by May 2026, even as only 20% of the 2026 humanitarian response plan had been funded by that date.

In the same vein, the WFP warned again in July that food assistance for more than 130,000 Congolese refugees could cease as early as October without new funding influxes.

Corrective Measures...

Confronted with this alarming situation, Africa stands to benefit from reinventing its approach. Fully funding its own security and peace missions is no longer optional; it requires accelerating the financial autonomy of the African Union. Several viable avenues exist. As an initial step, Africa should pursue cost-sharing frameworks between the UN, the African Union, and international partners. Other measures include introducing multi-year funding mechanisms for humanitarian aid and scaling up local and regional financing for humanitarian programs. Now is the time for preventive economic and security measures.

For the UN, this crisis also presents an opportunity to re-examine its operational framework and, above all, the allocation of its resources under the UN80 initiative.

Valéry FOUNGBE



SECURITY COUNCIL REFORM

Ezulwini Dossier Remains Stalled

At a time when the United Nations must imperatively reinvent itself, what is being done about the pressing need to reform the Security Council? Following the adoption of the Ezulwini Consensus, returning to the status quo ante is no longer an option. Yet, a wide gulf remains between African aspirations and today's political reality.

While the entire world proclaims *urbi et orbi* that Africa must take

its rightful place in the concert of nations, African states are allocated merely three non-permanent seats on a two-year rotational basis. Without securing the institutional overhaul it demands, Africa cannot truly exert real influence.

In 2005, the Ezulwini Consensus, followed by the Sirte Declaration, consolidated the common African position. What was this uncompromising demand?

Africa required at least two permanent seats on the Security Council—

equipped with all the prerogatives of permanent membership, including the veto as long as it exists—alongside five additional non-permanent seats. Furthermore, it demanded the right for the African Union to select the African states designated to occupy these permanent seats, who would then be elected by the General Assembly.

Indeed, in May 2026, the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, reiterated this position: «no fewer than two»

permanent seats with veto power, as well as five non-permanent seats. To bolster their claim, Africans introduced a new framework: in April 2026, the AU Committee of Ten Heads of State on Security Council Reform (C-10) officially presented its «African Model» to the UN, providing further structure to the Ezulwini Consensus.

The African Model specifically calls for an expanded Security Council of at least 26 members, with African representation comprising two permanent and five non-permanent seats. The model also addresses the veto power, regional representation, the council's size, and its working methods.

The Pact for the Future, adopted in 2024, represents a significant diplomatic victory for Africa, as it explicitly recognizes the need to «redress the historical injustice» against the continent and designates this issue as a priority for Security Council reform. The African Model builds directly upon this recognition.

Resistance to Change...

Since 2005, member states have remained divided on the final com-

THE AFRICAN MODEL IN PARTICULAR DESIRES AN EXPANDED SECURITY COUNCIL TO AT LEAST 26 MEMBERS...

position of the Security Council, the number of seats, member categories, and the veto status to be granted to Africa. The co-chairs' document from June 2026 shows that several options remain open, particularly regarding the extension of the veto to new permanent members. However, it is clear that the major powers are unwilling to yield ground on their «atomic button»—the right of veto.

Nigeria reiterated this during the 2026 negotiations: granting Africa permanent seats without the veto would merely institutionalize the

very inequality that the reform purports to correct. Africa thus rejects any reform that would create second-class permanent members. Yet, current international discussions reportedly center on three possibilities: extending the veto to new permanent members, withholding it, or deferring the decision to a future review.

While international resistance undeniably hampers African ambitions, Africans themselves have yet to reach a consensus on which countries should occupy the two permanent seats should they be allocated.

The Ezulwini Consensus dictates that the African Union will select the candidates. But based on what criteria? Especially given that certain African nations are prepared to clash in pursuit of continental hegemony. In light of this scenario, is it not easy for opponents of African ambitions to balk and stall the realization of Ezulwini's aspirations? The upcoming 81st UN General Assembly must bring clarity to these issues.

Valery FOUNGBE



AFRICAN SOVEREIGN DEBT

TOWARDS A REFORM OF THE INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL ARCHITECTURE BROUGHT TO THE UN TRIBUNE



Having become increasingly alarming and widely regarded as inequitable, African sovereign debt is drawing growing attention from the continent's leaders and senior officials of major international institutions. Since March 2023, calls have been mounting for a reform of the global financial architecture. The United Nations General Assembly will provide an opportunity for African leaders to reiterate their concerns and strengthen their advocacy on the continent's sovereign debt.

Reducing the burden of African sovereign debt, which is considered inequitable, and freeing up vital resources to achieve the Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs) are the objectives underpinning the call for reform of the international financial architecture, strongly advocated by African leaders and the United Nations.

According to experts from the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), this advocacy seeks to address the shortcomings and structural weaknesses of the current system, particularly excessive borrowing costs, which absorb more than 60% of GDP at the regional level.

Interest rates on borrowing by African countries are considered excessively high compared with those faced by developed economies, according to the same sources. "African countries face significantly higher interest rates than developed countries." Experts have

gone further in analyzing the underlying causes. They argue that credit ratings are biased: "International credit rating agencies impose excessively high-risk premiums, often as a result of misperceptions or a lack of transparency in data."

Another significant factor in the reform of Africa's sovereign debt architecture is the ineffectiveness of existing frameworks. The modern structure of borrowing, involving multiple private and bilateral creditors, is poorly suited to the G20 Common Framework, whose mechanism is widely considered too slow and inadequate to address the complexity and urgency of the situation.

Faced with this complex situation, the United Nations Economic Commission

for Africa (ECA) has sounded the alarm. Claver Gatete, its Executive Secretary, recently called for an urgent reform of the global financial system, highlighting the dramatic increase in Africa's debt burden. According to the figures he cited, African debt surged by 192% between 2010 and 2023, reaching the staggering amount of US\$1.1 trillion.

This mountain of debt is placing enormous pressure on the continent's economies, which spend some US\$163 billion every year on debt servicing. "It is as though every African were carrying an invisible burden on their shoulders, limiting investment in critical sectors such as education, healthcare and infrastructure," Claver Gatete said.

In March 2023, during a meeting of the High-Level Working Group on the Global Financial Architecture, held on the margins of the 55th Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, African finance, planning and economic development ministers called for decisive action to reform the global debt architecture. Their objective was to create the necessary policy and financial space for investment in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and global climate

A MOUNTAIN OF DEBT WEIGHS HEAVILY ON THE CONTINENT'S ECONOMIES, SUCKERING UP 163 BILLION DOLLARS EACH YEAR...

objectives.

Coordinated by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the High-Level Working Group brings together African ministers of finance, planning and economic development, the African Union, the African Development Bank, Afreximbank and the World Bank, with the participation of IMF staff and Executive Directors. The Group serves as a forum for developing proposals to reform the global financial architecture and strengthening Africa's voice on the international stage.

Hanan Morsy, ECA Deputy Executive Secretary and Chief Economist, noted that 2023 represented a critical jun-

ture for advancing the reform efforts advocated by the High-Level Working Group. Many of the Group's proposals are aligned with those put forward by the United Nations Secretary-General as part of his call for a reform of the international financial architecture and for an annual SDG stimulus of at least US\$500 billion to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

The Reform Agenda

The reform agenda being brought before the United Nations is centered on comprehensive restructuring. Its main pillars include the establishment of a sovereign debt restructuring mechanism or treaty under the auspices of the United Nations; the systematic inclusion of debt-service suspension clauses in the event of climate-related or pandemic shocks, in the form of solidarity clauses; stronger legal frameworks to curb speculative practices such as those involving vulture funds; improved loan traceability to enhance transparency and regulatory oversight; and the strengthening of multilateral development banks and the African financial stability mechanism to support regional institutions.

Ferdinand GADE



WASHINGTON ACCORDS BETWEEN THE DRC AND RWANDA

One Year On: Between Diplomatic Progress and Security Stalemate in Eastern Congo



One year after the signing of the Washington Accords between the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Rwanda, it is time to take stock. Presented as a major step toward de-escalating a conflict that has poisoned relations between the two countries for decades, this diplomatic framework raised high hopes.

Supported by the United States and several international partners, the commitments made were intended to facilitate the withdrawal of the M23, the neutrali-

zation of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), and the gradual return of stability to eastern Congo.

Yet twelve months later, the results appear mixed. While diplomatic tensions between Kigali and Kinshasa seem less acute than at the height of the crisis, the security reality on the ground remains deeply concerning, while civil populations continue to pay a heavy price.

A Real, Yet Fragile, Diplomatic Thaw

One of the main achievements

of the Washington Accords lies in the resumption of dialogue between the two neighbors. Following months of mutual accusations, threats, and border incidents, diplomatic channels have been reactivated. Meetings between political and military leaders have multiplied, reducing the risk of a direct confrontation between the two states.

This relative easing of tension was welcomed by international partners who feared a regionalization of the conflict. The monitoring mechanisms put in place have also allowed for a perma-

nent framework for discussion, even when tensions resurface. However, this progress remains fragile. Deep divisions over the root causes of the conflict and respective responsibilities continue to fuel persistent mistrust. Behind conciliatory statements, each side remains vigilant and maintains its own strategic priorities.

M23 and the FDLR: At the Heart of Unfulfilled Promises

The issue of armed groups formed the central pillar of the agreement. Kinshasa demanded the withdrawal of the M23 and an end to all alleged external support for the movement. Kigali, for its part, insisted on the neutralization of the FDLR, an organization viewed as a threat to its national security.

On the ground, some progress has been observed. Certain areas were indeed evacuated by M23 fighters, and several verification initiatives were launched. However, many observers believe that the movement still retains significant influence in strategic localities.

Regarding the FDLR, results are even more limited. Despite military operations and repeated commitments, their complete neutralization remains out of reach. Logistical challenges, the complexity of the terrain, and the multiplicity of armed groups severely complicate ongoing efforts.

This situation fuels frustration on both sides. Each regularly accuses the other of failing to fully respect its commitments, undermining the credibility of the process.

A Humanitarian Crisis That Continues to Worsen

Beyond diplomatic and military considerations, the main indicator of success remains the situation of the population. On this front, progress remains insuffi-



cient.

Eastern DRC continues to rank among the most unstable regions on the continent. Population displacements persist, while thousands of families still live in camps or precarious conditions. Access to healthcare, education, and basic services remains limited across numerous areas. Humanitarian actors point out that the relative decrease in interstate tensions has not yet produced the expected benefits for civilians. Localized violence, clashes between armed groups,

and chronic insecurity continue to disrupt daily life.

For many residents of North Kivu and South Kivu, the promised peace remains a distant reality.

Between Cautious Hope and Persistent Challenges

Despite its limitations, the agreement has not failed. It prevented a more severe deterioration in relations between Kigali and Kinshasa and provided a political framework to continue discussions.

The real test now lies in the effective implementation of security commitments. Without tangible progress regarding the M23, the FDLR, and the protection of civilians, diplomatic gains risk gradually losing their substance. One year after Washington, the process appears to be an important yet incomplete milestone. Lasting stability in eastern Congo will depend less on political declarations than on the ability of the actors involved to turn promises into concrete results for the millions of people affected by the conflict.

Cir-Raoul HOUNGBEDJI

**ONE OF THE MAIN
ACHIEVEMENTS OF
THE WASHINGTON
AGREEMENTS
LIES IN THE
RESUMPTION OF
DIALOGUE
BETWEEN THE TWO
NEIGHBOURS.**

WILLIAM SAMOEI RUTO

FROM “HUSTLER” TO STRATEGIST OF AFRICA’S CLIMATE DIPLOMACY

As world leaders gather at the United Nations Headquarters in New York for the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly, Kenya is once again emerging as a key player in major global policy deliberations.

On the sidelines of the UN proceedings, the Kenyan government is bringing together its strategic partners - Brazil, Spain, UN-Habitat, the Joint SDG Fund, UNCDF, the COP31 Climate Champion, alongside development partners and financiers such as the World Bank, Shelter Afrique Development Bank, Equity Bank, KCB, Habitat for Humanity, AfDAN and UCLG Africa - for a high-level event dedicated to the BCRUP programme (Building Climate Resilience with the Urban Poor).

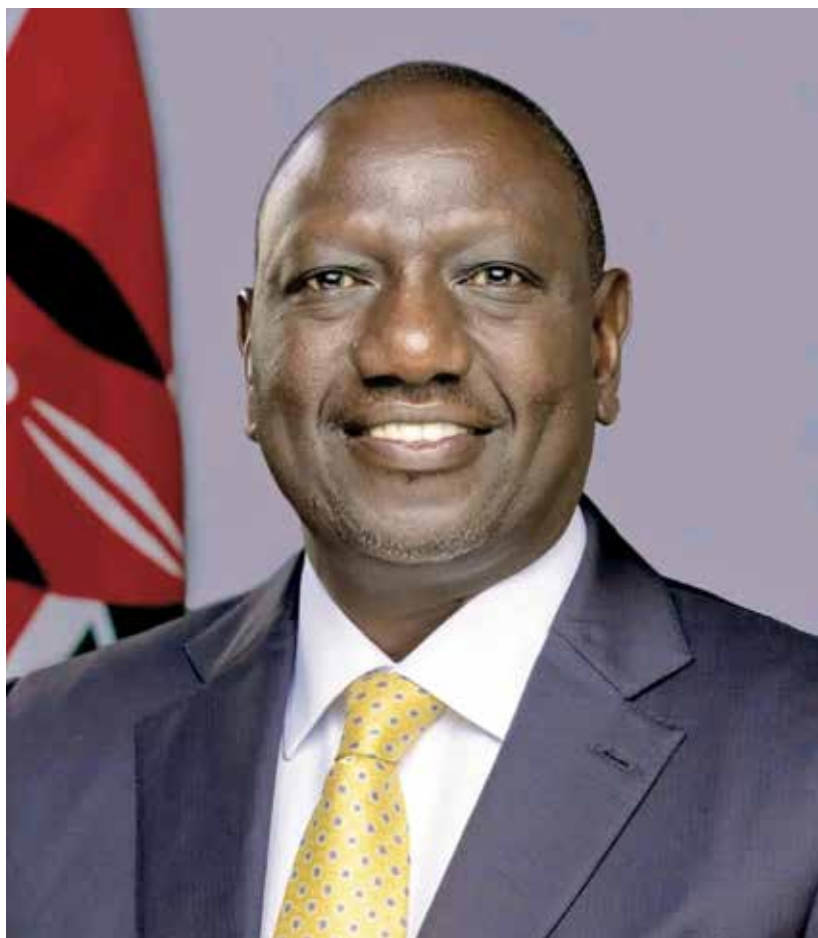
Under the theme “Strengthening the Climate Resilience of Urban Poor Communities: From Local Challenges to Bankable Solutions,” the initiative brings together 20 African countries with the ambition of mobilising more than US\$10 billion over ten years. Through its “Deal Room,” the initiative seeks to transform the vulnerability of informal settlements into opportunities for sustainable investment.

