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Africa**

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ELEVATE AFRICA 2025 CONVENING PROCEEDINGS REPORT

30 - 31 October 2025
Gaborone, Botswana

**Africa:
The Next Chapter**

www.weelevateafrica.org

Elevate Africa 2025 Convening Proceedings Report.

OCTOBER 30 & 31, 2025
GABORONE, BOTSWANA

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Abbreviations/Acronyms

ADC: African Diamond Council

AfCFTA: African Continental Free Trade Area

AfDB: African Development Bank

AI: Artificial Intelligence

AU: African Union

BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation

BNETD: Bureau National d'Études Techniques et de Développement

CEMEA: Central Europe, the Middle East, and Africa

CFR: Commander of the Federal Republic (Nigerian national honor)

CGGI: Chandler Good Government Index

CIG: Chandler Institute of Governance

DFIs: Development Finance Institutions

EAC: East African Community

EA Fellow: Elevate Africa Fellow

EBS: Elder of the Burning Spear (Kenyan national honor)

ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States

EGH: Elder of the Golden Heart (Kenyan national honor)

EJRAID: Elizabeth Jack-Rich Aid Foundation

ESG: Environmental, Social, and Governance

FIMS: Fellow of the Institute of Management Specialists (honorific)

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

GGGI: Global Green Growth Institute

GPT: Generative Pre-trained Transformer (AI model)

ICT: Information and Communications Technology

ID: Identification Document

Abbreviations/Acronyms

IP: Intellectual Property

MP: Member of Parliament

M-PESA: Mobile phone-based money transfer service (Kenya)

NDP 12: Twelfth National Development Plan (Botswana)

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

OAU: Organization of African Unity

PAPSS: Pan-African Payment and Settlement System

PPPs: Public-Private Partnerships

R&D: Research and Development

RECs: Regional Economic Communities

RRF: Rainbow Room Foundation

SADC: Southern African Development Community

SMEs: Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

TIFIA: Mentorship Program by the Rainbow Room Foundation,

U.S. / USA: United States of America

WILAN: Women in Leadership Advancement Network

Executive Summary

From Potential to Proof: Africa in Action

The Elevate Africa 2025 Convening, held in Gaborone, Botswana, marked a decisive shift from dialogue to action. Under the theme “Africa: The Next Chapter,” leaders, innovators, and changemakers came together with a single, urgent mandate: to architect Africa’s future with purpose, unity, and intentionality.

A clear consensus emerged: Africa’s destiny will be self-determined, not shaped by external validation. The era of isolated “islands of excellence” has ended. The new imperative is to connect, collaborate, and build enduring systems that outlast individuals and deliver tangible progress.

Key outcomes and commitments crystallized around five strategic pillars:

1. **Governance and Institutions:** Move beyond rhetoric to high-performance government, institutionalize meritocracy, digitize public services, and launch citizen-led policy labs to rebuild public trust.
2. **Economic Transformation:** Break the “paradox of plenty” by modernizing resource laws, harnessing the AfCFTA for local value addition, and mobilizing Africa’s own capital, including its \$2 trillion in pension funds, to finance strategic infrastructure.
3. **Gender Equality:** Normalize women’s leadership, close the gender finance gap through data-driven lending, and embed empowerment across education and community systems.
4. **Technology and Innovation:** Leapfrog development by investing in foundational digital infrastructure, implementing existing policies such as the AfCFTA, and fostering public-private tech ecosystems that turn constraints into scalable advantages.
5. **Culture and Narrative:** Shift from narrative defense to commercial offense by establishing Pan-African creative guilds, launching a blended Creative Africa Fund, and marketing a unified, authentic Brand Africa to the world.

The convening led with the adoption of the Gaborone Communiqué, a living covenant that codifies accountability, collaboration, and progress across the continent.

Africa’s next chapter is not aspirational; it is a blueprint for action. The message from Gaborone is clear: We are the ones we have been waiting for. The time to act is now.

Introduction

The Elevate Africa 2025 Convening, held in Gaborone, Botswana, on October 30-31, marked a decisive turning point. More than a conference, it was a continental movement, a collective declaration that Africa's future will not be left to chance but architected by intention. Under the theme "Africa: The Next Chapter," two days of profound dialogue produced a clear, urgent consensus: the era of potential is over; the era of proof has begun.

The gathering was rooted in a powerful conviction, articulated by Her Majesty, Olori Atuwatse III, Co-Founder of Elevate Africa. While individual Africans achieve globally, our collective strength lies in unity. The time has come to move from isolated "islands of excellence" to interconnected networks of trust, collaboration, and shared progress. Daniel Ikuenobe, CEO of Elevate Africa, framed the organization's mission as a "binder" for the continent: orchestrating, connecting, and catalyzing action to make Africa smaller, fostering a family-like continent where trade, collaboration, and opportunity flow seamlessly.

Over two days, former presidents, sitting governors, pioneering CEOs, and cultural icons engaged in conversations that moved decisively from problem diagnosis to actionable solutions. The convening was structured around three strategic pillars: Governance and Leadership, Investment, Trade and Innovation, and Culture and Heritage, providing a foundation for plenaries that explored high-performance government, transformational female leadership, sustainable infrastructure, intra-African trade, technology, and the creative economy.

This report synthesizes the outcomes of these dialogues, capturing actionable recommendations, concrete resolutions, and clear implementation pathways. The guidance outlined is not aspirational, but a practical mandate for the coming year, with responsibilities clearly assigned across national governments, regional bodies, the private sector, and civil society. Progress will be tracked and reported at the next convening, ensuring accountability and tangible impact.

The resounding conclusion of Elevate Africa 2025 is that the continent possesses all the essential assets: a dynamic youth population, abundant resources, and a surge of innovation. What remains is the will to execute with purpose: to build systems over speeches, forge partnerships over promises, and convert ideas into measurable progress. As His Royal Majesty, Ogiame Atuwatse III, affirmed in his closing charge, Africa's next chapter is not just bright, it is brilliantly intentional.

Welcome
to Elevate
Africa

Africa
The Next
Chapter

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DAY ONE

Day 1 Synopsis – Elevate Africa 2025

- The day opened with a foundational plenary that set the tone and articulated the movement’s core vision. Daniel Ikuenobe, CEO of Elevate Africa, traced the organization’s origins as a profoundly personal journey marked by “blood, sweat, and tears.” He defined its mission as a binder for the continent, one that orchestrates, connects, and catalyzes progress. He outlined three guiding pillars: Governance and Leadership; Investment, Trade and Innovation; and Culture and Heritage, anchored by the overarching ambition to “make Africa smaller” by fostering a continent bound by collaboration and shared purpose.
- That vision was amplified by Her Majesty, Olori Atuwatse III, Co-Founder of Elevate Africa, who declared herself “an African queen” devoted to the continent’s collective future. She identified trust as the non-negotiable foundation for transformation and warned against the historical pattern of “islands of excellence” that fail to connect. Her Majesty celebrated tangible progress, most notably the launch of the Elevate Africa Fellowship, which brings together 17 high-impact leaders from 13 countries, as a living embodiment of the convening’s ethos of collaboration and shared leadership.
- Remarks from distinguished continental leaders further enriched the opening plenary. His Excellency Benjamin Chesire Cheboi, Governor of Baringo County, Kenya, called for an honest re-examination of governance models and urged leaders to build institutions that outlast individual tenures. A representative for Her Excellency Joyce Banda, former President of Malawi, described leadership as an act of service and positioned women’s empowerment as a strategic driver of prosperity. Her Excellency Dr. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, former President of Mauritius, reframed Africa’s challenges as opportunities for innovation, pointing to Kenya’s M-PESA as proof that the continent can leapfrog development stages through creative application of technology. Botswana’s Honourable Ketlhafile Motshegwa then outlined his country’s national development frameworks and expressed hope that the convening would yield a shared African agenda grounded in unity and accountability.

The discussions deepened through four thematic plenaries, each producing concrete outcomes and pathways for action:

Plenary 1: Governance and Policy

Keynote speaker Wu Wei Neng of the Chandler Institute of Governance presented a framework for high-performance government, asserting that effective institutions, rather than political systems, determine national success. In the ensuing panel, former President Gurib-Fakim and Governor Cheboi dissected the “promise-delivery gap” eroding public trust. The session concluded with clear resolutions: to institutionalize meritocracy in the public service; accelerate digitization and decentralization of governance; and embed ethical leadership through civic education from early schooling.

Plenary 2: Transformational Female Leadership

Moderator Abosede George-Ogan opened with compelling data on the economic cost of gender inequality in leadership. In a lively exchange, HRH Princess Ncengcenge Dlamini of Eswatini spotlighted digital inclusion initiatives such as the “Government in Your Hand” platform. At the same time, Representative Kim Schofield from Georgia,

USA, emphasized the importance of women building “power with” rather than “power over.” The session resolved to institutionalize women’s leadership through targets and quotas, establish robust mentorship ecosystems, and leverage technology and indigenous knowledge to expand women’s economic participation.

Plenary 3: Natural Resources and Sovereign Wealth

Addressing the enduring “paradox of plenty,” Aisha Maina argued that Africa’s true wealth lies in its people, not its minerals. Dr. M’zée Fula-Ngege cited a deficit of political courage as a significant impediment, while Ron Chari pointed to outdated legal frameworks and corruption. The panel converged on a continental strategy to reorient resource governance toward human capital development, modernize and harmonize natural resource laws, and operationalize the AfCFTA to strengthen regional value chains and promote intra-African trade in processed goods.



Plenary 4: Catalyzing Governance Reforms – Policy Labs

Structured as an interactive working session, this plenary saw passionate interventions from policymakers and civic leaders alike. A unifying consensus emerged: that reform must be culturally rooted, citizen-driven, and transparent. Participants proposed creating Citizen Policy Labs to co-design solutions, integrating indigenous knowledge systems into modern governance, and establishing public accountability pipelines to track policy implementation from conception to delivery.

Across all discussions, a single narrative crystallized: Africa's next chapter will not be authored by waiting for permission or external validation; it will be written by Africans themselves. The day closed on a resounding note of purpose and optimism, affirming that the continent's future will be shaped through collaboration, cultural reconnection, and the translation of vision into measurable action.



Opening Plenary

Elevate Africa CEO Remarks - Daniel Ikuenobe

Mr Daniel Ikuenobe, the CEO of Elevate Africa, began his address by expressing profound honour to be part of the gathering, describing the inception of Elevate Africa as the culmination of a deeply personal and challenging journey. He recalled that bringing the vision to life had demanded “blood, sweat, and tears,” likening the process to the pain and perseverance of giving birth.

He explained that the vision was inspired by Their Majesties, the King and Queen Consort, soon after the King’s ascension to the throne. Together, they recognised that while individual Africans were excelling across the globe, their collective strength lay in unity. He underscored that Africa’s context should never be viewed as a weakness but as a unique challenge to overcome, affirming that Africans are neither deficient nor incapable, but fully equipped to realise their ambitions.

From this conviction, he said, the idea of Elevate Africa was



born. He observed that while the continent has many “builders,” it lacks enough “binders”, those who bring others together for a shared purpose. Elevate Africa, he explained, chose to become that binder: a platform of orchestrators, architects, bridge-builders, and catalysts for Africa’s next chapter.

Mr. Ikuenobe highlighted the transformative power of storytelling and narrative as tools for systems change. The organisation’s mission, he said, is to connect diverse actors and unlock Africa’s full potential. He outlined three core pillars guiding this work.

First, he stressed the importance of governance and leadership, asserting that leaders at all levels must define a compelling vision, serve as ambassadors for their people, mentor the next generation, and foster a hopeful outlook for the future.

Second, he focused on investment, trade, and innovation, explaining that trading together fosters interdependence, strengthens communities,

and showcases the sustainability of African enterprises.

Third, he underscored culture and heritage as the soul of the continent, embracing history, literature, music, fashion, and philosophy as vital sources of pride and identity.

He revealed that Elevate Africa’s core ambition is to “make Africa smaller”, to build a family-like continent where it’s easy to trade, collaborate, and connect. Illustrating this, he shared a story from the reception: two leaders from different countries had agreed to arrange a meeting between their presidents, a live example, he said, of the convening’s purpose in action.

As he concluded, Mr. Ikuenobe invited participants to see themselves as part of a grand production, a collective cast curating, capturing, and communicating Africa’s progress. He urged everyone to move “from conversations to action” and to embrace the spirit of Ubuntu as they work together to elevate Africa.

Elevate Africa



Opening Address - Her Majesty, Olori Atuwatse III, Co-Founder, Elevate Africa

Her Majesty, Olori Atuwatse III, Queen Consort, began her address by warmly welcoming delegates to Botswana and acknowledging the distinguished guests in attendance. She expressed profound honour at the opportunity to stand alongside His Majesty, whom she praised as a visionary leader. She extended her appreciation to the President of Botswana, represented by the Honourable Minister Motshegwa.

From the outset, she celebrated the power and presence of women's leadership in the room, paying tribute to the first female President of Mauritius and the former President of Malawi (Represented by an aide). She commended their groundbreaking contributions, noting that their legacy continues to inspire a new generation of African women leaders.

Anticipating a question on many minds, she addressed it directly: "What is a Nigerian monarch

doing organising a conference in Botswana?" With conviction, she answered by restating a principle she first shared at the inaugural convening, that "nations need nations to thrive." She argued that Africa has become a truly interconnected global village, where the fortunes of one nation inevitably affect others. Citing examples such as Nigeria's refinery production influencing fuel prices in Benin and Cameroon, and Nollywood investments spurring cinema growth in Ghana and Kenya, she affirmed that African economies "breathe together" and that their destinies are deeply intertwined.

Turning to her own identity, she declared that she was not merely a queen of Nigeria, but an African queen, rooted on the continent and committed to its shared future. "The very core of me is African," she affirmed, explaining that her presence in Botswana symbolised an investment in the future of all African people.



Before looking ahead, Her Majesty reflected on Africa's great civilizations: Mali and Benin. While they stood as magnificent empires, she observed that their downfall stemmed from existing as "islands of excellence" that failed to form lasting alliances. Brilliance in isolation, she warned, is a vulnerability Africa can no longer afford.

She declared that Africa's next chapter must begin with a radical shift in both mindset and method, built upon a single, essential foundation: trust. Transformation, she said, is not only about infrastructure or policy reform but about reimagining Africa's collective consciousness, moving from fragmented nations to a unified, interdependent force. With trust, she argued, borders become bridges, enabling ideas, innovation, and goods to move as freely between Lagos and Lusaka as they do between Cape Town and London.

Describing Elevate Africa as a bridge between nations, people, and possibilities, she explained that Botswana was chosen as the host because it is a place "where quiet competence meets continental ambition." She thanked the Government of Botswana for its unwavering support in realising the vision.

Her Majesty then shared evidence of progress, declaring that Elevate Africa had moved from "promise to pipeline." She reported meaningful advances in the creative sector, particularly in shifting the narrative toward African ownership. However, she highlighted the launch of the Elevate Africa Fellowship as their most transformative achievement, a nine-month leadership program that brings together 17 outstanding fellows from 13 countries. These fellows, already leaders in their respective fields, are being equipped to amplify their impact and embed narrative transformation

into systems change. She described them proudly as Elevate Africa's "greatest investment", a living embodiment of the collaborative, excellent Africa they envision.

Reiterating that trust is the bedrock of growth, she warned that without it, nations would continue to work in silos and duplicate efforts, with citizens paying the price. The difficulty of travelling across African borders to reach Botswana, she noted, was a practical example of this fragmentation.

To counter such divisions, she celebrated African success stories that demonstrate progress and potential, from Nigeria refining and exporting petrol to the United States, to Namibia achieving a gender-balanced cabinet. She lauded Rwanda's e-government systems, Botswana's fiscal prudence, and the smooth democratic transitions in Ghana and Senegal. She also highlighted Africa's growing cultural influence on the global stage, noting that the infrastructure for distribution and intellectual property protection is finally catching up, ensuring that value is created and retained at the source.

With Africa's median age under 20 and the AfCFTA opening vast new markets, she declared that African youth represent the continent's "undeniable advantage." Excellence, she said, is already abundant; what remains is not the need for permission to be exceptional, but coordination and collaboration to be unstoppable.

She revealed that when she and His Majesty founded Elevate Africa, some dismissed their vision as idealistic. Yet they saw it as a divine mandate to build not an event but a movement. This movement, she said, draws on the full strength of the African



family: the patience of Botswana, the audacity of Nigeria, the innovation of Kenya, and the resilience of the diaspora.

Her Majesty concluded by outlining Elevate Africa's threefold mission: to convene and connect, to equip and strengthen, and to broadcast and shift the narrative from potential to proof. She explained that this convening would centre on three pillars vital to every African life: Leadership, Trade and Investment, and Culture.

She ended with a call to action: the accurate measure of success, she said, would be the delivery of tangible outcomes captured in the Gaborone Communiqué, a co-authored pact and shared compass for the continent's progress. She urged all participants to engage deeply so that, together, they could declare that Africa's next chapter is not only bright but "brilliantly intentional."

Closing her address, Her Majesty painted a powerful vision: when the world reads Africa's next chapter, it will be said that the continent dared to trust, believe, write, and build together.



Opening Speech I - His Excellency, Benjamin Chesire Cheboi, EGH, EBS, Governor, Baringo County, Kenya.

Governor Cheboi opened his address by expressing profound honour at the opportunity to speak at the Elevate Africa Convening 2025. He extended warm appreciation to Their Majesties for their visionary leadership in bringing together continental leaders. He lauded Botswana's selection as the host nation, noting that its exemplary democracy and stability made it the

perfect setting to reimagine Africa's future.

Looking back through history, the Governor reflected on Africa's long and complex journey, from the era of independence pioneers such as Nnamdi Azikiwe and Kwame Nkrumah, through colonialism and the struggle for self-rule, to a continent now poised to write its next chapter. He

acknowledged that Africa continues to grapple with the lingering legacies of colonialism; inequality, conflict, and underdevelopment, but underscored its remarkable resilience and its current position at a crossroads of immense promise.

Governor Cheboi pointed to Africa's greatest assets: its youthful population, abundant natural resources, and rapidly advancing technology. He described technology as a transformative force that would, inevitably, compel greater transparency and accountability in governance. While commending progress made through initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), he cautioned that challenges such as poverty, climate shocks, and disease outbreaks continue to constrain development.

Against this backdrop, he urged an honest reckoning with governance models that too often prioritise short-term political gain and "electoral suffrage" over lasting transformation. Africa, he asserted, now needs leaders who can anticipate crises, plan beyond their tenure, and shape a sustainable tomorrow.

Citing Kenya's 2010 Constitution as a case study, he explained how devolution into 47 county governments had promoted equitable resource sharing and development across regions, regardless of political affiliation. He stressed that Africa's second imperative must be the establishment of resilient, adaptive, and

independent institutions capable of withstanding shocks such as pandemics and climate emergencies.

He emphasised that Africa's progress would not be measured by the number of policies crafted but by the competence, credibility, and consistency with which they are implemented. He called for a fundamental shift in leadership towards unity and cooperation, lamenting that African nations continue to trade more with external partners than among themselves. Using examples such as beef, diamonds, and rubies, exported raw and re-imported at a premium, he argued that the AfCFTA must be leveraged to drive value addition and intra-African trade.

In closing, Governor Cheboi urged participants to embrace the conviction that Africa's destiny lies in its own hands. He called for the building of enduring institutions, visionary governments, and a selfless leadership ethos that looks beyond the next election, citing Nelson Mandela as a timeless model. He commended the founders of Elevate Africa for proving that influence and relevance endure beyond formal office. He pledged his full commitment to the initiative, expressing optimism that the convening's robust dialogue would translate into concrete action for Africa's advancement.



Opening Speech II – Ms. Salamatu Yaradua - Representative of Her Excellency, Joyce Banda, Former President of Malawi

Ms. Salamatu Yaradua began by explaining that she was attending on behalf of Her Excellency Dr. Joyce Banda, the former President of Malawi. She reflected that the moment captured the essence of Dr. Banda's leadership, one defined not by dominance but by empowerment, where others are given space to lead and be heard.