At the heart of this urban and climate diplomacy stands the figure of Kenya’s Head of State: William Samoei Ruto.

From YK’92 to Ministerial Responsibilities

Originally from Uasin Gishu County, in Kenya’s Rift Valley, William Ruto embodies a distinctive socio-political trajectory. He entered the political arena in the early 1990s, at a time when Kenya was returning to multiparty politics.

He rose to prominence as a co-founder and Treasurer of Youth for KANU 1992 (YK’92), an influential youth movement campaigning for the re-election of



DOCTOR OF ECOLOGY TURNED HEAD OF STATE, RUTO EMBODS THE CHANGES IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN GOVERNANCE.

President Daniel Arap Moi. This experience proved to be a formative school of political hardening and strategic manoeuvring.

In 1997, he secured his first parliamentary mandate, winning the Eldoret North constituency.

As party alignments shifted over the years, Ruto established himself as a formidable political strategist. He held a number of government positions, including the Ministry of Home Affairs under President Moi in 2002, followed by the Agriculture and Higher Education port-

folios under the coalition government of Mwai Kibaki.

His mastery of electoral dynamics and of the ethnic and political balances of the Rift Valley made him an indispensable player in Kenya's political landscape.

The Turning Point: The Vice Presidency

William Ruto's political fortunes took a decisive turn in 2013, when he forged an unexpected alliance with Uhuru Kenyatta. Despite their past confrontation during the 2007–2008 post-election violence, the two men joined forces under the banner of the Jubilee coalition and won the 2013 presidential election.

One of the key foundations of this alliance was their shared confrontation with the International Criminal Court (ICC), where both men had been charged with crimes against humanity in connection with the 2007 events.

Their coordinated defence of institutional sovereignty, combined with support from the African Union, ultimately contributed to the withdrawal of the charges for lack of sufficient evidence, freeing both leaders from the proceedings.

However, during their second term in office (2017–2022), the “UhuRuto” partnership gradually broke down. Uhuru Kenyatta moved closer to his long-standing political rival Raila Odinga through the Handshake agreement.

Marginalised within the administration, Ruto turned his political isolation into a powerful electoral instrument. He positioned himself as the candidate of the “Hustlers” - ordinary strivers, small-scale entrepreneurs and workers in the informal economy - against the so-called “dynasties” represented by the Kenyatta and Odinga political families.

Economic and Diplomatic Leadership

In August 2022, following a closely fought election, William Ruto was elected as the fifth President of the Republic of Kenya. From the outset of his presidency, he embarked on his economic policy doctrine: the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA).

The model seeks to channel greater financial and economic opportunities towards the bottom of the social pyramid through flagship initiatives such as the



Hustler Fund and a large-scale Affordable Housing Programme.

On the international stage, President Ruto has repositioned Kenya as an increasingly influential diplomatic power.

- Global Finance and Climate: As host of the first Africa Climate Summit, held in Nairobi in 2023, Ruto has advocated for a restructuring of the international financial architecture, particularly the IMF and World Bank, as well as the creation of a global carbon tax to finance climate adaptation across the continent.

- Urban Resilience: Through the BCRUP programme, he is seeking to turn the environmental vulnerabilities of poor urban communities into bankable projects capable of mobilizing more than US\$10 billion across the continent.

- Geopolitical Positioning: Ruto has maintained a pragmatic alignment with Western powers while simultaneously asserting an increasingly confident pan-African leadership role within the African Union.

Challenges, Reforms and Contestation: The Test of Power

William Ruto's presidency is unfolding against a challenging macroeconomic backdrop, characterised by a heavy

public-debt servicing burden.

In an effort to meet fiscal requirements and preserve the Kenyan state's financial credibility on international markets, the government has undertaken stringent tax reforms.

These measures have triggered significant social tensions, particularly through Gen Z-led protests, with young Kenyans denouncing the rising cost of living and calling for greater institutional transparency.

The Kenyan President's challenge now lies in striking a delicate balance between fiscal discipline, social stability and the fulfilment of his promises of economic inclusion to lower-income and working-class communities.

A doctor of ecology who rose to the highest office in the land, Ruto embodies the transformations reshaping contemporary African governance.

As the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly opens in New York, his initiative for strengthening the resilience of urban populations demonstrates that Africa no longer intends merely to bear the brunt of climate shocks or debt pressures. It increasingly seeks to shape and impose its own development solutions.

S.T.

ETHIOPIA

Abiy Ahmed Faces the Triple Challenge of Power, Peace and the Red Sea

Buoyed by a new mandate, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed commands considerable political power. But his real challenge begins now: turning his electoral victory into lasting domestic stability, consolidating economic reforms, and making the quest for maritime access a project of cooperation rather than a new source of tension in the Horn of Africa.

On 1 June 2026, Ethiopians went to the polls for the country's seventh general election. Twenty days later, official results confirmed the sweeping victory of Abiy Ahmed's Prosperity Party, which won 438 seats — an overwhelming majority in the constituencies where voting was effectively able to take place. The new Parliament is expected to take office in October, paving the way for a new five-year term for the Prime Minister.

But this victory should not obscure the country's actual political geography. The election did not take place in Tigray and was disrupted in parts of Amhara and Oromia because of insecurity. The key question is therefore no longer whether Abiy Ahmed has a mandate. He does. The question is how he will use this political power.

President Taye Atske Selassie himself recalled, during the 130th anniversary of the victory of Adwa, that "the lesson of Adwa



strengthens Ethiopian identity” and must serve to counter forces of division. The message is strategic: Ethiopia cannot become a major economic and geopolitical power if its energies continue to be consumed by internal conflicts. Abiy Ahmed’s new term will therefore be judged less by the size of his parliamentary majority than by his ability to rebuild a political compact between the federal government, the regions and the country’s diverse social constituencies. A 438-seat majority gives him the power to make decisions. It does not, by itself, guarantee the ability to bring the country together.

Stability: The Condition for Success

On the economic front, the government can point to tangible achievements. The reform programme supported by the IMF since 2024 has contributed to improvements in foreign-exchange reserves, exports and public revenues, alongside the gradual modernization of the foreign-exchange market. In June 2026, the IMF estimated real GDP growth at 9.2% for the 2025-2026 fiscal year, despite the shock caused by the war in the Middle East and rising fuel and fertilizer prices.

This momentum reinforces Abiy Ahmed’s strategy. The liberalization of the banking sector, greater openness to investment, foreign-exchange reform and the development of the private sector all reflect an ambition to fundamentally transform Ethiopia’s economic model. The IMF nevertheless warns that security, social and political risks could undermine these gains.

This is precisely where Ethiopia’s paradox lies. Addis Ababa can

build infrastructure, attract capital and liberalize its economy; but no investor can indefinitely overlook insecurity in several strategically important regions of the country.

Abiy Ahmed is therefore entering a phase in which economic performance will need to become more inclusive. Growth must create jobs, reduce regional disparities and give people in peri-

ABIY AHMED WILL THEREFORE BE JUDGED LESS ON THE SIZE OF HIS PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY THAN ON HIS ABILITY TO REBUILD A POLITICAL CONTRACT BETWEEN THE FEDERAL STATE, THE REGIONS, AND THE VARIOUS COMPONENTS OF SOCIETY.

pheral areas a tangible reason to believe in the national project. Otherwise, macroeconomic success risks coexisting with growing political and social frustration.

The Red Sea: The Ambition That Could Redefine Ethiopia’s Power

It is, however, on the maritime question that the most strategic dimension of Abiy Ahmed’s new mandate is likely to be tested. Ethiopia, a country of nearly 130 million people and one of Africa’s leading demographic and economic powers, now regards its landlocked status as a major constraint on its development.

Abiy Ahmed has made the issue a national priority. Addressing Parliament, he stated that access to the Red Sea is a “legal, historical, geographical and economic” issue. At the same time, he has consistently stressed dialogue and cooperation. In February 2026, he said: “We must grow together without destroying one another, through agreements and the laws of the market.”

This statement may well capture the best strategy available to Addis Ababa. Access to the sea should not become a project of confrontation with Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia or other neighboring countries. Instead, it could evolve into a broad regional economic integration project encompassing ports, rail corridors, logistics hubs, energy, cross-border investment and shared access to markets.

The stakes therefore go far beyond the simple search for a maritime outlet.

Ethiopia now has an opportunity to turn a geographical vulnerability into an instrument of cooperative power. Abiy Ahmed’s real test begins now. His new mandate gives him the political means to act.

But history will ultimately judge him on his ability to answer three questions: Can he sustainably pacify the country’s domestic front? Can he turn economic growth into shared prosperity? And can he lead Ethiopia towards the sea without leading the Horn of Africa towards a new confrontation?

The future of Ethiopia - and, to a considerable extent, that of the entire Horn of Africa - will be shaped at the intersection of these three challenges.

S.T.

H.E. DENIS FRANCONIO MAC, MINISTER OF LABOUR, EMPLOYMENT AND CIVIL SERVICE OF MADAGASCAR

«Sustainably transforming the Malagasy civil service requires a clear, realistic, and structured vision»

In a context where African citizens demand more efficient and transparent public administrations, what is your vision for the sustainable transformation of Madagascar's civil service?

Sustainably transforming the Malagasy civil service requires a clear, realistic, and structured vision built on deep yet progressive reforms. The overarching ambition is simple: a professional, high-performing, and citizen-centered Malagasy public administration operating with integrity as a catalyst for sustainable and inclusive national development.

Which structural levers do you intend to activate to turn the employment sector into a genuine engine of social stability and inclusive growth?

To turn Madagascar's employment sector into a true driver of economic growth, we must move beyond ad-hoc measures and activate structural levers capable of permanently reforming the economy, the labor market, and our institutions. To this end, the Ministry has taken the initiative to revise the National Employment Policy (PNE) to address shifting labor market dynamics, foster large-scale creation of decent jobs, and underpin sustainable economic growth.

The Malagasy government has launched several initiatives focusing on civil servant census operations, the integration of



non-standard personnel, and administrative redeployment. How do you plan to balance headcount rationalization, state efficiency, and social justice?

Reconciling headcount rationalization, state efficiency, and social justice is not about brutal workforce cuts; it is about an intelligent restructuring of the civil service to better serve citizens while protecting public workers. We are pursuing an operational approach that builds an agile, high-performing state with controlled, motivated, and fairly treated personnel serving all citizens.

Do you believe Madagascar can become an African model for peaceful social governance and effective tripartite cooperation?

Yes - provided Madagascar transforms social dialogue into a genuine decision-making engine rather than a mere formal framework. Becoming an African benchmark is entirely achievable, provided we accelerate tripartism to deliver tangible outcomes.

How is your department preparing public administrations and Malagasy workers for the transformations brought about by digitalization and new professions?

The idea that digital technology will solve everything is appealing, but dangerous if left unguided. The real challenge is not merely adopting digital tools, but equipping workers and public sector institutions to stay competitive in the era of artificial intelligence. Our strategic vision aims to leverage the digital transition and AI as drivers of employment, productivity, and administrative modernization—without leaving workers behind.

Beyond technical reforms, what personal legacy do you wish to leave as head of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Civil Service? And what message



do you have today for young Malagasy citizens who still doubt the public institutions' ability to transform their daily lives?

Youth trust in leadership and institutions cannot be decreed; it must be built through concrete proof. First, young people require visible

results. As long as public policies fail to generate a real impact on living standards, institutional rhetoric will lack credibility.

Second, trust rests on transparency and fairness. Effectively tackling the root causes of corruption, guaranteeing equal access to public sector employment, and ensuring executive accountability are mandatory prerequisites.

Furthermore, actively engaging young people in public policy and decision-making is essential. A young citizen involved in shaping policy is far more inclined to place trust in public institutions.

To conclude, I invite Malagasy youth to embrace three choices: believe in your potential, seize every opportunity - no matter how modest - and become active agents of change. «Mirary soa sy ny tsara ho antsika rehetra»!

Interview conducted in Marrakech
by Samirat Ntiازه

**TO MAKE THE
EMPLOYMENT
SECTOR A TRUE
ENGINE OF GROWTH
IN MADAGASCAR,
IT IS NEEDED TO
GO BEYOND ONE-
OFF MEASURES
AND ACTIVATE
STRUCTURAL
LEVERS...**

FRANÇOIS MENGUELÉ

The Discreet Architect of Africa's Territorial Transformation



Appointed in March 2026 as Secretary General of United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG Africa), François Menguelé has emerged as one of the most influential figures in territorial development on the continent. Trained as an urban planning engineer, a public policy strategist and a staunch advocate of decentralization, he has devoted more than three decades to building bridges between institutions, local authorities and African communities.

His appointment to lead the continent's largest pan-African organiza-

tion representing local and regional governments is no coincidence. It is the culmination of an exceptional career defined by expertise, commitment and an in-depth understanding of African realities.

A Builder of Public Policies

Holding a Master's degree in Urban Planning and Spatial Development from Dortmund Technical University in Germany, complemented by MBA studies in South Africa and a specialization in public affairs in Berlin, François Menguelé has developed a vision of development grounded in institutional effectiveness and tangible impact on

people's lives.

After beginning his career as a research assistant to German parliamentarians, he went on to lead numerous high-level assignments for GIZ, the European Union and the African Union across several African and European countries. His contribution is particularly visible in South Africa, where he played a role in shaping post-apartheid housing policies, notably Nelson Mandela's urban renewal programme, which helped deliver approximately 12,000 decent homes to some of the most vulnerable communities in the townships.

Yet his contribution extends far

beyond the national level. He played a decisive role in the establishment of the African Union's Specialized Technical Committee on Urban Development, Decentralization and Public Services, as well as in the adoption of the African Charter on Decentralization and the Niamey Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation between Local Authorities.

A Vision Driven by Action

Recognised for his expertise in local governance, sustainable urban development, regional integration and decarbonisation, François Menguelé is regarded by many observers as one of the architects of the modernisation of territorial governance in Africa.

His appointment as Secretary General of UCLG Africa, following a particularly competitive international selection process, was widely welcomed across the continent. Several prominent figures in Africa's municipal sector see in him a leader capable of injecting fresh momentum into the local government movement and transforming African cities into genuine engines of growth, innovation and social cohesion.

At the international roundtable on the Sustainable Development Goals towards 2030 held recently in New York, he once again stressed the urgent need to rethink the relationship between global agendas and local realities, arguing that the future of development will first and foremost be shaped within territories.