Turning to the convening, she expressed heartfelt appreciation to Her Majesty Olori Atuwatse III for assembling such a diverse and visionary group of African changemakers, and to the Government and people of Botswana for their warm hospitality and steadfast commitment to pan-African dialogue.



Transitioning to the core of her address, she spoke passionately about leadership, drawing on Dr Banda's experience as President of Malawi beginning in 2012. Leadership, she said, is far more than a title; it is an act of service, rooted in love for the people one leads. Authentic leadership, she continued, is expressed through listening, lifting others, and using power to create opportunity, justice, and equity. This form of leadership, she asserted, ensures that no one is left behind.

She made a compelling case that empowering women is not a charitable gesture, but a strategic imperative for building stronger families, effective governments, and more prosperous nations. However, she cautioned that empowerment must extend beyond rhetoric and be embedded in systems that grant women and young people tangible access to essential spaces, from homes and schools to positions of power, not as tokens or afterthoughts, but as full participants and leaders.

She urged women to embrace solidarity and sisterhood, acknowledging that challenges and divisions would arise. In such moments, she said, they must stand firm together, not as competitors,

but as each other's advocates and leaders.

Highlighting Africa's progress, she reminded the audience that the continent has already produced seven female heads of state and that the country with the highest number of women in parliament is in Africa. This milestone should fill every African with pride, especially as older democracies continue to struggle with gender parity in leadership.

In closing, she called on all present to renew their commitment to building systems that enable women to live and lead as equals. She emphasized the responsibility to mentor young women, open doors of opportunity, and create spaces where female voices are heard, valued, and amplified. Africa's future, she said, rests on the courage, compassion, and continuity of its people to build a golden Africa that works for all.

Finally, she expressed her hope that future Elevate Africa convenings would extend to Malawi and across the continent.



Opening Speech III – Her Excellency, Dr Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, Scientist and Former President of Mauritius

Dr. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, the former President of Mauritius, opened her address by reflecting on how science, technology, and industry can drive sustainable development across Africa.

She began with a candid acknowledgment of the continent's pressing challenges. Despite being home to over 70% of the world's youth, Africa contributes only about 3% to the global

economy. She illustrated this imbalance vividly, projecting Africa's total 2025 GDP at \$3.5 trillion, compared to the \$5 trillion market capitalization of a single company, Nvidia. Turning to health, she highlighted another stark disparity: Africa shoulders 25% of the world's disease burden but accounts for only 2% of global health expenditure, while Asia commands nearly 70%.

Yet, her message was not one of despair; instead, she urged the audience to see these realities as a call to action and improvement. Africa, she argued, has the raw materials for transformation, vast biodiversity, agricultural progress in countries like Morocco and Egypt, and a youthful, dynamic population. However, she cautioned that this demographic dividend could easily turn into a crisis without deliberate investment in job creation.

Recalling Africa's complicated past, she noted that at the dawn of the 20th century, half of the children born in sub-Saharan Africa did not live to see their tenth birthday. While health outcomes have improved, she said, the current generation faces the new challenge of translating demographic growth into opportunity.

Dr. Gurib-Fakim stressed that science and technology cannot thrive in isolation; they require enabling political and policy environments. Africa's actual task, she said, is to build a future where the benefits of balanced, inclusive development reach every citizen. This means transforming the continent's natural wealth and human potential into a sustainable, innovation-driven economy that serves both present and future generations.

She observed that a new momentum is emerging, with pockets of world-class innovation already visible across Africa. Kenya, she noted, provides a shining example: 90% of its population owns a mobile phone, and the M-PESA mobile money system, used by 98% of households, has revolutionized how people transact, from buying groceries to paying utilities. Such success, she explained, does not stem from inventing new technologies but from creatively applying existing ones to solve local challenges.

Dr. Gurib-Fakim emphasized that the innovators behind platforms like M-PESA, solar energy projects, and agricultural tech solutions succeeded

by reimagining existing tools for African realities. M-PESA, she pointed out, thrived precisely because it used simple SMS technology to bridge gaps in formal banking access, demonstrating Africa's capacity to leapfrog traditional development paths.

However, she cautioned that education remains the single most significant barrier to Africa's progress. Calling it "the path out of poverty and the foundation of innovation," she lamented the continent's ongoing brain drain, where its best talent seeks opportunity abroad. To reverse this, she argued, Africa must create professional and personal environments that make staying home both fulfilling and competitive. The goal, she said, is to make Africa a place where people remain not out of obligation, but out of genuine opportunity and pride.

Dr. Gurib-Fakim reframed Africa's limited infrastructure not as a disadvantage but as an opening. The continent's "lack of legacy systems," she argued, offers freedom to adopt nimble, cost-effective, and modern solutions, allowing Africa to leapfrog straight into the future. This, she said, should be the cornerstone of Africa's "next chapter."

In closing, she reaffirmed her belief that fostering the right conditions for human ingenuity will unlock Africa's prosperity. She called on leaders and innovators alike to use science, technology, and innovation as tools to ensure no one is left behind. She ended her address with a quote from Louis Pasteur:

"Science knows no country, because knowledge belongs to humanity, and it is the torch that illuminates the world."



Keynote Address by Representative of the President of Botswana – Honourable Ketlholefile Motshegwa, Minister of Local Government and Traditional Affairs

Honourable Motshegwa stood in for Botswana's president, Advocate Duma Boko. He opened his remarks by expressing deep gratitude to the organisers of Elevate Africa for the honour of selecting Botswana as the host nation for the 2025 Convening. He stated that this recognition was both humbling and affirming, strengthening the country's confidence as it continued to enhance its

governance systems and democratic institutions.

He observed that the convening's thematic areas, Practical and Innovative Solutions for Governance, Trade, Technology, and Cultural Integration, resonated strongly with Botswana's national aspirations. Linking it to current national debates, he shared that he had recently submitted to Parliament that Africa must now pursue monetary

sovereignty and proper economic integration to complement political independence and achieve genuine financial freedom.

As the Minister responsible for traditional leadership, he revealed that the government was reviewing relevant legislation to give greater prominence to chiefs and kings, enabling them to contribute more meaningfully to national development and economic participation.

Honourable Motshegwa then outlined Botswana's overarching development vision. He explained that Vision 2036 seeks to transform Botswana into a high-income, inclusive economy grounded in good governance, sustainable development, and national pride. He emphasised that Africa's transformation must be powered by homegrown solutions rooted in the dignity, creativity, and resilience of its people. Culture and creativity, he insisted, are not peripheral; they are the very foundation of development and the key to the continent's collective progress.

To advance this vision, he reported that Botswana had embarked on a new phase of economic reform through the Botswana Economic Transformation Programme, a bold initiative designed to reposition the economy for inclusive, sustainable, and technology-driven growth. He explained that this programme recognises that

traditional revenue sources, such as diamonds, can no longer sustain the country's ambitions. Instead, it ushers in a new era where sound economics, effective execution, and innovation translate into tangible results.

He described the programme as a disciplined "delivery architecture" built around four key phases: diagnostics, strategic alignment, economic levers, and execution, bringing together ministries, regulators, private investors, and citizens to ensure that viable ideas are not lost in bureaucratic processes.

Complementing this programme, he said, is the Twelfth National Development Plan (NDP 12), a five-year strategic framework that sets out Botswana's reform priorities. He highlighted several non-negotiable pillars at the heart of this plan:

- Positioning the private sector as the engine of growth.
- Driving nationwide digitalisation.
- Transforming education for productivity and relevance.
- Tackling the "triple crisis" of unemployment, poverty, and inequality.
- Strengthening transparency, accountability, and human rights-centred governance.



Together, he affirmed, Vision 2036, NDP 12, and the Economic Transformation Programme form the backbone of Botswana's development agenda, anchoring the country's collective resolve to build a self-sustaining economy that creates opportunities for all citizens.

Honourable Motshegwa expressed hope that Elevate Africa would not merely serve as a forum for discussion but as an arrangement for concrete action that advances the continent's shared prosperity. He outlined specific expectations for the two-day convening, including:

- ⦿ Crafting a shared African agenda aligned with Agenda 2063 to unite governance, trade, technology, and culture.
- ⦿ Establishing practical partnerships and investments in infrastructure, digital innovation, and creative industries.

- ⦿ Amplifying stories of African excellence to counter outdated global stereotypes.

- ⦿ Creating mechanisms to ensure that young Africans are not only heard but also empowered to lead.

He assured delegates that Botswana stood ready to contribute meaningfully to this mission, offering its democratic stability, cultural richness, hospitality, and unwavering commitment to regional cooperation as part of Africa's collective strength.

In conclusion, he invoked the wisdom of Leonardo da Vinci: "Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Being willing is not enough; we must do." He contrasted optimists, who see opportunity in every challenge, with pessimists, who see challenge in every opportunity. With that, he wished the assembly fruitful deliberations and declared:

"Let the spirit of Africa reign supreme."

High Performance Begins at the T

Remember this: Good ministers are not just those who kiss babies and smile and have dialogue sessions; you can have endless sessions, it's very good, you keep on listening and so on.

It means, at the end, taking very tough, very unpleasant, very unpopular decisions - and still smiling and still explaining and finally pointing out: 'See, we're turning the corner. The figures prove it!' That's what government is about.

- Then Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Kuan Yew, Day Rally Speech



Elevate Africa 2025 Convening Plenaries



Plenary 1: Governance and Policy

Introduction to the Governance and Policy Roundtable Plenary – Wu Wei Neng, Chief Executive Officer, Chandler Institute of Governance, and Chairman of the Chandler Academy of Governance

Mr. Neng began his address by expressing his profound honor to participate in the convening and thanking Elevate Africa and Their Majesties for the invitation. He shared that he had travelled from Singapore to speak on two central themes: high-performance government and the role of leaders as stewards of a national story.