The Advocacy of an African Committed to South-South Cooperation

One of the most recent expressions of his vision was the message he delivered to mark the 27th anniversary of His Majesty King Mohammed VI's accession to the Throne of the Kingdom of Morocco. In this widely noted contribution, François Menguelé praised an African policy rooted in solidari-



ty, trust and cooperation among territories. He highlighted the role of the African Fund for Support to International Decentralised Cooperation (FACDI), which he presented as a model of South-South cooperation enabling African

local authorities to share their experiences and jointly develop solutions tailored to the needs of their populations.

Through this tribute, the Secretary General of UCLG Africa reaffirmed a conviction that has guided his entire career: Africa's sustainable development cannot be decreed from national capitals or international institutions; it must take root in the cities, municipalities and territories where citizens live.

A Knight of Cameroon's National Order of Valour since 2015 and the recipient of an honorary doctorate, François Menguelé is today emerging as one of the most credible voices in African territorial development. His career reflects a clear conviction: the Africa of tomorrow will be built on strong, innovative and mutually supportive local and regional governments.

Cir-Raoul HOUNGBEDJI

**FRANÇOIS
MENGUELÉ IS
CONSIDERED BY
MANY OBSERVERS
AS ONE OF THE
ARCHITECTS OF THE
MODERNIZATION
OF AFRICAN
TERRITORIAL
GOVERNANCE.**

CLG AFRICA
Cities and Local Governments of Africa
Gouvernements Locaux d'Afrique
LU AFRIQUE

UCLG AFRICA
United Cities and Local Governments of Africa
Cités et Gouvernements Locaux Unis d'Afrique
COOPERATION REGIONALE



FRANÇOIS MENGUELÉ, SECRETARY GENERAL UNITED CITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS OF AFRICA (UCLG AFRICA)

“We must move from mere advocacy to transformative action”

Succeeding a historic figure such as Jean-Pierre Elong Mbassi, after more than two decades at the helm, carries an enormous symbolic burden. Beyond institutional continuity, what conceptual or methodological shift do you intend to bring to the organisation?

It is true that my predecessor accomplished a monumental task. He succeeded in unifying the African municipal movement, which, until 2005, remained fragmented along colonial lines of inheritance—Francophone, Anglophone and Lusophone. The transition from the OAU to the African Union, three years earlier, called for this major gathering. This was how the unified Pan-African municipal movement was born at the Tshwane Summit in South Africa, paving the way for the GADDEPA strategic programme (Governance, Advocacy and Decentralized Development Programme for Africa), focused on advocacy and on ensuring that Africa's territories could speak with one voice. Today, we are entering a new era. In a world that has become multipolar and is witnessing the erosion of traditional multilateralism in favour of exclusionary, closed-door negotiations—the so-called “deal rooms”—we must move beyond advocacy towards transformative action.

This transformation is built around six major shifts:

- From a purely municipal movement to a broader territorial movement, reflecting the growing diversity of our membership, which now includes municipalities, cities and regions. This diversity requires us to design a range of responses in a “buffet-style” format, stan-

dardised for all categories of members, alongside an “à la carte” menu offering more targeted solutions tailored to the specific nature of each request.

- Towards a fundamentally renewed governance model, firmly anchored in the principles of accountability and the transparent, rigorous management of resources, supported by periodic controls and communication mechanisms that promote information-sharing and facilitate smooth decision-making. This is also an opportunity for

After more than two decades of building and unifying the African municipal movement, UCLG Africa intends to change its approach.

me to pay tribute to the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) for its renewed confidence in our Organisation, demonstrated through its new support for the overhaul of our internal governance system.

- From citizens as consumers to citizens as co-creators: the end of the provider state. The time has come for participatory governance, in which citizens co-design public policies and participate directly in budgetary choices, implementation and the management of investments undertaken.

- From financial dependence to operational sovereignty. UCLG Africa currently relies 100% on membership contributions - which are often irregular - and external donations. Our model must now incorporate the other economic variables represented by investment and savings ($Y = C + I + S$). Our objective is to achieve 50% financial self-reliance by 2031, through the provision of high-value-added services - including expertise, bankable project studies and training - and through the creation of tangible and intangible assets, including the negotiation of an exceptional sovereign fund with African States. The transformative implementation of the new strategic recovery plan requires external contributions not to substitute for our own efforts, but rather to provide additionality, enabling us to experiment with or scale up innovative solutions to the problems identified.

- From a headquarters-centred approach to a network-based operating model. In this new context, where the strategic recovery plan calls on us to play a role in territorial value chains across the continent, managing all activities from the Organization's headquarters in Rabat is no longer a viable option. We intend to decentralize our governance by revitalising the operational role of our five regional offices - in Nairobi, Accra, Cairo, Libreville and Tshwane - and by mobilizing our sixth, virtual region, namely the diaspora, so that our activities can be deployed closer to territorial realities.

- From an event-driven approach to a results-oriented culture. Since taking office, we have received numerous requests of various kinds. Some organizations have approached us to co-



organize high-level ceremonial events. During our first five months in office, we received approximately ten proposals for partnership agreements, which is a sign that many governances stakeholders regard UCLG Africa as a partner of choice for catalyzing change across Africa's territories. However, it is in our interest to avoid the fragmentation and dispersion resulting from multiple global solicitations and instead focus more strongly on delivering concrete solutions to the everyday challenges faced by Africa's local and regional governments. The time has come to reshape and manage our value proposition.

When setting out your roadmap during your inauguration a few months ago, you stated that participatory development requires building «with» citizens, rather than simply «for» them. In a context where African youth aspire to local sovereignty alongside a crisis of trust in public action, how do you translate this political slogan into a concrete governance architecture within metropolises of several million inhabitants?

Africa is currently undergoing an urban transformation unprecedented in its

history. Comparing the continent's current aerial cartography to that of twenty years ago yields a striking observation: green spaces have shrunk dramatically, yielding to a built environment heavily dominated by the informal sector. This dynamic presents a dual strategic challenge for our territories:

On the one hand, this spontaneous urban development relies on high-carbon footprint materials, accelerating global warming and greenhouse gas emissions. Soil sealing, the destruction of carbon-sequestering vegetative cover, the diversion of riverbeds, and the proliferation of plastic waste clog-

ging drainage channels expose our cities directly to catastrophic and recurring floods. This represents the priority task of adaptation.

On the other hand, we have local authorities—particularly rural and forest communities—that retain an exceptional natural heritage. Thanks to decentralization policies that transferred forest management to municipalities, these territories constitute the continent's true green lung, over which our members exercise control. Consequently, they can exert significant leverage on climate change mitigation.

In the face of these challenges, climate finance can no longer remain trapped at the macro-institutional level. To break through this barrier and enable local governments to gain direct access to climate financing mechanisms, UCLG Africa is mobilizing a novel lever as part of its new recovery plan: the structuring of a territorialized carbon market.

The objective is to equip our municipalities—alongside self-building citizens who account for roughly 70% of urban housing—with the technical capacity to independently formulate bankable, mature, and credible projects capable of fostering trust with financial institutions.

In practical terms, this approach is exemplified in major continental infras-

Relying 100% on membership fees, which are often irregular, and on external funding is no longer sustainable.

structure projects, such as the future Abidjan-Lagos corridor. We advocate for this economic integration megaproject, like so many others, to incorporate major ecological offset measures. By directly involving coastal local authorities and populations across the Gulf of Guinea in mangrove restoration and planting, we transform a highway into a genuine catalyst for climate action. Infrastructure no longer merely connects economies; it reconciles communities with their environment. Beyond financial engineering, the key lies in a new strategic and technological literacy. Facing the challenges of the next 10 to 20 years, we must equip youth and local leaders with these emerging skills so they can master tomorrow's tools and become sovereign architects of their territories' sustainable transformation.

CGLU Africa has established itself as the political arm of local and regional authorities within the African Union. At a time when the continent is experiencing major geopolitical and institutional upheavals, how far can the "diplomacy of territories" go without running up against the sovereignty-first stance of central governments?

The "diplomacy of territories" is not intended to challenge the State, but rather to complement it. At a time when the world is facing major geopolitical upheavals, responsibilities that were once the exclusive preserve of central governments must now increasingly be jointly shouldered by local and regional authorities. The stakes are high: preserving the fundamental values of peace, solidarity and peaceful coexistence upon which the post-war world was built.

Unlike traditional diplomacy, the diplomacy of territories is a form of proximity and development diplomacy. It takes concrete shape through the delivery of local public services, the management of relations between neighbouring local authorities — whether within national borders or across them — and conflict prevention.

This approach does not operate in a legal vacuum. It is underpinned by clear



frameworks promoted at the level of the African Union:

- The Niamey Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation, adopted in June 2014 by the Heads of State and Government of the African Union in Malabo, which constitutes the legal cornerstone of this grassroots diplomacy.
- The African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralisation, Local Governance and Local Development, adopted that same year, which serves as a genuine continental framework law and is currently undergoing ratification by Member States.
- The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), a major economic instrument designed to give concrete expression to the four fundamental freedoms: the free movement of goods, people and capital, as well as the right of

establishment.

Admittedly, the gap between legal and policy frameworks and their effective implementation remains a reality across the continent. Yet establishing such frameworks is essential to shaping the collective mindset and guiding the actions of populations. Just as the major development slogans of the 1970s and 1980s left a lasting mark on an entire generation, it is now necessary to instill in Africa's youth the conviction that free movement is not an option, but an absolute necessity.

Continental unity is the sine qua non of Africa's development. It is a non-negotiable imperative.

The emergence of cities and regions on the diplomatic stage does not challenge the sovereignty of central governments. On the contrary, it strengthens the action of the State by injecting into it a dynamic of local economic development, which itself is a guarantor of lasting peace.

Today, there is a need to conceptualize and disseminate this distinction more effectively in order to avoid institutional friction. The diplomacy of territories and State diplomacy are not in conflict: they complement and reinforce one another.

The existence, in some countries - admittedly outside the African continent - of university programmes dedicated to this emerging field of knowledge is a welcome development. There is an urgent need to train a pool of young professionals in this disci-

Faced with uncontrolled urbanization, flooding, and the erosion of green spaces, UCLG Africa wants to make local authorities direct actors in climate finance.



pline and to deepen this empirical field through a critical mass of practical, on-the-ground experience, so that these complementarities can become a reality. It would be paradoxical for a noble discipline whose very purpose is to help entrench peace to struggle to transcend institutional frictions. There are several cross-border conflicts relating to the shared management of natural resources where central government authorities alone have, for decades, struggled to find lasting solutions. These areas could serve as genuine laboratories for sustainable solutions involving neighbouring communities, brought together through their local and regional authorities.

By promoting the equitable sharing of resources, wealth creation at the local level, youth entrepreneurship and the economic empowerment of women - the pillars of our societies - local and regional authorities make a decisive contribution to the stability and prosperity of the continent.

The UCLG World Congress was held in Tangier from 22 to 25 June. At a time when Western urban models are showing their limitations, what major value proposition and what concrete resolutions did Africa succeed in bringing to the rest of the world at this landmark gathering?

Held in Tangier from 22 to 25 June, the

World Congress of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) revolved around three major issues for Africa and for territorial governance worldwide.

The first achievement was the stabilisation of the organisation's governance through the renewal of its governing bodies. African representation was consolidated alongside that of the other regions, with the election of a new UCLG President and African representatives to the World Bureau. In an increasingly fragmented world, Africa demonstrated its ability to speak with one voice - a first demonstration of strength for the continent.

The second challenge was to respond to global transformations: the rise of multipolarity, the erosion of the values underpinning peaceful coexistence, the spread of extremism, and growing

“Diplomacy territories » doesn’t come compete with states: she completes them, by bringing closer cooperation international daily realities...”

public distrust of government institutions. In response to these challenges, which had already begun to emerge at the previous gathering in Daejeon, South Korea, the Tangier Congress advanced a structuring concept: a new generation of public services based on co-production between institutions and citizens.

The era of the state as the sole provider of public services is drawing to a close. Contemporary challenges require inclusive, participatory and solidarity-based development, fully involving young people, women and the driving forces of civil society - in keeping with the United Nations commitment to “leave no one behind.”

The third challenge was to prepare the transition to the post-2030 era, with only a few years remaining before the deadline for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The time has come to take stock of achievements, measure existing gaps and identify the challenges that remain.

Africa must undertake a genuine capacity-building and empowerment drive for its local governments, enabling them to conduct their Local Voluntary Reviews, take ownership of the SDGs, and generate the data and reports required to address major challenges such as climate change, fragility, poverty, demographic growth and access to essential services.

This paradigm shift is also reflected in a change in vocabulary. We are moving from the “localization” of the SDGs to their “territorialization.”

The notion of localization suggested that objectives were designed elsewhere and that local governments were merely recipients or implementers. Territorialization, by contrast, makes the territory - whether municipal, urban, regional or national - a shared space for action and responsibility, bringing together local authorities, central government administrations, economic stakeholders and civil society around the principles of spatial and territorial equity.

The message conveyed in Tangier continues to resonate in international forums, notably the United Nations High-Level Political Forum and the forthcoming

General Assembly, with a view to informing reflection on the future post-2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

Beyond city diplomacy, Africa is therefore advocating a renewed vision of territorial development: moving beyond a model based primarily on the production and export of unprocessed raw materials, towards the creation of local value chains, the processing of resources locally and the creation of conditions that enable young Africans to build their futures on the continent. To territorialize development means transforming African territories from spaces of extraction into spaces for the creation of wealth and jobs, innovation and prosperity.

Under such a model, the African city cannot be considered in isolation. It forms part of a continuum structured around a territorial value chain.

Rural areas are integrated into this model as spaces of primary production. Agricultural production basins must be opened up through the construction and upgrading of feeder roads and other transport infrastructure, thereby facilitating the movement of agricultural products to urban centres.

Cities, in turn, serve as centres of secondary production through industrial processing hubs. Value-added products are then transported to major metropolitan areas, where commercial and market infrastructures drive consumption and waste management within a circular economy framework - reduce, reuse, recycle.

One final word to young people?

What I would like to say to young people may, at first sight, sound like a simple and hollow exhortation. But for me, it is much deeper than that.

We have had the opportunity to travel around the world. And if we came back to the continent, it is because we discovered that there was something here that many people have not yet fully recognized: an immense potential waiting to be transformed into value added.

It is true that many young Africans are leaving the continent today in search of better opportunities, sometimes driven by disillusionment, sometimes by eco-



nomie hardship or governance failures. But sooner or later, the journey back may call out to us, just as it called out to us.

I therefore want to tell young people that Africa has never offered as many opportunities as it does today. Precisely at a time when some are leaving the continent, we must remind them that they have a vital role to play in its transformation.