He opened with a firm assertion that government remains one of the most important institutions in any society, as it creates the enabling framework for progress through laws, policies, and public goods such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure. Yet, he noted, governments around the world increasingly face the challenge of having to “do more with less,” amid tightening fiscal constraints and rising public expectations, making effective

performance more critical than ever.

Drawing from years of CIG’s research, Mr. Wong stated that a nation’s political system does not determine high-performance government or which party is in power. Instead, it is shaped by the capabilities, systems, architecture, skills, and culture that exist within the machinery of government itself. He emphasized that strong institutions are those that can articulate clear goals, execute policy effectively, and sustain delivery over time.

He introduced the Chandler Good Government Index (CGGI), a global benchmark developed by CIG to assess government capabilities. The index measures key institutional strengths such as planning, budgeting, and data analysis, and compares



them
with
outcomes
that directly affect

citizens' lives, including literacy, environmental quality, and safety. He revealed that CIG's findings consistently demonstrate a direct correlation: countries with stronger government capabilities achieve better and more consistent outcomes for their citizens.

Mr. Neng cautioned against what he termed the "piecemeal approach" to government reform, in which attention is narrowly focused on isolated issues such as digital transformation or leadership training. While these efforts are essential, he argued, they are insufficient without a holistic systems approach. He then outlined CIG's model for building high-performance governments, structured around four interlinked dimensions.

The first, Performance-Driven Leadership, he explained, is about leaders who are willing to make complex, sometimes unpopular decisions in the national interest. Citing Singapore's founding Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, he said a great leader does not communicate well, but one who delivers visible, measurable results. "For governments," he noted, "the ultimate proof of success lies in the outcomes their citizens can see and feel."

The second dimension, Performance Architecture and Systems, he described as the structural backbone of effective governance. He highlighted three essential elements:

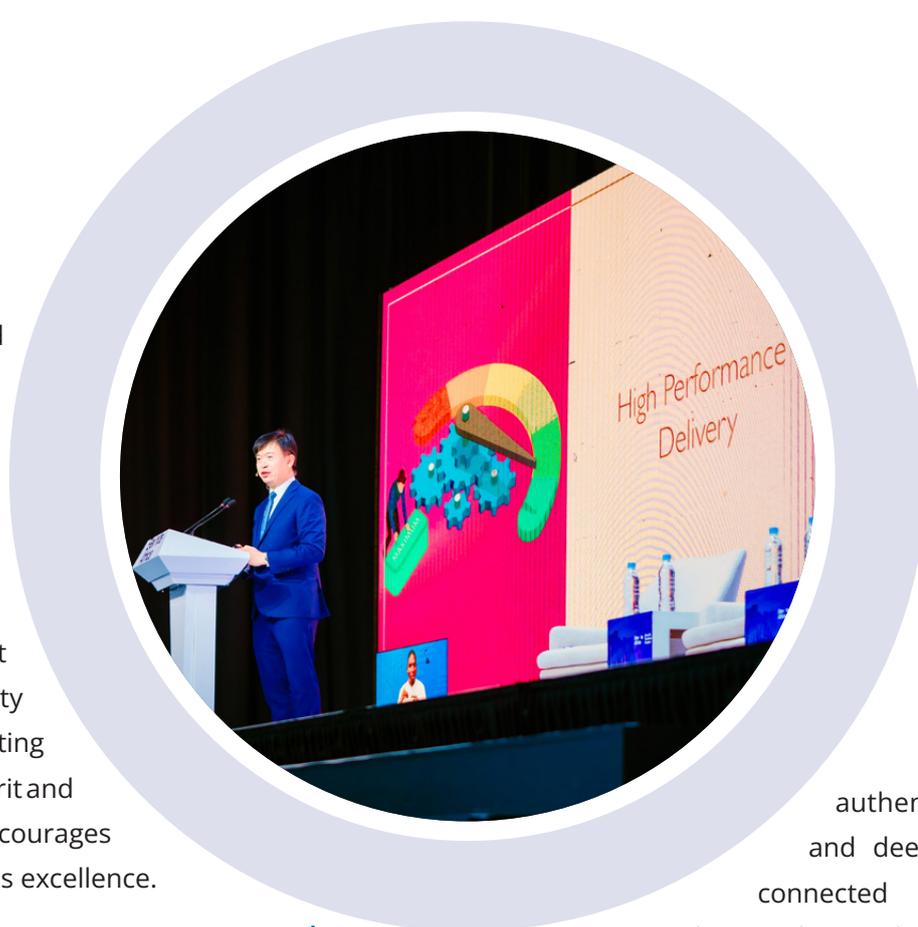
1. Coordination Architecture — systems that compel ministries to collaborate on complex, cross-cutting issues such as climate change and public health.
2. Robust Performance Management — mechanisms that track and evaluate both institutional and individual performance.
3. Linking Performance and Rewards — ensuring that excellence is recognised, incentivised, and rewarded across the public sector.

The third dimension, High-Performance Delivery, he argued, is where policy meets reality. He outlined three critical skills for public servants:

1. Programme Implementation — the capacity to deliver services effectively, beyond simply managing processes.
2. Dynamic Planning — the agility to adjust plans as circumstances evolve.
3. Resource Management — developing civil servants as "smart buyers" who can negotiate contracts, ensure value for money, and minimise waste. He noted that this skill alone often generates significant savings, separate from anti-corruption efforts.

Mr. Neng then discussed the importance of cultivating a Performance Culture within the public service. He summarised Singapore's ethos as "work for reward, reward for work," a philosophy that offers equal opportunity while differentiating advancement based on merit and results. This, he said, discourages complacency and motivates excellence.

Finally, he turned to the idea of the National Story, describing it as the unifying force that gives meaning and direction to a country's development journey. He argued that effective leaders are not only administrators but also storytellers, stewards of a collective vision that inspires citizens to move forward together. He cited Lee Kuan Yew's vision of transforming Singapore into a modern metropolis as an example of a powerful national narrative. Also, he celebrated African leaders like Julius Nyerere, whose concept of Ujamaa (familyhood) gave Tanzania a shared sense of identity and purpose. A successful national story, he said, must be



authentic and deeply connected to the people it seeks to inspire.

In conclusion, Mr. Neng reaffirmed the Chandler Institute of Governance's commitment to supporting governments across Africa in strengthening capability and performance. He closed with an optimistic conviction that transformative change is entirely possible when nations invest deliberately in building capable institutions and effective leaders.

Strategic Action Points

1. Institutionalize a Holistic Performance Architecture Across Government

Governments should move beyond piecemeal reforms and adopt a whole-of-government performance system.

Action points:

- Establish a central coordination framework that compels inter-ministerial collaboration on

cross-cutting priorities like climate, education, and health.

- Implement robust performance tracking mechanisms at institutional and individual levels to measure delivery outcomes.
- Introduce performance-linked incentives to reward excellence and accountability within the civil service.

2. Build Civil Service Capacity for High-Performance Delivery

Strengthen the technical and managerial competencies of public servants to ensure that policy translates into measurable public impact.

Action points:

- Develop training programmes in programme implementation, adaptive planning, and resource management, with a focus on efficiency and results.
- Create a cadre of “smart buyers” who can negotiate effectively, manage contracts, and ensure fiscal prudence.
- Embed continuous learning and

feedback systems that enable agile policy adjustment and innovation.

3. Craft and Communicate a Unifying National Story

Position leadership as both administrative and narrative stewardship, anchoring governance in a shared vision that citizens can believe in and rally behind.

Action points:

- Develop a cohesive national narrative that reflects citizens’ aspirations and historical identity.
- Integrate this story into national planning, public communication, and leadership development programmes.
- Use the national story to inspire collective purpose, enhance public trust, and align government performance with societal values.

Panel Discussion: Governance and Policy Roundtable -Steering the Next Chapter for Africa



Moderator: Tim Hanstad, Vice Chair,
Chandler Foundation

Panelists:

- Her Excellency, Ameenah Gurib, Former President of Mauritius
- His Excellency, Benjamin Chesire Cheboi, EGH, EBS, Governor, Baringo County
- Honorable Kadiva Diana Hamutumwa, Governor of Ohangwena Region, Namibia
- Hon. Dr. Frank Amoakohene, Ashanti Regional Minister, Republic of Ghana.



The panel moderator, Mr Hanstad, opened by sharing a personal story about his Norwegian grandparents, who emigrated a century ago when Norway had weak institutions and low prosperity. He highlighted how the country's transformation into a wealthy nation was built on strong government institutions, the impartial rule of law, and high public trust. He used this narrative to frame the discussion, emphasizing that Africa's path to prosperity similarly depends on effective governance and high-performing governments.

He then invited the panelists to share their insights. The former President of Mauritius explained that good governance in her country stemmed from early strategic decisions, such as the establishment of free healthcare, social protection, and universal education in 1976. She stressed that the strict separation of executive, judiciary, and administrative powers, alongside a culture of meritocracy, created lasting public trust and institutional resilience.

Honorable Hamutumwa from Namibia highlighted her country's progress over 35 years, citing political stability, press freedom, human rights, and decentralization through regional councils. She emphasized gender equality, with a cabinet that is over 50% female, and youth empowerment. For further improvement, she identified embedding meritocracy, advancing digital public services, and practicing participatory democracy by leading alongside citizens rather than for them.

Governor Cheboi of Kenya addressed the decline in public trust, attributing it to a "promise-delivery gap" in which leaders prioritize elections over long-term transformation. He advocated for servant leadership, integrity, accountability, and active citizen participation, starting with leadership education in schools to cultivate a new generation

of ethical leaders.

Dr. Amoakohene, the Ashanti Regional Minister from Ghana, shared his experience using social media to build trust, including Facebook Live sessions and online appointment systems, which made government more accessible. He underscored the importance of leaders listening to and governing with the people to strengthen democracy.

In a second round of questions, the former President of Mauritius emphasized storytelling as a tool to connect African youth with their history, culture, and heritage, fostering pride and belonging. Honorable Hamutumwa detailed Namibia's anti-corruption strategy, including independent institutions, transparent procurement, a Whistleblowers Act, and embedding anti-corruption education in schools from grade one to cultivate a culture of integrity.