I urge them never to stop dreaming, to come back, to work on the continent and, above all, to seize the opportunities that are emerging.

This is precisely why UCLG Africa has established a youth employability programme to support its members in preparing young people to seize the opportunities offered by institutions such as the African Development Bank.

Africa needs their skills, their energy,

their intelligence and their strength. We must therefore support this generation and give young people the means to build businesses, innovate and create.

If migration abroad enabled us to open our eyes to Africa's potential, we must now learn to open our eyes from within Africa itself, so that we can see that potential and transform it.

Above all, we must not allow several decades to pass before young people realise that they left the gold behind - and that this awakening came too late.

By investing in Africa and remaining on the continent, you can transform this immense potential into wealth and well-being. And today, the continent has extraordinary accelerators capable of making this transformation happen.

Artificial intelligence and new information technologies, in particular, constitute the new alphabet of tomorrow's development. The faster we master these technologies and put them at the service of our territories, the faster we will be able to accelerate our transformation.

Our shared ambition must be to enable Africa to make, within a single generation, the transition from poverty to prosperity.

Ultimately, this is what all our efforts today are about: creating the conditions that will enable the transition from scarcity to well-being, from poverty to wealth, to be achieved within a single generation.

Interview with Samirat Nti

Transforming resources locally, creating value chains, retaining talent, and making cities, regions, and rural areas true centers of wealth...

NAFAD

Financing Africa through Africa: The African Development Bank's New Financial Architecture

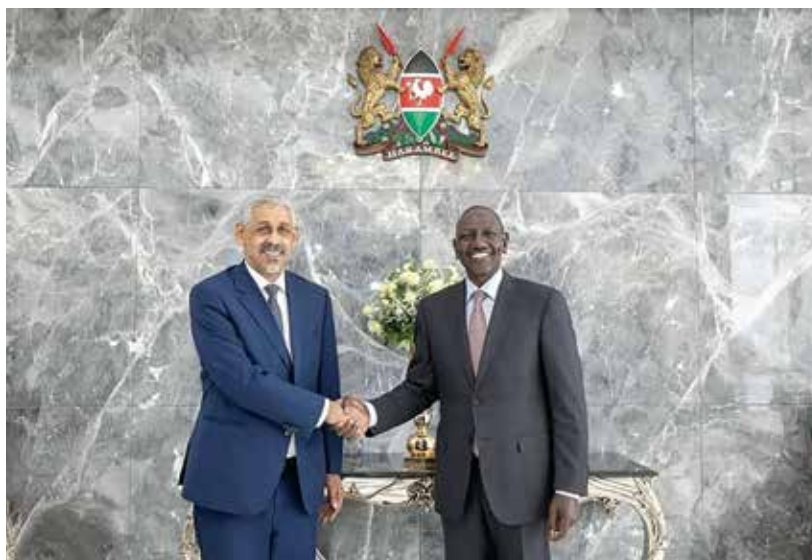
There are moments when a continent stops asking and starts building. In early April, in Abidjan, around one hundred decision-makers - central bank governors, heads of sovereign wealth funds and finance ministers - endorsed the eleven-point Abidjan Consensus. Three weeks later, in Brazzaville, from 25 to 29 May, the 61st Annual Meeting of the African Development Bank (AfDB) made it one of the central themes of its agenda.

In September, the African heads of state and government attending the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York will have something unusual in their briefing folders: an African roadmap for financing Africa.

NAFAD - the New African Financial Architecture for Development - is not another institutional acronym designed to embellish communiqués. It represents a paradigm shift. "After decades of knocking on the doors of the Bretton Woods institutions and calling for reforms, Africa has grown tired of waiting," says Cyprien Olanga, a Central African economist. In his view, Africa has now chosen to build its own walls.

The reality is painful. Recent World Bank and IMF estimates indicate that Africa needs more than \$400 billion a year to close its development financing gap. Infrastructure alone faces an annual shortfall of between \$184 billion and \$221 billion. Climate finance needs amount to another \$213 billion. And yet these figures conceal an intolerable paradox: the continent does not lack money. It lacks mechanisms to keep and deploy it.

"The truth is that we are not suffering from a shortage of capital. Africa has approximately \$4 trillion in medium-



and long-term savings," Sidi Ould Tah said at the Abidjan Consultative Dialogue.

REFERENCE POINTS

- Nearly \$130 to \$170 billion: annual infrastructure financing gap in Africa (AfDB estimates).
- Approximately 4%: Africa's share of global GDP, despite representing nearly 19% of the world's population.
- 54 AfDB member countries.
- The AfCFTA is now the world's largest free trade area in terms of participating states.
- Financing needs related to climate adaptation and the energy transition are projected to reach hundreds of billions of dollars by 2030.

Before taking office on 1 September 2025, Ould Tah had transformed the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA), increasing its assets to nearly \$7 billion and securing AAA and AA+ ratings for the institution.

But where does the money go?

Every year, between 12 million and 15 million young Africans enter the labour market. Only around 3 million formal jobs are created. Meanwhile, Africa attracts barely 1% of global institutional capital.

"Africa is not short of capital. Africa is short of risk transformation," Ould Tah stressed at the Africa Forward Summit in Nairobi in May 2026.

Carlos Lopes, the Guinea-Bissau-born economist who headed the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa for many years, puts it with uncompromising clarity: "For decades, Africa has worked with its development partners, and concessional finance has played a role — particularly for the most vulnerable countries. But we have

also learned its limitations. It was never designed to finance transformation on a large scale.”

An Architecture, Not a Fund

This is precisely where NAFAD comes in. It is neither a new bank nor another fund. It is an architecture - a coordination framework designed to make Africa’s existing financial institutions work together.

For Olanga, the principle is simple in ambition but radical in scope. “NAFAD rests on four pillars: subsidiarity, complementarity, coordination, and disciplined risk transformation.”

The objective is to mobilise pension funds, sovereign wealth funds and domestic savings; attract private capital through intelligent risk-sharing mechanisms; deepen regional financial markets; and increase financing in local currencies.

The first concrete manifestation is already visible.

In Nairobi, Kenyan President William Ruto strongly championed ATIDI - the African Trade & Investment Development Insurance institution - calling for it to become “a critical pillar of the new African financial architecture for development.”

The idea is to leverage the AfDB’s AAA-rated balance sheet to strengthen African institutions capable of mobilising investment on a large scale. France immediately followed suit.

Robert Beugré Mambé, Côte d’Ivoire’s Prime Minister, speaking on behalf of President Alassane Ouattara, welcomed “a real opportunity to deepen our collective reflection on the reforms needed to build a fairer international financial system, better suited to the realities of today’s world.”

Mavis Owusu-Gyamfi, President of the African Center for Economic Transformation, based in Accra, captures the spirit of the moment: “I like the approach President Tah is bringing: we have to come together to make this work. Let’s defragment, collaborate and coordinate.”

For Africa’s financial landscape is fragmented. Every country wants its own bank, its own fund, its own stock

exchange. NAFAD seeks to bring them together.

An Instrument of Sovereignty

Some leaders’ careers help explain the projects they champion. Sidi Ould Tah is one of them.

His style is markedly different from that of his predecessor. He is discreet, multilingual and deeply attentive. Yet behind this restraint lies an iron determination.

“The question today is not our ability to mobilize resources, but our ability to channel them productively,” he asked in Brazzaville.

He went on, bluntly: “African savings

THE FIVE AMBITIONS OF NAFAD

- Mobilize more African savings for development.
- Develop deeper and more integrated African financial markets.
- Increase financing in local currencies to reduce exchange rate risks.
- Strengthen guarantee mechanisms to attract more private capital.
- Coordinate major African financial institutions around a shared vision of economic transformation.

have not sufficiently financed Africa’s development. This is partly explained by fragmentation, and in today’s world, fragmentation comes at a cost.”

Yet between ambition and reality lies a road filled with obstacles.

Mavis Owusu-Gyamfi puts it with the precision of someone familiar with the intricacies of negotiations: “In Brazzaville, we talked less about the ‘what’ than about the ‘how’. The real challenge will be the technical details of the how.”

NAFAD assumes that states will accept deeper financial integration. That pension funds in Nigeria, South Africa and Morocco will coordinate their

strategies. That Africa’s still-shallow financial markets will be able to absorb unprecedented volumes of capital.

And, above all, that governments will reform their tax systems.

Kevin Urama, Chief Economist and Vice President of the AfDB Group, makes essentially the same point when he stresses that domestic resource mobilization is “essential to strengthen resilience, reinforce sovereignty and provide essential public services and infrastructure.”

At the 58th Conference of African Ministers of Finance in Tangier in April 2026, he outlined five pillars for such mobilization: strengthening tax policies, simplifying tax regimes, diversifying sources of revenue, broadening the tax base, and reducing illicit financial flows.

These are all reform fronts requiring courageous political choices. But beyond the mechanisms themselves, NAFAD carries immense symbolic weight.

“In a world where protectionism is accelerating, where Sino-American rivalry is shaping capital flows, and where official development assistance is declining, NAFAD is also an instrument of economic sovereignty,” Olanga argues.

“It is an operational complement to the AfCFTA, as if trade and finance were finally meeting. Its objective is to finance the African Union’s Agenda 2063 with African resources.”

Sidi Ould Tah knows this. At his inauguration in Abidjan a year ago, he had already set out the direction: “Africa must look North, South, East and West - not to imitate, but to draw on the wisdom and strength of each direction while defining its own path.”

Less than a year later, he concluded with a renewed sense of urgency: “The political moment is now. The institution exists. The approach has been approved. The path for capital has been laid out. What remains is a collective decision: to multiply Africa’s financial firepower in the service of its transformation.”

Sylvestre Tetchiada

CLAVER GATETE UNITED NATIONS UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL AND EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA (ECA)

The Economist Seeking to Reinvent Africa's Growth Model

Since October 6, 2023, Claver Gatete has served as United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). In this strategic position, he heads the primary UN body responsible for economic policy and research on the continent. A renowned Rwandan economist, he brings to Africa more than three decades of experience across public policy, finance, diplomacy, and economic governance.

Born on May 23, 1962, in Mbarara, Uganda, he pursued his higher education in Canada, earning both a bachelor's and a master's degree in agricultural economics from the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. This academic background equipped him with a deep understanding of the economic challenges surrounding development, agriculture, and the structural transformation of emerging economies. His career began in Canada, where he worked as an economist for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada as well as Statistics Canada between 1993 and 1997. Upon returning to Rwanda, he joined the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Kigali as a national economist. This initial role within the UN system marked the start of a career dedicated to the economic modernization of Rwanda and the broader African continent.

From Top National Responsibilities to the International Stage

Starting in 2000, Gatete held several strategic positions within the Rwandan government. As Director General for



Social and Economic Affairs in the Office of the President, he contributed to coordinating national development policies. He also represented the President on the NEPAD Steering Committee and coordinated the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)—two major continental governance initiatives.

After serving as Secretary General and Secretary to the Treasury in the Ministry of Finance, he was appointed Ambassador of Rwanda to the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Iceland from 2005 to 2009. Returning to Kigali, he joined the National Bank of Rwanda, serving first as Deputy Governor and later as Governor from 2011 to 2013, where he helped strengthen the country's financial stability.

Appointed Minister of Finance and Economic Planning from 2013 to 2018, he spearheaded fiscal policy and guided key reforms supporting Rwanda's robust economic growth. He subsequently became Minister of Infrastructure until 2022, overseeing major structural investments in transport, energy, and public utilities.

In 2022, he returned to diplomacy as Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Rwanda to the United Nations in New York. A year later, he was appointed to lead the Economic Commission for Africa, succeeding Cameroonian economist Vera Songwe.

An Advocacy for a New African Economy

At the Economic Commission for Africa, Gatete champions a clear vision: Africa cannot achieve lasting prosperity by relying solely on raw material extraction, capital accumulation, or low-skilled labor. In his view, the continent must undergo a structural transformation powered by knowledge, innovation, and disruptive technologies.

His agenda centers on four major priorities. The first is strengthening human capital through national skills pacts, with a strong focus on basic education, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), alongside digital literacy.

The second priority aims to accelerate



industrialization by integrating technologies like artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, and robotics across the agricultural, industrial, and service sectors. The third focuses on African data sovereignty, which he views as a strategic economic asset that must be leveraged domestically. Finally, he

advocates for a fundamental reform of innovation financing by leveraging blended finance, public venture capital, and innovation bonds.

Claver Gatete grounds this vision within the framework of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which he considers the primary engine for industrialization and economic integration across the continent.

Since taking office, he has also distinguished himself by highlighting the decline in international funding for healthcare in Africa and calling for a reimagining of Africa's economic model in the face of global technological shifts. For him, the choice is clear: unless African nations invest heavily in skills, data governance, and innovation, the continent risks remaining a supplier of raw materials and low-value labor, rather than becoming a key player in tomorrow's global economy.

Huberson Digbeu.

GATETE ADVOCATES FOR A PROFOUND REFORM OF INNOVATION FINANCING, BY MOBILIZING GREATER USE OF BLENDED FINANCE, PUBLIC VENTURE CAPITAL, AND INNOVATION BONDS.

AFCFTA FIVE YEARS ON

IS THE FREE TRADE AREA DELIVERING ON ITS PROMISES?



The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) stands at a critical crossroads. Five years after the official start of its operational implementation in January 2021, it has laid the groundwork for a single market of over 50 countries. Despite strong promises of industrial integration and a boost in intra-African trade, its practical execution faces deep structural hurdles.

The AfCFTA is more than just a free trade zone; it is a flagship project of the African Union (AU)

under Agenda 2063. It provides a member-state-driven blueprint to achieve inclusive and sustainable development across the continent. Grounded in a comprehensive agreement along with protocols, annexes, and additional appendices, it represents a single, unified commitment. The AU Summit adopted the AfCFTA in March 2018 in Kigali, Rwanda.

According to its founding agreement, the general objectives of the AfCFTA are to: create a liberalized market for goods and services through successive rounds of nego-

tiations; contribute to the movement of capital and natural persons and facilitate investment by building on initiatives and developments within State Parties and Regional Economic Communities (RECs); lay the foundation for a Continental Customs Union at a later stage; promote and achieve sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development, gender equality, and structural transformation among State Parties; enhance the competitiveness of State Parties' economies; resolve the challenges of multiple and overlapping memberships; and

accelerate regional and continental integration processes.

Initial Progress and Promises

Despite the slow pace of achieving its overarching objectives, the AfCFTA's first notable milestone remains the unanimous consensus reached among all 54 signatory countries and the rollout of actual trading among several nations via the Guided Trade Initiative. This was followed by the adoption of negotiated additional protocols on digital trade, investment, and services, alongside a heightened awareness surrounding the local processing of raw materials. Key early achievements and promises also include the creation of a single legal framework to boost trade among African nations; the target to eliminate tariffs on 90% to 97% of tariff lines; the adoption of crucial protocols—such as digital trade and investment—designed to streamline commercial exchanges; and the implementation of trade facilitation tools, notably the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS) and the Trade Observatory to track and evaluate inter-state trade performance.

Persistent Obstacles and Challenges

Significant barriers continue to impede progress toward these general goals, posing major challenges for AfCFTA signatories. Chief among them is the persistent weakness of intra-African trade, which hovers around a mere 15% to 18%, severely constrained by severe logistical and administrative bottlenecks. Furthermore, while the removal of tariffs on 90% to 97% of products is phased over ten to fifteen years, progress is slowed by persistent non-tariff barriers (border controls, corruption, delays), low levels of industrialization that limit the range of exchangeable goods, and the dominant weight of informal trade unaccounted for in official statistics. In addition, non-tariff barriers impose heavy costs through border friction, administrative hassles,



and corruption. Delays by numerous states in finalizing and effectively applying tariff offers, along-

INFRASTRUCTURE DEFICIENCIES IN TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS CONNECTING THE REGIONS OF THE CONTINENT CONSTITUTE A REAL OBSTACLE TO TRADE.

side chronic transport and logistical infrastructure deficits linking the continent's regions, severely stifle trade flows. Finally, the low level of local raw material processing prior to export continues to cap the economic competitiveness of African nations.

Signatory countries that are lagging behind in implementation must urgently accelerate reforms and policy decisions under the agreement. Only then can the African Union hope to deliver on the AfCFTA's core promises in time for its 2063 horizon.

Ferdinand GADE

MAMADOU G. K. KONÉ

Building a More Inclusive African Insurance Industry

At the helm of the Federation of African National Insurance Companies (FANAF) since February 2026, Mamadou G. K. Koné represents a new generation of African leaders who firmly believe that insurance is far more than a financial product: it is an instrument of social protection, economic resilience and sustainable development.

Elected President of the leading professional organisation representing French-speaking African insurers, bringing together insurance markets in more than thirty countries, he is championing an ambitious vision to transform the industry into a model that is more accessible, more innovative and more closely aligned with the needs of local populations.

Alongside his continental responsibilities, he heads SanlamAllianz Côte d'Ivoire Assurances, the holding company created through the combination of two major industry players, while also serving as President of the Association of Insurance Companies of Côte d'Ivoire (ASA-CI).

This triple responsibility reflects the confidence he enjoys within an industry undergoing profound transformation, as well as his ability to combine strategic vision, operational excellence and institutional leadership. At a time when low insurance penetration remains one of Africa's major economic challenges, he has emerged as one of the most influential voices in shaping the sector's transformation.

Career and Expertise

Mamadou G. K. Koné's career is that of a professional who has explored



virtually every segment of the African insurance value chain. A graduate of the International Insurance Institute (IIA) in Yaoundé, the École Nationale de la Statistique et de l'Administration Économique (ENSAE) in Paris, and London Business School, he has developed a rare combination of expertise spanning actuarial science, regulation, management and corporate strategy.

With nearly three decades of professional experience, he has held senior positions across insurance, reinsurance and brokerage, as well as within Côte d'Ivoire's National Insurance Directorate and the Inter-African Conference on Insurance Markets (CIMA), where he notably served as Chief Supervisory Commissioner. This dual public- and private-sector experience has given him an in-

depth understanding of both regulatory requirements and the economic realities facing insurance companies. His rise within SanlamAllianz Côte d'Ivoire, which he has led since 2014 before taking the helm in 2024 of the new holding company created through the merger of Sanlam and Allianz, demonstrates his ability to steer complex transformations in an exceptionally competitive environment.

Modernisation and Social Impact

Over the years, Mamadou G. K. Koné has distinguished himself through his sustained commitment to modernising Africa's insurance industry. His approach is rooted in the consolidation of insurance markets, stronger corporate governance, accelerated digital transformation and the development of solutions tailored to the continent's economic realities.

His election as President of FANAF comes at a pivotal moment, as African insurers face a range of major challenges: financial inclusion, climate-related risks, the digitalisation of services, the growing burden of health risks and the need to rebuild and sustain policyholders' confidence.

The General States of Insurance for All, held in Cotonou in June 2026, marked a turning point under his leadership, with the adoption of a Pan-African Pact for Inclusive Insurance comprising twenty-three resolutions and a "Cotonou Call".

This strategic framework notably calls for tax reforms, regulatory changes, the promotion of gender-responsive insurance, and the establishment of a FANAF Inclusive Insurance Day aimed at raising public awareness and expanding access to insurance. For Mamadou G. K. Koné, trust is the insurance industry's true capital, while the prompt settlement of claims remains the foremost driver of the sector's democratisation.

A Human-Centered Vision

Beyond economic performance,



Mamadou G. K. Koné advocates a deeply human-centered conception of insurance. His vision consistently places the interests of customers, the protection of policyholders and social impact at the heart of corporate strategies.

He advocates risk-proportionate regulation capable of safeguarding the financial soundness of insurance companies while fostering innova-

tion and enabling the emergence of products tailored to populations that have, until now, remained largely excluded from traditional insurance mechanisms.

His involvement in the Côte d'Ivoire General Confederation of Enterprises (CGECI), FANAF, ASA-CI and several African professional bodies reflects his determination to build strong institutions capable of supporting inclusive growth.

Awarded the rank of Knight of the National Order of Côte d'Ivoire for his contribution to the development of the insurance sector, he belongs to a generation of African leaders who believe that economic performance only truly matters when it builds trust, protects families, supports businesses and strengthens the resilience of African economies.

His ambition is clear: to make insurance an indispensable pillar of Africa's development and a genuine driver of shared prosperity for decades to come.

Irène Djipohi

MAMADOU G. K. KONÉ'S CAREER PATH IS THAT OF A PROFESSIONAL WHO HAS EXPLORED THE ENTIRE VALUE CHAIN OF AFRICAN INSURANCE.

TONY ELUMELU

The Entrepreneur Who Turned Africapitalism into a Continental Transformation Project

In Africa's economic landscape, few business leaders have left as profound a mark on their era as Tony Onyemaechi Elumelu. Banker, investor, entrepreneur and philanthropist, this Nigerian businessman has, in less than three decades, become one of the most influential voices in Africa's private sector.

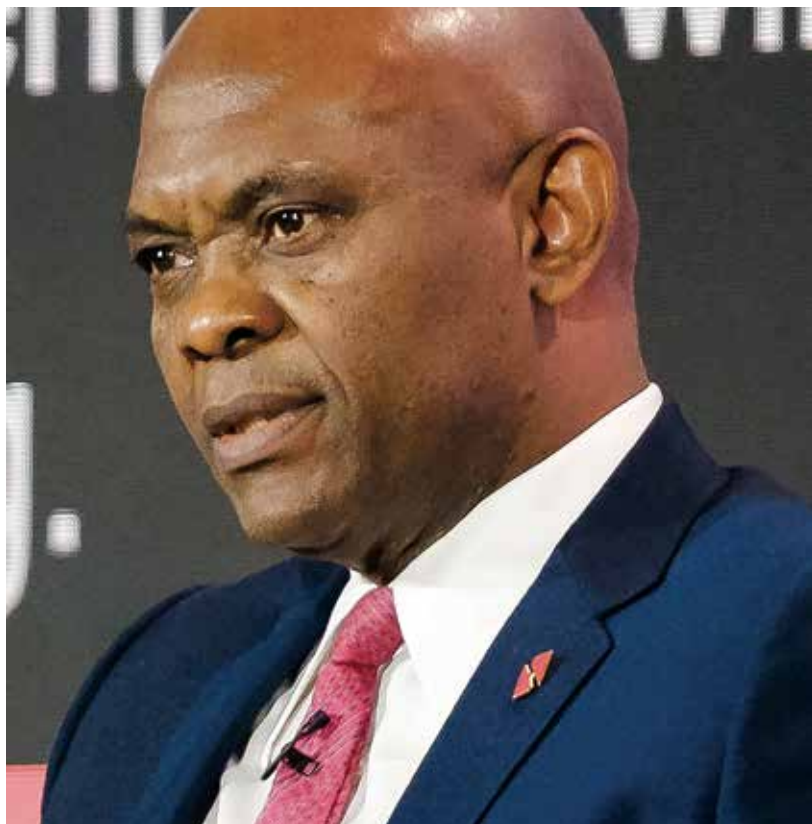
His journey goes far beyond that of a successful business executive: he embodies a vision of development in which African capital, African businesses and African entrepreneurs serve as the main engines of the continent's prosperity.

The Making of a Pan-African Finance Builder

Born on 22 March 1963 in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria, Tony Elumelu grew up in a family originally from Delta State. From an early age, he developed a keen interest in business and economics. After earning a degree in Economics from Ambrose Alli University, he pursued further studies with a Master's degree in Economics from the University of Lagos, convinced that knowledge is an entrepreneur's first form of capital.

His career began modestly in the banking sector. After an initial experience in sales, he entered the world of finance at a time when Nigeria's banking system was undergoing profound transformation. In 1997, at just 34 years of age, he led a group of investors in acquiring a distressed bank, Crystal Bank, which was subsequently renamed Standard Trust Bank. Within just a few years, the institution returned to profitability and established itself as one of Nigeria's most dynamic banks.

The real turning point came in 2005, when Standard Trust Bank merged with United Bank for Africa (UBA).



The transaction, regarded as one of the most significant banking consolidations ever undertaken in sub-Saharan Africa, opened a new chapter in the bank's history. Under Tony Elumelu's leadership, UBA gradually moved beyond its status as a predominantly Nigerian bank to become a pan-African banking group with a presence in around 20 African countries, as well as in the United Kingdom, France, the United States and the United Arab Emirates.

This strategy earned UBA the nickname "Africa's Global Bank"—an institution capable of facilitating trade and investment flows between Africa and the rest of the world.

The Empire of a Private-Sector Visionary

In 2010, after stepping down from his executive position as Group Managing Director, Tony Elumelu chose to broaden his entrepreneurial horizons. He founded Heirs Holdings, a family-owned investment group whose activities span energy, financial services, hospitality, healthcare, real estate and technology.

Through the holding company, he also took control of Transnational Corporation of Nigeria (Transcorp), a conglomerate active in power generation, oil and gas, as well as luxury hospitality.

ELUMELU'S FIVE LEADERSHIP LESSONS

1. Believe in Africa's potential before anyone else
2. Turn crises into opportunities
3. Invest in women and youth
4. Think African, act globally
5. Profit is only meaningful if it creates prosperity

THE 10 DATES THAT SHAPED HIS DESTINY

- March 22, 1963. Born in Jos, Plateau State (Nigeria), to a family originally from the Delta region.
- 1986. Graduated with a degree in economics from Ambrose Alli University, before continuing his studies at the University of Lagos where he earned a Master's degree in economics.
- 1997. At just 34 years old, he led a group of investors who acquired Crystal Bank, a struggling financial institution, which was renamed Standard Trust Bank.
- 2005. Spearheaded the historic merger between Standard Trust Bank and United Bank for Africa (UBA). This operation marked a major turning point in the African banking landscape.
- 2007. UBA became one of the first truly pan-African banking groups, with an ambitious expansion strategy across the continent.
- 2010. Steps down as Executive Director of UBA and founds Heirs Holdings, an investment holding company active in finance, energy, hospitality, healthcare, and technology.
- 2010. Establishes the Tony Elumelu Foundation, dedicated to promoting African entrepreneurship and supporting a new generation of business creators.
- 2015. Launches the Tony Elumelu Entrepreneurship Programme (TEEP) with a \$100 million commitment to train, mentor, and fund 10,000 African entrepreneurs over ten years.
- 2020. Named to the prestigious TIME100 list, which recognizes the 100 most influential people in the world.
- 2026. After reaching the maximum term of office provided for by the banking governance rules in Nigeria, he will leave the chairmanship of the Board of Directors of United Bank for Africa, while continuing his activities at the head of Heirs Holdings, Transcorp and the Tony Elumelu Foundation.

But it is undoubtedly his philosophy of "Africapitalism" that has made him a global reference point. According to this doctrine, Africa's private sector should be the primary driver of the continent's economic development. Businesses should not pursue profit alone; they also have a responsibility to invest for the long term, create jobs, develop local skills and contribute to collective prosperity.

For Tony Elumelu, Africa does not lack talent or resources. What it needs above all is patient capital, visionary leadership and an enabling environment for entrepreneurship.

This conviction took concrete shape with the establishment of the Tony Elumelu Foundation in 2010. Five years later, he announced a historic commitment of \$100 million over ten years to support 10,000 African entrepreneurs. Since then, tens of thousands of young entrepreneurs from all 54 African countries have benefited from training, mentorship, professional networks and seed funding. The foundation is now regarded as one of Africa's largest philanthropic initiatives dedicated to entrepreneurship.

His influence now extends far beyond Africa's borders. A regular participant in the World Economic Forum in Davos, the World Government Summit in Dubai, the African Development Bank's Annual Meetings and numerous international forums, Tony Elumelu has consistently advocated for an Africa capable of financing its own development.

In 2020, TIME magazine included him among the 100 most influential people in the world, further cementing his role as a leading voice for a new generation of African business leaders. His commitment has earned him numerous distinctions, including several Nigerian national honours, honorary doctorates and international recognitions for his contribution to private-sector development and the promotion of entrepreneurship.

2026: The Time for Succession

In July 2026, a new chapter opened in his career. UBA announced that Tony Elumelu would officially step down, on 21 August 2026, as Chairman of

its Board of Directors, after reaching the maximum 12-year tenure permitted for non-executive directors under the Central Bank of Nigeria's corporate governance rules. His designated successor is Emmanuel Nnorom, an experienced member of the group's board. Presented as a planned succession, the transition does not signal Tony Elumelu's withdrawal from the economic stage. He remains Chairman of Heirs Holdings, Transcorp and the Tony Elumelu Foundation, where he continues to champion investment, energy, industrialization and African entrepre-

neurship.

At 63, Tony Elumelu stands as one of the leading figures of contemporary African capitalism. His career illustrates the emergence of a generation of African business leaders convinced that the continent's economic destiny depends above all on Africans' ability to invest in their own continent.

More than a banker or an industrialist, he has become a symbol of an Africa determined to create its own wealth, finance its own future and claim its rightful place in the global economy.