When asked about Africa's future, all panelists expressed optimism. The Kenyan Governor highlighted technology and transparency as enablers of accountability. Dr. Amoakohene advocated intra-African partnerships to process raw materials locally. Honorable Hamutumwa pointed to practical regional integration, such as that between Namibia and Botswana, allowing border crossings with only an ID. The former President of Mauritius concluded with a rallying call, stating that Africa's potential must not be wasted, emphasizing that success is both possible and imperative.





Strategic Action Points

1. Institutionalize Meritocracy and Performance Systems in Public Service

Action Point:

Governments should embed clear, transparent systems for recruitment, promotion, and performance evaluation within the civil service to strengthen accountability and trust.

Implementation Steps:

- Introduce standardized performance management frameworks that reward measurable results.
- Establish independent merit and promotion boards to reduce political interference.
- Provide leadership and management training programs focused on ethics and delivery outcomes.

2. Digitize and Decentralize Governance for Citizen-Centered Service Delivery

Action Point:

Accelerate the digitization of public services while devolving decision-making to local and regional levels to ensure inclusivity and accessibility.

Implementation Steps:

- Expand e-governance platforms for licensing, procurement, and citizen feedback.
- Build digital capacity among civil servants and local administrators.
- Strengthen coordination between national and regional governments to ensure rural communities access services efficiently.

3. Cultivate Ethical Leadership and Civic Participation from the Ground Up

Action Point:

Develop leadership pipelines and civic education programs that instill integrity, accountability, and active citizenship from an early age.

Implementation Steps:

- Integrate ethics and anti-corruption education into school curricula starting in primary school.
- Promote mentorship programs connecting youth with ethical leaders in government and civil society.
- Institutionalize mechanisms such as town halls and digital platforms for continuous citizen engagement and feedback in policymaking.

Plenary 2: Transformational Female Leadership

Panel Discussion: Transformational Female Leadership



Moderator: Abosede George-Ogan,
Founder, Women in Leadership
Advancement Network (WILAN)

Panelists:

- Representative Kim Schofield, Member, Georgia State Representative, District 63
- Her Royal Highness Senator Princess Ncengcenge Dlamini, Parliament of the Kingdom of Eswatini



Elevate Africa



cultural traditions into opportunities for empowerment, such as turning marula fruit into a global cosmetic product that now sustains rural women.

In Parliament, she noted that the King has actively advocated for women's election and that she herself pushes for gender-responsive legislation. Yet she also highlighted internal challenges, pointing out that younger women often hesitate to seek mentorship from their elders, while competition and intimidation among women can impede collective progress.

Representative Schofield from the Georgia House of Representatives then spoke about strategies for amplifying women's voices in leadership. She asserted that "collaboration is the new currency of power" and that genuine transformation arises from shared victories, not self-promotion. She outlined a three-tier framework for building power: power over, power within, and power with. She urged leaders to embody integrity, empathy, and impact "to legislate for the heart of the people." She cautioned young women against chasing power too quickly without grounding in purpose, warning that such impatience often leads to misuse of influence.

When the discussion turned to technology and education, the Princess described Eswatini's "Government in Your Hand" initiative, led by the country's female ICT Minister. The digital platform, she explained, enables citizens, especially in rural areas, to access government services such as birth certificate applications without leaving

The moderator opened the session with compelling statistics that set the tone for the discussion. She noted that although women make up 49.7% of Africa's population, they occupy only 25.7% of parliamentary seats and less than 8% of leadership roles in listed companies. She argued that this disparity carries measurable economic costs, citing African Development Bank data showing that firms with gender-balanced leadership achieve 20–25% higher profitability. Similarly, she referenced UN Women's findings that countries with greater female representation enjoy stronger social investment and governance stability. "By not having women in leadership," she said, "Africa is leaving money on the table."

The conversation began with Princess Dlamini from Eswatini, who was asked how she had navigated traditional and political spaces historically dominated by men. She attributed her leadership to a lineage of strong women, including her great-grandmother, who defied convention by sending the King to school, an act she said "saved the kingdom." She added that the current Queen Mother continues that legacy by transforming

home. She also highlighted efforts to establish a Research Council Act that would fund studies on indigenous plants, transforming them into marketable products such as cosmetics and food, thereby unlocking new pathways for women's economic participation.

Drawing from her work under the Obama administration and her personal health journey, the Georgia Representative was then asked what unique lens women bring to health policy. She described women as "healers and liberators," explaining that they combine data, storytelling, and innovation to reimagine healthcare systems. By mentoring young female doctors and researchers and by centering the experiences of marginalized people, she argued, women are redefining the future of health equity and care delivery.

On mentorship, the Princess credited her father as her most significant influence, recalling his advice to "have no enemies." She said his ability to build bridges even during apartheid taught her that collaboration is the essence of leadership. She encouraged women to reject the scarcity mindset, emphasizing that "success is not a scarce resource" and that one woman's triumph does not diminish another's potential.

In closing, both panelists delivered calls to action. The Princess urged that women's participation in leadership be normalized, not treated as a "ceremonious event" but

as an accepted reflection of their long-standing roles as community builders and changemakers.

The Georgia Representative delivered a passionate appeal for urgency: "Learn it, live it, legislate it," she said, quoting a poet, "Our time is not to someday. Our time is now." She challenged the audience to be the generation that transforms lives, safeguards democracy, and stewards Africa's future with purpose.

The moderator concluded by affirming that women are not merely filling gaps in leadership; they are redefining what leadership means. Elevating women, she said, is not just about representation; it is about unlocking Africa's next chapter.



Strategic Action Points

1. Institutionalize Women's Leadership Across All Sectors

Action Point:

Governments and organizations should embed gender representation targets in legislation, corporate governance codes, and public service recruitment policies to ensure women's leadership becomes a structural norm, not a symbolic act.

Implementation Measures:

- Introduce gender quotas or parity laws in political and corporate leadership structures.
- Establish women's leadership academies and fellowship programs to prepare qualified female candidates for executive and decision-making roles.
- Require annual gender representation reporting for public and private institutions.

2. Build Collaborative and Mentorship Ecosystems for Women

Action Point:

Create structured mentorship and peer-support networks that connect emerging women leaders with established role models across sectors and generations.

Implementation Measures:

- Develop a continental or national "Women Leading Women" mentorship initiative that pairs senior leaders with

young professionals.

- Offer leadership and collaboration training emphasizing "power with" rather than "power over."
- Incentivize women's associations, chambers, and networks to host regular mentorship and capacity-building forums.

3. Leverage Technology and Indigenous Knowledge for Inclusive Growth

Action Point:

Accelerate digital transformation and innovation policies that empower women, especially in rural and informal sectors, to access government services, funding, and markets.

Implementation Measures:

- Scale up "e-government" platforms that simplify access to essential services and information for women entrepreneurs and households.
- Fund research and commercialization of indigenous products (like marula oil) led by women cooperatives and SMEs.
- Support ICT training programs for women to strengthen participation in the digital and green economies.

Plenary 3: Natural Resources and Sovereign Wealth

Panel Discussion: Natural Resources and Sovereign Wealth



Moderator: -Sandra Babu-Boateng, Co-Founder, PanaGenius, Managing Partner.

Panelists:

- ⚙️ Ron Chari, Executive Director, Chandler Institute of Justice.
- ⚙️ Aisha Maina, Managing Director, Aquarian Consult/Aquarian Oil and Gas.
- ⚙️ Dr M'zée Fula-Ngege, Chairman, African Diamond Council (ADC), African International Diamond Exchange (AIDEX)





The session opened with a bold assertion from the moderator: Africa's prosperous future will not happen by chance; it must be intentionally engineered by those willing to take responsibility for shaping it. She emphasized that part of this re-engineering required confronting the continent's long-standing inability to convert its vast natural wealth into widespread prosperity, a dilemma she called "the paradox of plenty."

She reminded delegates that Africa holds over 30% of the world's mineral reserves and therefore "literally holds the key to the future." The challenge, she said, was to convert this subterranean wealth into sovereign wealth, jobs, and infrastructure that directly benefit Africans. Framing the discussion, she posed a crucial question: What systemic barriers continue to prevent this transformation, and how can the cycle be broken?

Ms Maina opened the dialogue by challenging the very premise of the debate. Africa's biggest mistake, she argued, was in misidentifying its most valuable resource. The continent's discourse, she said, remains fixated on what lies beneath the soil: oil, minerals, and water, while neglecting what stands above it: its people.

She asserted that until Africans recognize that human resources are their

greatest asset, they will continue to mismanage their natural endowments. Sustainable systems, she explained, require a critical mass of competent and trusted individuals, not a few exceptional ones. Without investing in human capability and trust-building, even the richest deposits would continue to yield poor returns.

Dr. Ngenge took the discussion further, pointing to a lack of confidence and political courage as key obstacles to transformation. He expressed frustration that many African leaders still prefer to follow rather than lead, seeking validation from external models before acting. Even innovative, locally designed policies, he noted, are often shelved until another country implements them successfully.

He called for African governments to break free from this "habit of following" and cultivate the courage to pioneer indigenous solutions. "We cannot lead the world," he said, "if we are too afraid to lead ourselves."

From a legal and policy standpoint, Mr Chari dissected the sector's profound structural weaknesses. He identified outdated legislation, weak enforcement, and corruption in licensing as significant impediments to fair and sustainable resource management.

Mr Chari outlined a three-pronged strategy used by his organization: first, tackling corruption in the award of mining licenses; second, ensuring



that resource extraction generates real economic opportunities; and third, and most importantly, guaranteeing that communities living around mining sites share in the benefits.

He emphasized that without comprehensive law reform and more intelligent contract negotiation, African states would continue to lose out on equitable deals with investors. "Our laws must reflect Africa's present realities," he said, "not colonial frameworks designed for extraction."

When asked what policy shifts could strengthen a collective African position, Ms Maina pointed to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) as a foundational tool. She urged countries not only to sign but to implement the agreement actively. Linking trade integration with mobility, she called for visa-free travel across Africa, arguing that greater freedom of movement would enhance collaboration and skills exchange.