Irène Djipohi

MAPUTO PROTOCOL

Twenty Years On, the Gap Between the Law and Women's Lives Is Widening

In Senegal, 34,079 clandestine abortions were recorded in 2024 (Association of Senegalese Women Lawyers). Across the continent, they number in the hundreds of thousands every year. Adopted twenty-three years ago by the African Union, the Maputo Protocol promised to protect women. In practice, it is almost never implemented. Today, a new text—the African Charter on Family, Sovereignty, and Values—championed by certain governments and conservative parliamentary networks, threatens to widen the gap between the law and daily reality even further.

According to African Union (AU) data from February 2026, 46 of the 55 member states have ratified the Maputo Protocol. The exceptions are nine countries: Burundi, Chad, Egypt, Eritrea, Madagascar, Niger, Somalia, Sudan, and Morocco.

For the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), the AU body responsible for ensuring respect for human rights across the continent, the Protocol remains one of Africa's most significant contributions to the international human rights framework. «The challenge is no longer one of accession, but rather the effective implementation of its provisions within national legislation and public policies,» explains Paul Zemdjo, socio-politician and university lecturer in Cameroon and Burkina Faso, speaking to *Hommes d'Afrique*. «In several states, implementation remains constrained by reservations entered upon ratification, particularly regarding Article 6 (marriage) and Article 14 (health and reproductive rights).»

This observation is shared by the African Commission itself. For Janet Ramatoulie Sallah-Njie, Special

Rapporteur on Rights of Women in Africa and Vice-Chairperson of the ACHPR, these reservations have a direct and measurable impact: «Reservations limit states' obligations and accountability, and directly affect the extent to which women can claim their rights.»

The ACHPR shares this assessment with civil society actors across Africa who advocated for the adoption of the Protocol. «Despite 46 ratifications,

**MILLIONS
OF WOMEN
AND GIRLS
CONTINUE TO
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DISCRIMINATION.**

millions of women and girls continue to face persistent discrimination,» notes Firmin Kra, socio-anthropologist at Alassane Ouattara University in Bouaké, pointing to the incomplete domestication of international commitments and the enduring weight of customary, religious, and social norms.

A Rival Charter Gains Momentum

Since 2023, a parliamentary movement that emerged in Entebbe, Uganda, has been working on a competing text: the African Charter on Family, Sovereignty and Values. «Driven by a succession of interparliamentary conferences and promoted by conservative organizations often linked to North American and European evangelical networks, this charter seeks to establish the so-cal-

led 'traditional' family as a continental norm and asserts state sovereignty over reproductive health, education and marriage - areas that the Maputo Protocol specifically regulates through individual rights,» explains Firmin Kra. He adds: «In May 2025, Nairobi hosted the 2nd Pan-African Conference on Family Values, which concluded with the 'Nairobi Declaration'. A year later, in June 2026, Accra marked another milestone with the 4th African Interparliamentary Conference on Family, Sovereignty and Values, devoted to the adoption of a draft African Charter and signaling the gradual institutionalization of this continental movement.»

The text is expected to be submitted to the African Union Assembly for a vote in February 2027, he continues. «Its proponents present it as an assertion of sovereignty in response to international funding they consider overly conditional; its critics see it as an attempt to hollow out rights already enshrined in the Maputo Protocol, particularly those guaranteed under Article 14.»

«To discuss the Protocol today without mentioning this charter would be to ignore the actual balance of power that is now shaping the future of African women's rights,» Kra stresses.

For Janet Ramatoulie Sallah-Njie, this conservative offensive could roll back gains that remain fragile. She warns: «Twenty-three years of normative progress can be undone far more quickly than they were built.»

What Still Stands in the Way, in Practical Terms

Three obstacles repeatedly emerge from analyses by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), the African Union (AU) and women's rights organizations.





The first concerns reservations made at the time of ratification. “Without calling into question their status as States Parties, these reservations limit the scope of certain obligations and hinder the full implementation of the treaty,” Zemdjio explains.

The second is financial. As early as 2001, the Abuja Declaration committed African heads of state to allocating at least 15% of public expenditure to health. More than a decade later, according to UNAIDS’ ‘Abuja+12’ assessment, only a handful of countries—namely Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Rwanda, Togo and Zambia—had met that commitment.

The third relates to the uneven domestication of the text. “Women still face customary, religious or legislative provisions that are incompatible with the principles of Maputo, while recourse to African human-rights protection mechanisms remains complex and difficult to access,” observes Paulin Obam, an anthropologist and member of the Congolese Human Rights Observatory. For Janet Ramatoulie Sallah-Njie, however, the explanation is primarily political: “The main weakness today lies in the absence of sustained political commitment.”

“Ignoring Men in Advocacy Means Condemning Ourselves to the Status Quo”

An active member of the Association of Journalists for Sexual and Reproductive Health in Benin (AJ-SSR Benin), Fulbert Adjimehossou works precisely in this field. The association is committed to reducing maternal mortality by improving access to information on reproductive healthcare.

The journalist highlights an uncomfortable

reality: “The norms that hinder the implementation of the Protocol are shaped and arbitrated by men - heads of households, traditional leaders and parliamentarians - in a context where women remain underrepresented in decision-making bodies. Ignoring men in advocacy means condemning ourselves to the status quo.”

“In Benin, we have been fortunate enough to mobilize imams and traditional rulers who understand that the role of men is not to authorize access to healthcare, but to support women at every stage,” Adjimehossou explains. According to him, several civil society coalitions involved in the Doxami Campaign have initiated dialogues with traditional leaders, trained “champions” - male community advocates - and engaged religious leaders as allies.

“It is this shift, from the role of gatekeeper to that of ally, that makes the difference between a political promise and genuine change in social norms.”

Adjimehossou points to another, less visible but equally decisive obstacle: the lack of coordination among stakeholders.

“We often see governments moving forward on their own, NGOs working in silos, and donors financing parallel

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projects without ever coordinating with one another. Ultimately, the impact remains diluted.”

In Benin, he says, a different approach was attempted: starting with a shared assessment and then allocating responsibilities across awareness-raising, advocacy, capacity building and legal assistance. According to him, this synergy helped amplify the impact of the Doxami Campaign, in which NGOs, healthcare professionals and the media joined forces to translate the law into practice on the ground.

“What I would like to see mainstreamed is for coordination to be built into projects from the outset, with data shared rather than kept by individual stakeholders. Otherwise, we end up funding redundant efforts while genuine needs remain unmet.”

On Article 14, whose spirit is precisely challenged by the competing charter, Adjimehossou is unequivocal:

“Across Africa, unsafe abortion continues to kill women and girls at an alarming rate, making our region one of the most dangerous in the world in this regard.”

He cites research conducted by the Centre for Research in Human Reproduction and Demography (CERRHUD) and Rutgers University to establish the link with restrictive legal frameworks, which impede access to safe healthcare - including for victims of rape or incest, or where the mother's life is at risk, situations that are expressly protected under Article 14.

An analysis echoed by Janet Ramatoulie Sallah-Njie: “The persistence of unsafe abortions reflects shortcomings in the implementation of the Protocol, rather than flaws in the text itself.”

“It is regrettable that implementation continues to be hampered not only by formal reservations, but also by the failure to incorporate Article 14 into domestic law, including in countries that have entered no reservations. Many governments have symbolically embraced the Protocol without transposing this provision into their national legislation.”

From his travels across West Africa, he identifies the same root cause: “stigma, combined with the weakness of the legal



framework. A woman who has been raped should not have to risk her life a second time because she cannot legally access safe healthcare.”

The Call to Decision-Makers

According to Obam, it is precisely because lifting reservations, mobilizing resources and translating international commitments into domestic law fall within spheres of power that remain largely dominated by men that the issue directly concerns decision-makers: heads of state, ministers, parliamentarians, judges and senior government officials - the very actors who hold the levers capable of turning a treaty into enforceable rights.

**23 YEARS AFTER
ITS ADOPTION,
THE MAPUTO
PROTOCOL
NO LONGER HAS TO
DEMONSTRATE ITS
LEGITIMACY.**

“They are the ones who ratify conventions, pass laws, allocate healthcare budgets, reform family codes and ensure that international commitments prevail over conflicting norms. The Maputo Protocol does not ask them to create new rights; it asks them to give full effect to the rights their states have freely accepted.”

Twenty-three years after its adoption, the Maputo Protocol no longer needs to prove its legitimacy. What is now at stake is a balance of power: a widely ratified instrument that is unevenly implemented, confronted by a competing charter that is gaining ground ahead of the February 2027 African Union Summit.

“The real challenge now lies in making it effective,” Zemdjo concludes. “The legal instruments exist, and the commitments are known. What is still lacking is sufficiently strong political will to turn promises into measurable results. Protecting women's rights, reducing maternal mortality and promoting positive masculinity are no longer merely matters of legal obligation; they are matters of governance and a decisive investment in the future of the continent.”

Sylvestre Tetchiada

TAHARA

Dignity to the Very Last Breath

Faced with loneliness, hardship and the burden of bureaucratic requirements, death too often strikes the most vulnerable amid indifference. Through the work of the Tahara Association and its president, Samad Akrach, civic commitment stands as a bulwark against such neglect. This is an inside look at a public-interest mission in which human dignity reasserts its rights.

What becomes of our human condition when life comes to an end in isolation, destitution or an administrative void? In Europe and major urban centres, hundreds of people die each year in the most absolute anonymity. Migrants, isolated elderly people and precarious workers: death acts as a magnifying mirror of social inequalities. Faced with this disturbing reality, public authorities can sometimes find themselves powerless or constrained by cumbersome bureaucratic procedures. It is precisely within this gap that Tahara has emerged, embodied by the vision and determination of its president, Samad Akrach.

By making respect for the deceased an ethical imperative, the organization does far more than arrange funerals. It fulfils a public-interest mission, reminding institutions and citizens alike that human dignity does not end with the last breath.

A Response to the Crisis of Funeral Insecurity

The average cost of a funeral represents a major obstacle for the most financially vulnerable households. When a death occurs within a family living in extreme poverty, or when a body remains unclaimed, there is a real risk that the deceased will receive impersonal and inadequate care.

To address this challenge, Tahara has developed an innovative structure: obtaining the necessary funeral-ser-



vices authorization, providing full financial support for procedures involving the most disadvantaged, offering ritual assistance and supporting bereaved families. Far from being merely a service provider, the organization acts as a social buffer.

"Our struggle is to ensure that no one is abandoned, either during their lifetime or after their death. Every human being has the right to a dignified farewell," Samad Akrach told *Hommes d'Afrique*.

A former hospital nursing assistant and specialist in mortuary care, Akrach has brought to the association a level of technical rigor and professionalism that has earned recognition. Today, Tahara's work is entering a strategic new phase, as the organization establishes itself as a key interlocutor for international decision-makers.

On 10 August 2026, in Rabat, during the National Day of Moroccans Residing Abroad, Tahara, alongside

CISMED and the Association of Franco-Moroccan Funeral Directors, brought together experts and decision-makers at the Dawliz Hotel. Focusing on the human, legal and medico-legal challenges involved in repatriating human remains, the conference resulted in 13 proposals. Among the key recommendations were the creation of a one-stop administrative service, the acceleration of consular authorizations, the possible provision of care for deceased persons who have no relatives, and mechanisms for resolving conflicts of succession laws.

This momentum reflects the association's determination to institutionalize its work across both shores of the Mediterranean.

"We would like to see institutional support from African embassies and consulates in France to overcome the administrative, legal and medico-legal obstacles associated with the repatriation of human remains," Akrach explains. He adds: "We also wish to open a Tahara Association office in Morocco in order to facilitate closer contact with isolated families."

A Collective Imperative for Solidarity

"Tahara's experience appeals to the conscience of political leaders, diplomats and institutional decision-makers: protecting the most vulnerable must remain at the heart of solidarity policies," commented an African diplomat based in France. "Supporting such initiatives is not merely a matter of occasional generosity; it is a strategic choice aimed at preserving social cohesion and human dignity," he told Hommes d'Afrique.

By restoring a face, a name and a tribute to those whom life has pushed to the margins, Samad Akrach and his team remind us of a fundamental truth: the greatness of a society is measured by the way it treats its most vulnerable members, right through to their final journey.

It is a lesson in humanism and public service to which no decision-maker can afford to remain indifferent.

Sylvestre Tetchiada



3 QUESTIONS TO Samad Akrach, President of Tahara "Leaving no one without dignity in the face of death"

Tahara often steps in when families are faced with bureaucracy or a lack of financial means. How do you reconcile the urgency of the situation, respect for religious rites and the requirements of the French administration?

Our role is to build a bridge between human urgency, respect for religious rites and administrative requirements. As a Franco-Moroccan, I also pay particular attention to Moroccan and African families who are confronted with the death of a loved one in France.

We work with hospitals, local authorities, prefectures, consulates and funeral service providers to facilitate administrative procedures and repatriations, while ensuring that the deceased are treated with dignity and respect for their beliefs, and that all procedures comply with French law.

Beyond ritual support, your work also extends to locating families, mediation and training for funeral professionals. How has this become a genuine public-interest mission?

TAHARA goes far beyond funeral assistance. We locate the families of deceased persons who have no one to turn to, support people with no financial resources, provide institutional mediation and offer free training to frontline professionals. Our work concerns many Moroccan and African families. It is also rooted in the spirit of solidarity and cooperation that Morocco is developing with African countries: strengthening human ties, supporting diasporas and ensuring that no one is left without dignity in the face of death.

In the face of the vulnerability and isolation of deceased persons, what forms of support does Tahara consider a priority from local authorities and public institutions in order to make this humanitarian mission sustainable?

We would like to strengthen partnerships with French local authorities, as well as with Moroccan institutions, consulates and diplomatic representations of African countries. Under the leadership of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, Morocco has developed strong cooperation with many African countries.

This momentum could also serve as a basis for stronger cooperation in matters relating to deaths, repatriation and support for bereaved families. Above all, we need formal agreements, clearly identified points of contact and more streamlined procedures.

Interview by S.T.



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H.E. MOUSSA SALEH BATRAKI

SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE ORGANISATION OF AFRICAN,
CARIBBEAN AND PACIFIC STATES (OACPS)

“OACPS 2035: The Time Has Come to Move from Words to Action”

In a world fractured by wars, debt and competition among major powers, the OACPS is seeking to move into a new dimension. At the helm of the organisation, which brings together 79 countries and 1.5 billion people, the Secretary-General sets out his vision: industrialise, finance development, and speak with one voice. From the Malabo Summit to the Samoa Agreement, and from the youth employment crisis to the broader challenges facing the Global South, he outlines a roadmap designed to ensure that the South no longer merely bears the consequences of globalization, but plays an active role in shaping it.

You took the helm of the OACPS at a time of heightened international tensions. What is your vision for 2035, and why does Malabo mark a turning point?

Malabo was the moment when we decided that the OACPS would no longer simply absorb global shocks. We would anticipate them and turn them into opportunities. That is the real starting point.