"When Africans can move freely and share their experiences in processing natural resources, including human resources, they approach global negotiation tables with something to offer, not something to ask for," she said.

In their closing reflections, the panelists shared their visions for the next two decades.

Dr. Ngege highlighted the power of storytelling and the creative industries in reshaping Africa's economic and cultural image. He observed that sectors like the diamond industry remain

fragmented due to a lack of trust and independent legislation. He challenged African filmmakers and artists to leverage cinema and media to rebrand the continent. "You are the launch pads of our luxury brands," he told them, urging them to use storytelling to elevate Africa's narrative on the global stage.

Mr Chari concluded with a call for Africa to define its own priorities in the global resource debate. He noted that the current discourse on "critical minerals" is driven by supply chain anxieties in advanced economies rather than by Africa's development agenda. He urged the continent to determine what is critical for itself, whether for revenue generation, employment, or community advancement, and to shape its policies accordingly.

Using Botswana's diamonds as an example, he argued that a mineral's value should not be measured by its relevance to the global energy transition, but by its contribution to national transformation. "Criticality," he concluded, "must be defined by Africans, for Africa."



Strategic Action Points

1. Build Africa's Human Capital as the Foundation of Resource Governance

Strategic Action:

Reorient national and continental resource strategies to prioritize people before minerals. Governments, universities, and private sector actors should jointly invest in large-scale skills development, technical training, and ethical leadership programmes specifically for the extractives sector.

Implementation Steps:

- Establish African Resource Leadership Academies to train local talent in mining governance, contract negotiation, and resource management.
- Integrate ethics, trust-building, and intergenerational mentorship into training curricula.
- Track progress through annual national human capital audits linked to resource sectors.

2. Modernize and Harmonize Natural Resource Laws Across Africa

Strategic Action:

Undertake comprehensive law and policy reform to replace outdated, extractive-era legislation with frameworks that ensure transparency, local benefit, and regional consistency.

Implementation Steps:

- Conduct national reviews of all mining and natural resource laws by 2026, benchmarking them against best practices from the African Mining Vision.
- Mandate public disclosure of mining

contracts and licenses to curb corruption and enhance accountability.

- Develop regional legal harmonization compacts under the African Union to prevent exploitative cross-border competition.

3. Operationalize the AfCFTA for Resource-Based Industrialization

Strategic Action:

Use the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) as a platform to build integrated regional value chains for resource beneficiation and trade in processed goods, rather than raw exports.

Implementation Steps:

- Launch cross-border resource-processing corridors (e.g., diamond polishing, lithium refining, cocoa processing) with shared investment frameworks.
- Fast-track visa-free travel and professional mobility within the resource sector to enhance knowledge exchange.
- Establish an AfCFTA Resource Integration Taskforce to monitor and coordinate progress on resource value addition projects.

Plenary 4: Catalyzing Governance Reforms - Policy Labs for the Next Era

Panel Discussion: Catalyzing Governance Reforms - Policy Labs for the Next Era



Moderator: Busie Matsiko, The President, New York Africa Chamber of Commerce

Panelists:

- Ms. Edith Akridge, Politician, Women's Advocate, and Advisor to H.E. Joyce Banda
- Vuyelwa Nyakaza, Founder and Managing Director, Sukume Consulting (EA Fellow)





The session, framed as an interactive policy lab, opened with the moderator setting a clear intention: this was not another talk session; it was a working space to generate actionable ideas for governance reform. She introduced the panelists and immediately adopted a town-hall format, inviting participants to share diverse, grounded perspectives from across the continent.

Ms Akridge of Malawi began by defining a policy lab as a space for Africans to craft their own solutions, breaking the cycle of dependency on external expertise. She emphasized the urgent need for intergenerational dialogue to close the gap between youth with bold ideas and an older political establishment that still holds power. Highlighting systemic barriers, she cited Africa's high borrowing costs, with bank interest rates as high as 30%, and the difficulty of intra-African travel, which hinders collaboration. She also criticized donor models that bypass local partners, insisting that "we know what we need" and that local partners must be trusted to lead implementation.

Ms Nyakaza, an anthropologist and development strategist, rooted the conversation in culture and identity. She argued that the core failure of post-colonial governance in Africa lies in its disregard for indigenous knowledge systems. Long before colonialism, Africans had advanced systems of government, education, and social order, which

were later dismissed as inferior. She asserted that many current policy frameworks remain imports, disconnected from local realities. Her call to action was for Africa to engage the world on its own terms by developing policies grounded in its cultural logic, values, and citizen consultations.

A Nigerian policy advocate shifted the lens from state-led action to citizen-driven innovation. He introduced the concept of a citizen policy lab, where individuals mobilize their skills to build social enterprises that tackle community problems while sustaining themselves financially. He shared that his own organization pays tutors to teach and then uses part of the revenue to fund advocacy work. This self-sustaining model reduces dependence on government or donor funding.

A Botswana policy expert highlighted implementation failure as the continent's most enormous governance gap. He explained that promising ideas often die in the policy pipeline because they lack enabling regulations. He called for a structured policy development framework, from conception to delivery, with clearly defined accountability mechanisms to ensure continuity and measurable progress.

Paul Mbakana delivered a passionate appeal for the indigenization of governance systems. He lamented that Africa had abandoned effective traditional mechanisms, such as Botswana's Mephato (an age-regiment system once



repurposed for community development), in favor of Western governance models that don't always align with local contexts. He urged the continent to rebuild governance from its own cultural and philosophical roots, rather than constantly adapting borrowed systems.

Georgia State Representative Kim Schofield brought energy and strategy to the discussion, urging Africans to become "too relevant to be ignored." She underscored that lasting policy change requires resilience, visibility, and strategic power-building. Drawing from her legislative experience, she reminded participants that her first bill took eight years to pass, proof that persistence matters. She advised citizens to stop waiting for inclusion: "If you're not given a seat at the table, build your own table." Her message was a rallying call to act, organize, and stay engaged.

A South African government insider distilled her insights into three practical levers for reform:

1. Identify points of leverage within government and cultivate internal champions.
2. Build parallel systems that model innovative solutions, prompting government adoption.
3. Localize implementation, ensuring national policies are broken down and delivered effectively at the community level through people, partnerships, and technology.

A youth advocate from Botswana gave a stirring intervention, arguing that "policies are made for youth, but not with youth."

He called for education reform focused on practical skills, the dismantling of trade barriers, and the creation of spaces where young Africans can actively shape policies that affect them. His message to peers was uncompromising: "Don't wait for invitations. Stand up and knock on doors."

In closing, the participants converged around key resolutions. They agreed that effective governance reform must be culturally rooted, co-created with citizens, and backed by legislation and financing to ensure delivery. The session ended with a unifying message that reverberated through the room:

"We are the ones we have been waiting for."

True reform, they concluded, will not come from waiting for permission; it will come from showing up, building movements, and relentlessly driving systems that reflect the people they serve.

Strategic Action Points

1. Institutionalize Citizen-Led Policy Labs Across Africa

Action Point:

Establish national and community-level “Citizen Policy Labs” that provide structured spaces for citizens, especially youth and entrepreneurs, to design, test, and scale locally relevant governance innovations.

Implementation Steps:

- Partner with universities, civic organizations, and local governments to pilot these labs.
- Create funding mechanisms (public-private co-financing) that reward scalable, community-driven policy solutions.
- Integrate successful ideas into formal policymaking processes through defined feedback loops with ministries and parliament.

2. Embed Indigenous Knowledge Systems into Policy Frameworks

Action Point:

Develop a policy reform agenda that systematically incorporates indigenous governance models, cultural values, and traditional systems (like Mephato) into modern governance structures.

Implementation Steps:

- Conduct national audits to identify effective pre-colonial governance practices adaptable to current contexts.
- Create technical working groups of

traditional leaders, scholars, and policymakers to codify and align these practices with democratic principles.

- Require cultural impact assessments for major policy reforms to ensure contextual relevance.

3. Create Accountability Pipelines for Policy Implementation

Action Point:

Introduce a transparent policy tracking system that maps every reform from conception to implementation, ensuring accountability and measurable progress.

Implementation Steps:

- Develop digital dashboards accessible to the public, tracking policy status, responsible actors, and milestones.
- Assign “implementation champions” within government ministries to oversee follow-through and report quarterly.
- Link budget allocations to implementation milestones to incentivize delivery and discourage policy stagnation.

DAY TWO





Day 2 Synopsis – Elevate Africa 2025 Convening

The second day of the Elevate Africa 2025 Convening built decisively on the foundations laid on day one, shifting from high-level vision to granular, actionable strategies across Africa's most critical sectors. The unifying theme of the day was clear: moving from isolated achievements to integrated, systemic action.

The morning opened with inspiring addresses that set a tone of urgent, practical ambition. Her Worship Manki Sekete, Deputy Mayor of Gaborone, celebrated the convening as a platform where “hope is translated into action,” declaring that the world must now look to Africa for inspiration. Hon. Kadiva Diana Humitumwa, Governor of Namibia's Ohangwena Region, framed Africa's youth bulge as a “revolution waiting to happen,” emphasizing that leadership is “the art of turning intent into impact.” She stressed that Africa cannot truly celebrate its youth without dismantling structural barriers, from outdated agricultural systems to regulatory walls that marginalize innovators.



The day progressed through a series of deep-dive plenaries, each producing concrete strategies and actionable frameworks:

Plenary 1: Creative Capital

Focusing on Africa's fragmented cultural and creative economy, Moky Makura of Africa No Filter revealed that stereotypical depictions of Africa cost the continent \$4.2 billion annually. Panelists, including actor Hakeem Kae-Kazim and investor Josh Wilson, called for a structural overhaul. Key resolutions included:

- Establishing Pan-African Creative Guilds to protect intellectual property and ensure fair compensation.
- Launching a blended 'Creative Africa Fund' to de-risk ventures.
- Implementing an 'Authenticity and Export' strategy to amplify African stories on global platforms.