The world has entered an era of profound disruption: trade fragmentation, the debt crisis, the climate emergency and technological competition. In this disorder, middle and developing countries can no longer be treated as adjustment variables.

My vision for 2035 is that of an OACPS that matters. No longer merely an organization focused on advocacy, but an organization delivering concrete projects. A coalition of 79 states mobilizing its assets - demographics, natural resources, oceans and geostrategic position - to create wealth at home.

The Malabo Summit was the founding act of this transformation. The Heads of State were very clear: we have had enough of processes. We want measurable results in employment, industrialization and resilience.

The Samoa Agreement opens a new phase with the European Union. How can we ensure that this becomes an investment partnership rather than an aid relationship?

The geopolitical context leaves us no choice. Europe is engaged in a trade and technology rivalry with China and the United States. It has a vital need for our critical minerals, green energy and markets. And we have a vital need for capital, technology and access to markets in order to industrialize. We must therefore put an end to the “donor-recipient” mindset.

With Samoa, we are laying the foundations for a partnership of equals, centered on three pillars:

- The first pillar is local transformation. We no longer want to export 100% of our raw minerals and import 100% of our batteries. If the EU wants lithium, cobalt and nickel, then let us co-invest in processing and manufacturing plants here.
- The second pillar is innovation. We need to finance research and development, digital technologies and start-ups across ACP countries. Tomorrow's jobs will not be found in subsistence agriculture. They will be in technology, agro-industry and the blue economy.
- The third pillar is the private sector. Public budgets will never be sufficient to create the 15 million jobs Africa needs every year. We must de-risk investments and attract European private capital. That is what a 21st-century par-



tnership should look like.

You represent 1.5 billion people. How can this demographic weight be transformed into real influence on the global stage?

Numbers alone do not create power. But numbers combined with coordination can become a genuine force of influence.

Today's world is organized around major blocs: the United States, China, the European Union... If the 79 OACPS member states approach major international negotiations in a fragmented manner - whether at the United Nations, the WTO or climate conferences - they risk having decisions imposed upon them rather than helping shape them.

Our strategy is therefore straightforward: convergence and specialization.

First, convergence. Before every major international negotiation, we work to harmonize the positions of our member states so that we can speak with one voice on the major global chal-

lenges.

Second, specialization. We are building on South-South complementarity. The Caribbean is at the forefront of issues relating to debt and climate resilience. The Pacific brings recognized expertise in ocean governance and the blue economy. Africa has major strengths in industrialization and food security.

With this approach, we become an indispensable force for shaping solutions. When a quarter of humanity speaks with one voice, the major powers can no longer ignore it.

This is how we can have greater influence over reform of the international financial architecture, the evolution of global trade rules and climate negotiations.

Financing is the key to everything. What new sources of funding does the OACPS intend to mobilize in the face of the debt crisis?

The current model has reached its limits. Interest rates have risen sharp-

ly, concessional financing is becoming increasingly scarce, and our needs are enormous: nearly US\$1.3 trillion a year is required to finance our climate and development objectives.

We will not escape this deadlock by accumulating more debt. We need to change the model and mobilize new sources of financing.

First, by mobilizing our own resources. Every year, our countries lose nearly US\$90 billion through illicit financial flows. We must strengthen domestic revenue mobilization, broaden the tax base, make better use of our savings, and enhance the role of our regional development banks.

Second, by turning climate finance into a genuine development lever. Our states are among those least responsible for climate change, yet they are among the hardest hit by its consequences. It is time for our forests, oceans, biodiversity and the environmental services they provide to the world to be fairly valued and remunerated. Carbon markets must become a credible and sustainable

source of revenue for our economies. Finally, we must massively mobilize the private sector. Together with our development banks, we are putting in place blended-finance mechanisms capable of attracting institutional investors, particularly pension funds, to finance infrastructure, industrialization, agriculture and the energy transition without increasing the burden of public debt.

Because the equation is simple: without investment, there are no jobs; without jobs, there is no stability; and without stability, there can be neither sustainable development nor strong institutions.

60% of Africans are under the age of 25. How does the OACPS intend to turn this young population into a driver of development?

As I recently pointed out in an interview with Jeune Afrique, young people are both our greatest asset and our greatest challenge. By 2050, one in three young people in the world will be African.

If we fail to create enough jobs, this demographic dynamic could fuel unemployment, forced migration and instability. Conversely, if we invest in skills, entrepreneurship and innovation, Africa's youth will become the most powerful engine of growth of our century.

That is why we are changing our approach. The issue is no longer simply to talk about young people, but to develop policies with them.

Our ambition is built around three priorities: capital, markets and representation.

First, capital, through the creation of an OACPS fund designed to support young entrepreneurs, particularly in agritech, fintech, renewable energy and other innovative sectors.

Second, markets, by opening up the opportunities offered by a cooperation space bringing together 79 Member



States, fostering trade, partnerships and the integration of young businesses into regional and international value chains.

Finally, representation, by giving young people a genuine role in decision-making processes and interna-

tional delegations. They should not merely be beneficiaries of public policies; they must be active participants in shaping them.

The challenge goes far beyond economics. It is a matter of peace, stability and prosperity for our States and for generations to come.

**FROM THE MOMENT
I TAKEN OFFICE
IN MARCH 2025,
I BROUGHT INTO
A FINANCIAL
RESTRUCTURING
PROCESS BASED
ON CLARIFYING
EXISTING
COMMITMENTS...**

If you were to be judged on three achievements at the end of your term, what would they be?

My first year has been a year of reform and reorganization. I initiated an organizational reform aimed at making the Secretariat leaner, more efficient, more coherent and more results-oriented.

The former structure, which was based on five departments, is gradually being reorganized around two main pillars: (i) an Operations pillar and (ii) a Policy and Programmes pillar.

This restructuring is intended to



clarify responsibilities, reduce costs, strengthen internal coordination and improve the monitoring of decisions taken by the Organization's statutory bodies.

From the time I took office in March 2025, I launched a financial clean-up process based on clarifying existing commitments - including an audit covering the years 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 - prioritizing essential expenditure, and initiating negotiations with service providers to establish a structured payment plan for accumulated debts.

At the same time, efforts to collect statutory contributions have been strengthened, with greater political engagement with Member States. A reform of the contribution system, which dates back to 2017, has also been initiated in order to ensure greater fairness, predictability and financial sustainability among Member States, taking into account the socioeconomic evolution of each country.

We have invested in acquiring a new headquarters for the OACPS Secretariat, pending future political decisions on the permanent relocation of the headquarters to a Member State. Even though this new workspace is provisional, working conditions are better and the Organization's

WE HAVE INVESTED IN THE ACQUISITION OF A NEW HEADQUARTERS FOR THE OACPS HEADQUARTERS PENDING FUTURE POLITICAL DECISIONS ON THE PERMANENT RELOCATION OF THE HEADQUARTERS TO A MEMBER COUNTRY.

image has been enhanced. Beyond that, Member States' delegations are now received with dignity and respect, making dialogue and political consultation more collegial.

I have also initiated the gradual modernization of the Secretariat's operational tools. This includes revising regulatory texts, digitizing procedures, improving document management, migrating to more modern and efficient software, and strengthening administrative and financial management systems.

The objective is to reduce administrative burdens, secure procedures, improve case monitoring and facilitate smoother communication with Member States, diplomatic missions and partners.

Ultimately, I want to be judged on facts, not speeches. So, if I had to identify the three things on which I would like to be judged, they would be:

One: Financial autonomy. Leaving behind an OACPS that has its own fund to finance its members' projects, without having to wait three years for a donor's approval.

Two: Industrialization. Contributing to the launch of concrete regional value chains. Processing our cocoa, our minerals and our seafood locally. This is the only way to create millions of jobs, build transferable knowledge and establish genuine trade partnerships.

Three: Credibility. Ensuring that the OACPS is systematically at the table whenever debt, trade or climate issues are discussed. Ensuring that our 79 countries are respected because they speak with one voice.

If I achieve these three objectives, the OACPS will be more influential, more effective and closer to the people.

What is your message to Heads of State, the private sector and young people?

To Heads of State, I would say this: unity is no longer simply a diplomatic

option; it has become a strategic necessity and a prerequisite for our economic sovereignty. In a world where major power balances are increasingly shaped by blocs comprising hundreds of millions, or even billions, of people, we must speak with one voice and act together in order to better defend our interests.

To the private sector, I issue a call to invest. Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific represent an immense space of opportunity, driven by dynamic demographics, abundant resources and an expanding market. Too often, risk is overstated while return potential is underestimated. The OACPS intends to create a more favorable investment environment through partnerships, guarantee mechanisms and innovative financing. Come and invest, produce, innovate and create jobs with us.

To young people, finally, I want to send a message of confidence. Your

future is not built tomorrow; it starts today. Digital technologies, artificial intelligence, the green transition and new value chains are opening up unprecedented opportunities. The OACPS is committed to creating more opportunities and facilitating mobility, partnerships and entrepreneurship across its 79 Member States. Dare to innovate, build businesses and claim your rightful place: you are the builders of tomorrow's prosperity.

What kind of leadership does Africa and the OACPS region need for the future?

The world of tomorrow will be more uncertain, more demanding and more competitive. It will leave no room for improvisation. Faced with this new reality, our States need a renewed form of leadership based on three essential qualities.

First, builders, capable of sustainably transforming their economies by crea-

ting added value, industrializing and investing in human capital, rather than limiting themselves to exporting raw materials.

Second, strategists, capable of navigating an increasingly complex geopolitical environment, forging balanced partnerships and defending their countries' interests without compromising their sovereignty.

Finally, accountable leaders, who place results at the heart of public action and transparently report on progress made, whether in education, healthcare, employment or economic development.

This is the kind of leadership we must promote: leadership based on vision, action and accountability. Only under these conditions will Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific be able to fully unlock their potential and assert their place in the world of tomorrow.

Interview with Samirat Ntiازه



Africa at War to Keep Global Warming Below 1.5°C



Africa's battle to prevent global warming from exceeding 1.5°C is a matter of vital importance. It is about ensuring that the fight against global warming does not translate into yet another injustice against the continent's vital interests. It is also a challenge to policies that would force the most vulnerable countries to bear the cost of a crisis they did not cause.

For Africa, the 1.5°C threshold is not an abstract target of climate diplomacy: it is a line of defence. The continent, which has contributed relatively little to global warming, is already suffering disproportionately severe consequences. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) points out that Africa is among the regions that have contributed the least to greenhouse gas

emissions. Yet climate-related losses in agriculture, water resources, biodiversity, health and the economy are already taking a heavy toll across the continent. This is why keeping global warming to 1.5°C is vital for Africa. Indeed, while the difference between 1.5°C and 2°C may appear limited - just half a degree - the consequences are considerable. According to the IPCC, limiting warming to 1.5°C rather than 2°C would significantly reduce damage to Africa's economies, agriculture, ecosystems and public health.

The IPCC estimates that Africa's per capita GDP would be at least 5% higher by 2050 and 10% to 20% higher by 2100 under a 1.5°C warming scenario compared with a 2°C scenario. An additional half-degree would result in more frequent heatwaves and heat-

related mortality; increased drought and water stress; greater agricultural losses and food insecurity; more floods and extreme weather events; a higher incidence of climate-sensitive diseases; population displacement; and greater economic and biodiversity losses, among other impacts.

The IPCC also warns that heat-related risks and climate-sensitive diseases are already reaching high levels in Africa at around 1.5°C of warming.

In February 2026, the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC) estimated that less than 3% of global climate finance reaches sub-Saharan Africa each year, with a significant proportion provided in the form of loans rather than grants. The African Union considers that this situation is exacerbating

ting the continent's debt burden.

The African Union has also recently maintained that progress on the Loss and Damage Fund remains inadequate, particularly in terms of the scale of financing available and access to funding.

The distinctive features of Africa's position...

Africa is clear about its demands. Given that it is firmly established that the continent bears limited responsibility for global emissions while being disproportionately affected by climate change, it is calling for meaningful international solidarity. Africa is therefore not merely

IN FEBRUARY 2026, THE COMMITTEE OF AFRICAN HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT ON CLIMATE CHANGE (CAHOSCC) ESTIMATED THAT LESS THAN 3% OF GLOBAL CLIMATE FINANCE REACHED SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA EACH YEAR.

demanding emissions reductions. It is also calling for the financial and technological resources needed to adapt to climate change and pursue development without reproducing the carbon-intensive model followed by industrialized economies.

Africa seeks to champion a just energy transition—one that is compatible with industrialization, universal access to energy and job creation.

The African Union is therefore placing particular emphasis on clean energy, technology transfer, adaptation and the mobilization of international climate finance. It also stresses that Africa's mineral resources can play an important role in the global transition towards a low-carbon economy.



At a time when climate justice is becoming inseparable from financial justice, Africa faces a fundamental dilemma: How can its economies industrialize without increasing greenhouse-gas emissions?

Africa strongly supports the 1.5°C threshold, but it must also increase energy production in order to industrialize its economies.

The continent still faces a huge electricity-access deficit and is seeking to harness its natural gas, mineral and hydrocarbon resources while simultaneously expanding renewable energy.

Africa strongly advocates the concept of a “just transition”, one that addresses four key concerns: maintaining the 1.5°C threshold; making historical polluters bear a greater share of the burden, in line with the principle of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities; financing adaptation and loss and damage—not merely through loans that add to already heavy debt burdens; and enabling African development through greater access to energy, industrialisation, job creation and technology transfer.

Valéry FOUNGBE

NIGERIA-MOROCCO GAS PIPELINE

The Atlantic Backbone Redefining African Energy Sovereignty



Beyond its \$25 billion investment, the world's longest offshore gas pipeline is asserting itself as the engine of unprecedented West African integration and the new geopolitical bridge to Europe.

On West Africa's forward-looking maps, borders are gradually fading in favor of energy flows. Snaking along the Atlantic coastline for 6,900 km, the Nigeria-

Morocco Gas Pipeline has ceased to be a mere technical projection; it has become the founding act of genuine continental autonomy.

Connecting 13 coastal nations while powering the Sahelian hinterland, this colossal \$25 billion infrastructure project aims to transport 30 billion cubic meters of gas per year. The initiative extends far beyond responding to global supply tensions. It reflects a major poli-

tical decision: to add value to African resources on African soil before supplying international markets.

As King Mohammed VI highlighted in a speech emphasizing the scope of this initiative: «The Nigeria-Morocco gas pipeline project is not merely a bilateral initiative between two sister countries. It is a structural project, a strategic bridge for the economic integration and development of the entire

Atlantic region.»

By anchoring the sub-region's industrial trajectory for the long term, this megaproject disrupts the legacy logic of raw extraction. It offers West Africa the opportunity to master its energy equation while asserting its geopolitical weight vis-à-vis the Global North.