Plenary 2: Sustainable Infrastructure

Mr. Kinapara Coulibaly, CEO of Côte d'Ivoire's National Technical Bureau, highlighted that nearly 70% of the infrastructure required in Africa by 2040 has yet to be built. A panel including a representative from Africa50 clarified that the main challenge is the scarcity of bankable projects, not capital, citing an annual financing gap of \$130–170 billion. Resolutions focused on:

- Strengthening governance to attract investment.
- Mobilizing domestic capital, including Africa's \$2 trillion in pension funds.
- Prioritizing strategic sectors, such as energy and transport, through cross-border collaboration.



Plenary 3: Bridging Borders

Centered on “power, sovereignty, and Africa’s digital destiny,” this session explored intra-African payments.

Experts from PAPSS and Visa highlighted that seamless trade depends on regulatory harmonization and embedding trust and security in digital systems. A venture capitalist noted that while Africa leads in female entrepreneurship, only 2% of capital reaches women, underlining the need to use transaction data to bridge the gender finance gap.

Plenary 4: She Leads

This session offered practical models for empowerment. Sophia Wanyonyi of Kenya’s Rainbow Room Foundation described how mentorship and support initiatives, such as the provision of sanitary pads, address educational barriers. Pastor Lesley Osei from the U.S. emphasized the role of faith in cultivating moral leadership and declared, “Excellence shuts people up,” advocating for women to be both spiritual and strategic. Key resolutions included:

- Embedding gender equity in education.
- Strengthening community-rooted social enterprises.
- Integrating values-based leadership into governance frameworks.



Plenary 5: Marketing Africa to the World

Moderator Pat Dambe shared a personal story linking Botswana’s diamond revenues to her education, framing marketing as the vital link between value and human impact. Consultant Oabona Kgengwenyane traced Africa’s marketing challenge to historical fragmentation, while Josh Wilson stressed that marketing must be a primary budget priority, not an afterthought. Resolutions focused on:

- Crafting a unified African brand narrative.
- Prioritizing marketing in economic policy.
- Investing in indigenous product development to convert narrative into commerce.

Plenary 6: Leveraging Technology

Panelists explored how technology can leapfrog development. Hon. Edem Agbana, a Ghanaian MP, stressed that basic needs must be met first. VC William Bao Bean showcased innovations

turning constraints into advantages, while Dr. Maya Fakhfakh envisioned rural nurses using AI as trusted assistants. Strategic takeaways included:

- Investing in foundational infrastructure and digital skills.
- Strengthening implementation of existing policies, such as the AfCFTA.
- Fostering public-private collaboration to build sustainable innovation ecosystems.

The day concluded with a reflective keynote from His Royal Majesty, Ogiame Atuwatse III, who synthesized two days of dialogue. He affirmed that delegates had moved beyond discussion to actively architect Africa’s future. Declaring trust the “cornerstone of governance”, he celebrated the adoption of the Gaborone Communiqué as a living covenant, not a ceremonial document. In his final charge, he urged participants to build systems, not speeches; forge partnerships, not promises; and elevate Africa, not tomorrow, but today. He left the audience with a resonant affirmation: Africa’s next chapter is not only bright, but brilliantly intentional.



Opening
Speeches



Her Worship, Manki Sekete, Deputy Mayor of Gaborone

Gaborone Deputy Mayor, Her Worship Sekete, spoke on behalf of the Mayor and the city. She addressed Her Majesty directly, acknowledging that her vision and leadership had inspired the entire movement. The Deputy Mayor commended Her Majesty's message for capturing the very essence of Africa's heart, a call for unity, innovation, and purpose.

She highlighted the gathering's theme, "Africa: The Next Chapter," and announced that Botswana had already begun writing this new chapter. She emphasized that Africa's progress is no longer a distant dream but a living reality, one that Africans themselves must continue to write. Through the Elevate Africa initiative, she celebrated the power of collaboration, where culture meets creativity, leadership drives transformation, and hope is translated into action.

Affirming Gaborone City's commitment to the ideals of Elevate Africa: employment, inclusivity, and sustainable growth, she lauded Her Majesty's vision and steadfast belief in Botswana's potential. She expressed hope that the initiative would continue to nurture current and future leaders dedicated to building a continent that reflects Africa's true greatness.

With conviction, she declared that the time is now for Africa to stand on its own and for other continents to look to Africa for inspiration and innovation. She urged African nations to unite in supporting the shared vision of elevating Africa to its highest heights.

In closing, the Deputy Mayor welcomed participants to the day's proceedings and encouraged active engagement and attentive listening. She urged delegates to carry the message back to their respective countries.

Key Ideas

1. Africa's Renewal and Unity: The Deputy Mayor emphasized that Africa's progress is a collective responsibility. Africans must unite to write the continent's next chapter through shared vision, innovation, and purpose.
2. "Elevate Africa" as a Catalyst for Transformation: She celebrated the Elevate Africa initiative as a platform driving collaboration, creativity, leadership, and sustainable growth across the continent.
3. Gaborone's Commitment and Her Majesty's Inspiring Vision: The Deputy Mayor affirmed Gaborone City's dedication to the ideals of Elevate Africa and praised Her Majesty's leadership for inspiring a continental movement grounded in faith, empowerment, and hope.



Hon. Kadiva
Diana
Hamutumwa,
Governor of
Ohangwena
Region,
Namibia

Governor Hamutumwa expressed delight at being part of what she described as a “gathering of minds and conviction.” She portrayed the Elevate Africa platform as a unique mechanism for translating ideas into action and courageously reimagining governance. The future of African governance, she asserted, would not be shaped solely within traditional corridors of power, but within new spaces of innovation: policy labs, civic platforms, and among citizens who insist that good governance become practical action.

Turning to Africa's demographic reality, she noted that by 2025 the continent would be home to nearly 2.5 billion people, with over 60% under the age of 25. She called this not merely a statistic, but “a revolution waiting to happen,” recognizing the continent's vast reservoir of youthful potential. Yet she contrasted

this promise with the stark inequalities that leave one in three young Africans neither employed, studying, nor in training. Behind each number, she said, lie stories of frustration and resilience.

She insisted that Africa cannot celebrate its youth without dismantling the barriers that stifle them. To speak of opportunity while maintaining outdated systems, she argued, would be disingenuous. For Africa to truly claim the 21st century, she said, its people must redesign how they relate to, love, and care for one another. She urged the audience to break free from stereotypes that hinder intra-African trade and to undo the boundaries imposed by the 1884 Berlin Conference. Leadership, she declared, must not preserve the status quo but prepare the continent for what must become.

Defining leadership as “the art of turning intent into impact,” she observed that institutions often struggle to keep pace with a rapidly changing world where technology evolves faster than policy. She proposed that policy labs offer a practical response, envisioning governance as a living experiment grounded in evidence and innovation. For reform to take root, she argued, governments must build ecosystems that foster collaboration among policymakers, researchers, entrepreneurs, and youth leaders before decisions are made, cultivating an adaptive, open, and courageous form of governance.

The governor emphasized that Africa’s growth will be driven not by rhetoric, but by sectors that restore dignity. Citing agriculture, she called for a transition from subsistence to sophistication,

noting that with 60% of the world’s uncultivated arable land, Africa has no reason to import food or lament hunger. By integrating technology and attracting youth through agripreneurship, she said, the continent can feed both its people and its economies, reminding delegates that “a hungry nation cannot be productive and will remain a beggar.”

On entrepreneurship, she called for the dismantling of “invisible walls” that marginalize young innovators, arguing that access to finance should not depend on political connections.

Africa, she urged, must stop benchmarking from others and start creating, innovating, and learning from its own experiments. She cited Namibia’s National Youth Development Fund as an example of practical support, explaining that it provides young people with low-interest, collateral-free loans for viable business ideas, capitalized by over 300 million Namibian dollars from the government.

On technology, she encouraged a shift from consumption to creation, lamenting that Africa currently accounts for less than 1% of global patents despite its abundant ingenuity. With the right investment, she said, the continent could become a source of solutions, especially in healthcare and climate resilience, rather than an importer of them.

She framed reform as a moral, not just technical, pursuit that demands honesty about past failures and humility to rebuild systems for a new generation. “We cannot build 21st-century



leadership with 20th-century tools," she declared. Reform, she insisted, must yield tangible outcomes: better schools, cleaner governance, and more accountable institutions. Good governance, she concluded, must evolve from a political performance into a "practice of care," where vision is united with evidence and power guided by principle.

Addressing young leaders directly, she reminded them that they are not merely asking to inherit institutions, but to reimagine them, and that it is the duty of those in authority to create space and trust for this transformation. She urged delegates to treat the convening as a "laboratory of possibility," remembered for its bold and courageous outcomes. She called for collaboration across all fronts: public and private sectors meeting at the point of creation, academia stepping into policy

design, and civil society moving from criticism to co-creation.

In closing, she declared that Africa now stands at the intersection of possibility and preparation. The question, she said, is whether the continent will rise with clarity and courage. She expressed hope that the convening would set the tone for an ambitious Africa governed with integrity. Leaving the audience with words of wisdom, she quoted Sir Seretse Khama, who said, "A people without a past is a people without a soul," and Marcus Garvey, who urged Africans to emancipate themselves from "mental slavery." She concluded by wishing everyone fruitful deliberations.



Strategic Action Points

1. Institutionalize Innovation through Policy Labs

Governments should establish national and regional policy labs that bring together policymakers, researchers, entrepreneurs, and youth leaders to co-design solutions before policies are enacted. These labs would serve as experimental spaces for testing new governance models, ensuring policies are evidence-based, adaptive, and responsive to real-world needs.

Action Steps:

- Create innovation units within key ministries to pilot reforms.
- Allocate dedicated funding for policy experimentation.
- Partner with universities and innovation hubs to generate data-driven insights.

2. Transform Agriculture through Technology and Youth Engagement

To move from subsistence to sophistication, African nations should modernize agriculture by integrating technology and empowering youth through agripreneurship. This approach would reduce food imports, enhance productivity, and create dignified employment opportunities.