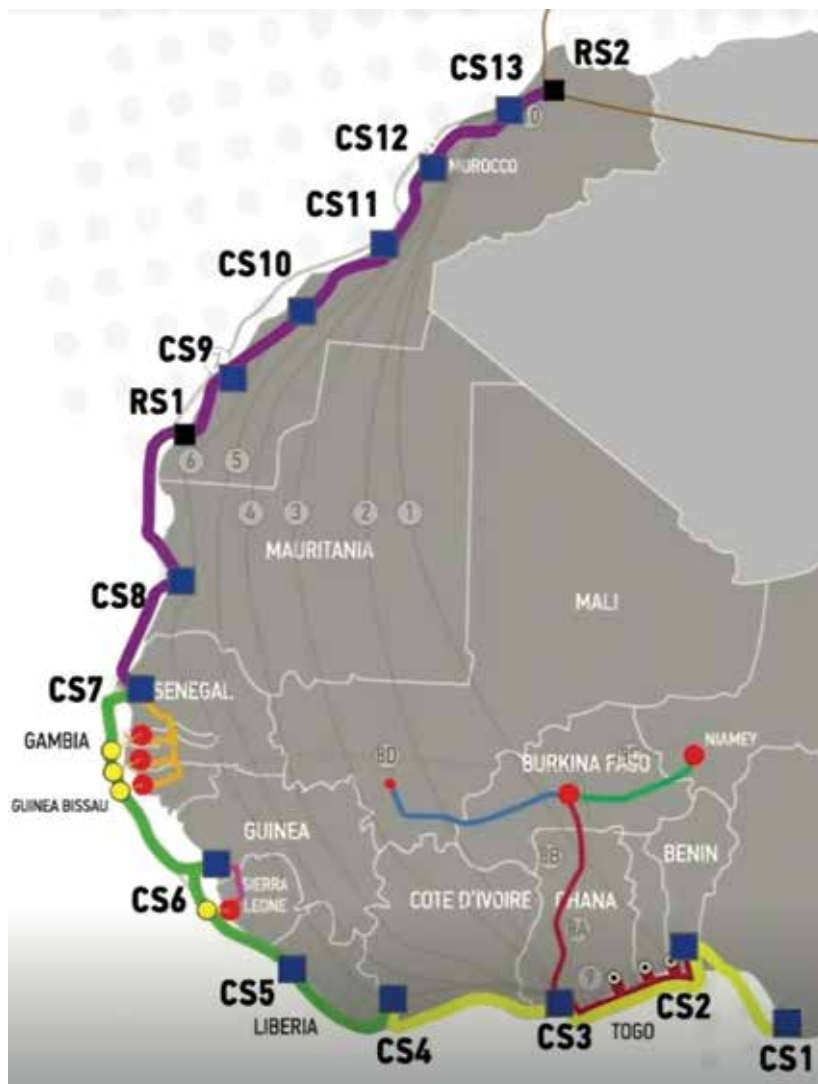
Turning Abundance into Industrial Value

While the potential of Nigerian reserves is unquestioned, the real challenge lies in channeling this wealth into the local economic fabric. Today, with an electrification rate struggling to cross the 50% mark in West Africa, energy deficits continue to drag down the competitiveness of regional industry. The pipeline addresses this exact bottleneck by securing the supply of power plants, supporting the establishment of chemical processing facilities, and boosting the production of fertilizers critical to continental food security. Here, economic diplomacy gives way to a pragmatic co-development model where every shared kilometer of pipe reduces the cost of a kilowatt-hour.

This shared ambition resonates directly with the highest Nigerian authorities. President Bola Tinubu frequently reinforces the urgency of this synergy: «We must stop viewing our natural resources exclusively through the lens of raw exports. The Atlantic gas pipeline is the catalyst that will allow us to industrialize our nations, power our factories, and create millions of jobs for our youth.» This strategic reallocation of energy flows underpins a bankable dynamic capable of attracting major international sovereign wealth funds, drawn by the solidity of an integrated market of over 400 million consumers.

Target 2031: A Unifying Governance Tested by Reality

As engineering studies reach completion and the international intergovernmental agreement nears signature toward the end of 2026, attention is shifting to the project's institutional complexity. Harmonizing regulatory frameworks, coordinating national tax regimes, and guaranteeing the security of infrastructure spanning multiple jurisdictions



demand an unprecedented level of collective discipline. The active involvement of regional bodies like ECOWAS and the backing of key players such as the credit insurance agency ATIDI demonstrate that the continent is learning to structure its own risk-mitiga-

tion mechanisms. Meeting the schedule, which targets initial deliveries by 2031, hinges entirely on maintaining long-term political alignment.

Ivorian Prime Minister Robert Beugré Mambé recently highlighted the historic significance of this convergence, describing the initiative as: «a genuine opportunity to deepen our collective reflection on the reforms required to build a fairer financial and energy system, tailored to our realities.» By linking the Gulf of Guinea to the doorstep of Europe, Africa is doing far more than laying a pipeline beneath Atlantic waters: it is building the backbone of an emerging economic powerhouse, master of its choices and architect of its future.

S.T.

CONNECTING 13 COASTAL COUNTRIES WHILE IRRIGATING THE SAHELIAN HINTERLAND, THIS TITANIC 25 BILLION DOLLAR PROJECT INTENDS TO TRANSPORT 30 BILLION CUBIC METERS OF GAS PER YEAR.

AFRICA PPP 2026 IN NAIROBI

THE STRATEGIC GATHERING FOR BUILDING AFRICA'S PROSPERITY

From 11 to 13 November 2026, the Kenyan capital will host the 16th Summit on Infrastructure Financing and Partnerships. A pivotal event aimed at turning bankability challenges into tangible development projects across the continent.

With Africa's annual infrastructure financing gap estimated at more than \$180 billion, the continent can no longer afford to settle for declarations of intent. What Africa now needs is accelerated, structured implementation. It is against this backdrop that the 16th edition of the Africa PPP Summit will take place in Nairobi from 11 to 13 November 2026. Under the theme "Building Africa's Prosperity: Infrastructure, Investment and Transformative Partnerships to Accelerate Economic Development," the event is emerging as a leading platform for matching private capital with public-sector infrastructure needs.

As Kenyan President William Ruto recently recalled during a meeting on the attractiveness of investment opportunities in East Africa: "Africa does not need charity, but fair and bankable partnerships. Our infrastructure projects represent some of the world's most strategic investment opportunities for bold investors." The Nairobi summit seeks to translate this political ambition into concrete financial closings by bringing together government decision-makers, project developers and development finance institutions (DFIs).

From Fragmentation to Action: Aligning Capital with Bankable Projects

The real bottleneck to Africa's growth does not lie in a lack of global liquidity, but in the scarcity of mature, investment-ready projects. Africa PPP 2026 breaks away from the tradition



of purely theoretical conferences by structuring every panel and workshop around real-life projects and practical cases. Logistics corridors, energy-transition projects, drinking-water networks and interconnected industrial hubs will be assessed against the requirements of bankability, risk mitigation and long-term viability.

Organised in strategic partnership with Kenya's State Department responsible for Public Investments and Asset Management (SDPIAM), the summit will also showcase the host region's major development ambitions.

Ivorian Prime Minister Robert Beugré Mambé, who regularly stresses the importance of regional market integration, sums it up aptly: "The transformation of our economies depends on our collective ability to de-risk investments and create an environment of trust for private-sector partners." By highlighting opportunities in roads, ports and smart cities, the event provides an immediate execution framework for institutional capital.

Moving from Contacts to Strategic Assets

Beyond institutional meetings, the

added value of this 16th edition lies in its operational format. Featuring practical training workshops on negotiating concession agreements, as well as technical field visits to project sites, Africa PPP 2026 is designed to deliver results. The challenge is to harmonise national regulatory frameworks so that investors can operate across borders, thereby maximising the socio-economic impact of major infrastructure projects for more than 400 million people directly affected by these developments. Sidi Ould Tah, President of the African Development Bank (AfDB) Group, stressed during the continent's recent financial meetings: "The political moment has come. The path for capital is clear. What remains is a collective decision: to multiply Africa's financial firepower for its structural transformation."

By bringing together in Nairobi the key players in public procurement and the global financial marketplace, Africa PPP 2026 is not merely organising a conference. It is laying the foundations for a sovereign, connected and resolutely forward-looking Africa.

H.D.

KHALID TAMER

Executive Director, African Capitals of Culture -ACAC

The official opening of the Permanent Secretariat in Rabat marks a major turning point in the history of the African Capitals of Culture. Beyond its symbolic significance, what will be the concrete missions of this new institution, and what added value will it bring to the African cities involved in this program?

The official opening of the Permanent Secretariat of the African Capitals of Culture in Rabat signifies much more than the establishment of an institutional headquarters: it finally provides the continent with a permanent tool for coordination, support, and cooperation, serving the African cities committed to this shared ambition. This establishment fulfills the African Union's decision to make Morocco the host country of the Permanent Secretariat and is fully aligned with the objectives of Agenda 2063, which recognizes culture as an essential driver of development, integration, and transformation of African societies. Our primary mission is to support candidate cities and future African Capitals of Culture, from the preparation of their application to the implementation of their program. The Secretariat will provide them with technical expertise, methodological tools, training, and strategic support so that each city can develop a robust, sustainable cultural project tailored to its specific context.



AFCON 2027

QUALIFYING POTS AND FULL SCHEDULE REVEALED

48 national teams now know what lies ahead on their road to Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. The draw held in Cairo has mapped out a qualifying campaign that promises to be fiercely contested, combining established football hierarchies with the hopes of historic breakthroughs.

The Confederation of African Football (CAF) unveiled, in May 2026, the composition of the four pots for the TotalEnergies CAF Africa Cup of Nations PAMOJA 2027 qualifiers. Held in Cairo, Egypt, the draw officially set the qualifying race in motion for the 48 nations competing for a place at the continent's flagship tournament.

The 48 teams will be divided into 12 groups. The qualifying campaign will be played across three FIFA international windows: Matchdays 1 and 2 will take place from 21 September to 6 October 2026, followed by Matchdays 3 and 4, scheduled for 9 to 17 November 2026. The qualifiers will conclude with Matchdays 5 and 6, from 22 to 30 March 2027, when the final list of qualified teams will be determined. The 36th edition of the Africa Cup of Nations, co-hosted by Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, will be held from 19 June to 17 July 2027.

The heavyweights dominate Pot 1. As expected, the established powers of African football occupy Pot 1. Morocco, Senegal, Nigeria, Algeria, Egypt, Côte d'Ivoire, Tunisia, Cameroon, DR Congo, Mali, South Africa and Burkina Faso have logically been given top-seed status. Pot 2 also boasts a formidable line-up, featuring rapidly rising sides such as Cape Verde, Ghana, Guinea, Gabon, Uganda, Angola, Benin and Zambia, alongside Mozambique, Madagascar, Equatorial Guinea and Comoros. Their presence already promises high-risk, high-profile clashes from the group stage.

The special case of the host nations. As the host countries, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda have already secured automatic qualification for AFCON 2027, but they will nevertheless take part in the qualifiers.

This special status has a direct impact on the qualification process: in groups containing one of the three host nations, only the group winner will secure quali-

Six of these teams - South Sudan, Burundi, Somalia, Lesotho, Eritrea and Ethiopia - had to make their way through a preliminary round to join the select group of the continent's 42 highest-ranked nations. While Africa's traditional football powerhouses start the campaign as the favourites, recent editions of the Africa Cup of Nations have demonstrated just how much the gap has narrowed between the

continent's established giants and its emerging football nations.

Central African Republic, Eritrea, Somalia and South Sudan will therefore harbour hopes of securing their very first qualification for the continental finals, while other nations will view these qualifiers as an opportunity to return to the upper echelons of African football.

Composition of the Four Pots

- Pot 1: Morocco, Senegal, Nigeria, Algeria, Egypt, Côte d'Ivoire, Tunisia, Cameroon, DR Congo, Mali, South Africa, Burkina Faso.
- Pot 2: Cape Verde, Ghana, Guinea, Gabon, Uganda, Angola, Benin, Zambia, Mozambique, Madagascar, Equatorial Guinea, Comoros.
- Pot 3: Kenya, Libya, Tanzania, Niger, Mauritania, Gambia, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Namibia, Togo, Malawi, Rwanda.
- Pot 4: Zimbabwe, Guinea-Bissau, Congo, Central African Republic, Liberia, Burundi, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Botswana, South Sudan, Eritrea, Somalia.

At the conclusion of the final two matchdays, from 22 to 30 March 2027, the full line-up for the tournament will be confirmed. For the first time, all 48 nations taking part in these qualifiers will be vying for their ticket to AFCON 2027.

Ferdinand GADE

QCAN 2027			
GROUPE A MAROC GABON NIGER LESOTHO	GROUPE B ÉGYPTE ANGOLA MALAWI SOUDAN D.S.	GROUPE C CIV GHANA GAMBIE SOMALIE	GROUPE D AF.SUD GUINÉE KENYA ÉRYTHÉE
GROUPE E RD CONGO GUINÉE É. SIERRA L. ZIMBABWE	GROUPE F BURKINA BÉNIN MAURITANIE CENTRAF.	GROUPE G CAMEROUN COMORES NAMIBIE CONGO	GROUPE H TUNISIE OUGANDA LIBYE BOTSWANA
GROUPE I ALGÉRIE ZAMBIE TOGO BURUNDI	GROUPE J SÉNÉGAL MOZAMB. SOUDAN ÉTHIOPIE	GROUPE K MALI CAP. VERT RWANDA LIBÉRIA	GROUPE L NIGÉRIA MADAGAS. TANZANIE GUINÉE-B.

fication. In all other groups, the top two teams will earn their places in the final tournament.

Pot 3 brings together Kenya, Libya, Tanzania, Niger, Mauritania, Gambia, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Namibia, Togo, Malawi and Rwanda.

Pot 4 comprises Zimbabwe, Guinea-Bissau, Congo, Central African Republic, Liberia, Burundi, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Botswana, South Sudan, Eritrea and Somalia.



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Multi-View
finger vein & palm

BIOMETRIC AUTHENTICATION



PURPOSE

Advanced security through proprietary vein pattern recognition technology.

Swiss innovation delivering unparalleled authentication for organizations worldwide.

Global ID is aiming to be the worldwide leader in Multi-View Finger Vein and palm Biometric Authentication & Identification.

Provide the best in class solutions related to Multi-View Finger Vein Biometric Authentication & Identification solutions.

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- ✓ **PUBLIC SECTOR**
- ✓ **NGOS**

- ✓ **HEALTH CARE**
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