Action Steps:

- Invest in agri-tech infrastructure (smart irrigation, precision farming, data tools).
 - Launch youth-focused agripreneurship incubators and financing schemes.
 - Strengthen intra-African trade in agricultural goods to build regional food resilience.
- ### 3. Build an Inclusive Innovation Ecosystem for Youth and Entrepreneurs
- African countries should dismantle barriers that restrict youth access to finance and opportunity, shifting from dependency on external benchmarks to homegrown innovation. This includes replicating models like Namibia's National Youth Development Fund across the continent.

Action Steps:

- Develop national innovation funds offering collateral-free, low-interest loans.
- Reform procurement and business registration systems to favor youth-led enterprises.
- Establish regional mentorship networks linking investors with young innovators.

Plenary 1: Creative Capital - Reimagining the Future of Africa's Cultural and Creative Economy

Moderator: Natasha, Editor-in-Chief, She Afrique



Panelists:

- Moky Makura, Executive Director, Africa No Filter
- Hakeem Kae-Kazim, Actor and Producer
- Jason Coke, Managing Partner, Global Venture Partners (GVP); Director, TIME Africa
- Buchi Franklin, Actor
- Nicole Asinugo, Director, Partnerships and Sponsorship, TOOF
- Kyler Griffin, Directors Guild of America
- Busie Matsiko, President of the New York African Chamber of Commerce





Opening the conversation, the moderator noted that Africa's creative industry, rich in cultural heritage and dynamic storytelling, has not only captured global attention but also made a growing contribution to the world economy. Yet, she observed, the sector remains undervalued and fragmented. The session, she said, aimed to move "beyond conversation" and turn to "the next page."

She began by inviting Moky Makura to share how Africa No Filter is shaping the continent's creative output. Akura described the organization as a "narrative change movement" advocating for better representation of Africa globally. He revealed that stereotypical depictions of Africa in international media cost the continent an estimated \$4.2 billion annually. In response, Africa No Filter has built a vibrant community of creatives, distributed grants, and invested over \$7.5 million into the African creative economy, investments he described as essential to redefining how the world perceives Africa.

Next, screenwriter and filmmaker Nicole Asinugo discussed how film and storytelling can reshape Africa's global narrative. She asserted that storytelling is the foundation of national branding and international perception, citing Hollywood's success in shaping America's image. Empowering African storytellers, she said, means giving them agency to recognize that their stories can transform how nations are seen.

Actor and producer Hakeem Kae-Kazim emphasized the importance of telling African stories from an African perspective. He cited Nollywood's early authenticity as evidence that global audiences value African truth. Concerned that some recent productions imitate Western

styles, he called for practical support systems, from investor education to film schools, to sustain authentic African storytelling.

Building on this, Buchi Franklin highlighted the urgent need for financing and infrastructure. While acknowledging that not all filmmakers remain true to their roots, he praised those who authentically portray Nigerian stories. He challenged investors to study the success of African films on platforms such as Netflix and Amazon as proof of their commercial viability.

From the financing perspective, Jason Coke of Global Venture Partners outlined how venture partnerships can strengthen the sector by helping creators retain control over their intellectual property and attract foreign direct investment. He cited a \$12 million investment as part of efforts to build a circular creative economy integrating financial services and digital infrastructure.

Turning to intellectual property, Kyler Griffin of the Writers Guild of America underscored the importance of collective action through guilds and unions. Citing the 2023 Hollywood strikes, she explained how solidarity protected workers from emerging threats like AI. He urged African creatives to establish similar structures to safeguard their rights and ensure fair compensation.

Busie Matsiko, President of the New York African Chamber of Commerce, focused on collaboration and ecosystem-building. She shared her experience of helping African designers secure a place on the official New York Fashion Week calendar, stressing that collaboration must be intentional, intergenerational, and transcontinental. She urged the diaspora to partner meaningfully with the continent, hold each other accountable beyond panels, and build sustainable, alternative funding sources.

In a fast-paced closing round, each panelist offered a key takeaway:

- Moky Makura called for increased philanthropic funding to support social-impact storytelling.
- Hakeem Kae-Kazim emphasized education and government support to train future storytellers.
- Buchi Franklin invited cross-border collaboration, expressing a wish to shoot his next film in Botswana.
- Nicole Asinugo described the panel itself as “philanthropy in action” and encouraged ongoing partnership.
- Kyler Griffin declared that “Africa is very hot right now” and urged the continent to seize this moment of global interest.
- Busie Matsiko concluded that funding is fundamental to building creative ecosystems, reminding delegates that “we are the ones we’ve been waiting for.”

Moderator Natasha closed the session by thanking the panelists for an insightful and inspiring conversation on unlocking Africa’s cultural and human capital, one that underscored the continent’s creative power and its readiness to define its own global narrative.

Strategic Action Points

1. 1. Establish and Resource Pan-African Creative Guilds and Unions

Strategic Action:

Transition from fragmented networks to formalized, Pan-African guilds representing writers, directors, actors, and production professionals, modeled on Hollywood’s collective bargaining systems, to ensure fair compensation, rights protection, and industry cohesion.

Implementation Steps:

- Founding Congress: Convene a Pan-African Creative Congress bringing together national industry bodies from key creative hubs (Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, Ghana, among others) to draft a shared charter, governance model, and operating framework.
- Legal Recognition: Collaborate with regional bodies such as the African Union (AU) and ECOWAS to embed guild recognition within regional policy, enabling standardized contracts, labor protections, and dispute mechanisms.
- AI and IP Safeguards: Develop guild-led contractual standards to protect intellectual property rights, explicitly addressing emerging threats such as unauthorized AI use and digital content replication.

2. Launch a Blended ‘Creative Africa Fund’ with a Philanthropic-Investment Mandate

Strategic Action:

Establish a continent-wide financing vehicle that blends philanthropic capital with commercial investment, designed to de-risk

creative ventures while supporting both social impact and profitability.

Implementation Steps:

- Capital Structure: Design a multi-tranche funding model, one tranche dedicated to early-stage development, training, and advocacy (philanthropic), and another focused on scaling commercially viable projects (venture/debt capital).
- Streamlined Access: Create a centralized digital portal where creatives can submit a single business plan for funding consideration across tranches, drawing on models like Namibia's National Youth Development Fund.
- Investor Engagement: Develop a Showcase Portfolio highlighting critically and commercially successful African productions (e.g., *The Black Book*, *To Kill a Monkey*) to build investor confidence and attract both domestic and international capital.

3. Implement a Systemic 'Authenticity and Export' Strategy for African Content

Strategic Action:

Move from reactive narrative correction to proactive storytelling by creating a coordinated, continent-wide pipeline to develop, curate, and export authentic African stories to global audiences.

Implementation Steps:

- Creator Incubators: Scale narrative-focused organizations like Africa No Filter to run mentorship-based incubators pairing emerging creatives with experienced filmmakers to

cultivate authentic, market-ready storytelling.

- Content Marketplace: Develop a digital African Content Marketplace, a curated, rights-managed platform where international distributors (Netflix, Amazon, Disney+) can easily discover, license, and invest in high-quality African productions.
- Diaspora Co-Production Forums: Host annual Africa-Diaspora Creative Forums in global cultural capitals (New York, London, Paris) to connect continental creators with diaspora investors, distributors, and talent, fostering structured collaboration and co-financing opportunities.

Plenary 2: Sustainable Infrastructure for Economic Transformation



Session Opening Speech:
Sustainable Infrastructure
- Mr. Kinapara Coulibaly,
CEO, Bureau National
d'Études Techniques et de
Développement

Mr. Coulibaly emphasized that the discussion on sustainable infrastructure was both urgent and hopeful, asserting that in building systems that connect African nations, “we are also building the very future that will define our continent.”

Mr. Coulibaly introduced the Bureau National de Technique et de Développement (INET) as Côte d'Ivoire's trusted hub for planning, designing, and delivering strategic infrastructure since its founding in 1978. He paid tribute to President Alassane Ouattara for his leadership and continued confidence in INET, which he said motivates the institution to uphold the highest standards of excellence. Beyond engineering, INET's mission, he explained, integrates feasibility studies, design, and policy advisory to transform national visions into sustainable, high-impact projects in transport, energy, and digital infrastructure. Regionally, INET plays a catalytic role in cross-border integration and has positioned itself at the forefront of innovation by joining the Open Geospatial Consortium.



To illustrate INET's tangible impact, he highlighted several flagship projects. Among them, the National Land Cover Map 2020, developed using advanced satellite imagery, now serves as a critical tool for shaping national policies on sustainable agriculture and deforestation monitoring. He also cited the Abidjan-Yonkon Drainage System, a complex urban engineering project that enhances flood management and water resilience in a rapidly expanding district, a testament, he said, to how technical excellence translates into human development. Mr. Coulibaly further reflected with pride on INET's contribution to the infrastructure for the Africa Cup of Nations 2023, describing these investments as enduring national assets that connect communities and drive local economies.

Looking ahead, Mr. Coulibaly revealed that INET had embarked on a new strategic plan that places sustainability and resilience at the heart of its operations. He noted that Africa is entering a decisive decade, with nearly 70% of the infrastructure needed by 2040 still to be built. The choices made today, he warned, will determine whether the continent's growth is sustainable and climate-resilient, cautioning that failure to act could result in GDP losses of up to 20% in some African economies by 2050.

He identified a persistent bottleneck in Africa's development pipeline, the scarcity of mature,

bankable projects. Drawing on engagements with the World Bank and the African Development Bank, he noted a consensus: there is more financing available than there are viable projects to absorb it. To bridge this gap, he called for stronger collaboration between technical institutions, project developers, and financial partners, ensuring that ideas can evolve into investable realities.

Mr. Coulibaly emphasized that the transition to sustainable infrastructure demands both new capabilities and a new mindset, one that integrates environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles from project inception. He noted that a growing ecosystem of partners, including the Global Green Growth Institute and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, stands ready to help African institutions strengthen their skills and systems for the next phase of transformation.

In conclusion, Mr. Coulibaly asserted that the opportunity, financing, and expertise already exist; what remains essential is leadership and commitment. He outlined INET's three-pillar strategy for driving this transformation: consolidating systems, transforming projects into bankable investments, and securing international financing. Positioning INET as a trusted partner, he warmly invited fellow delegates to collaborate in co-developing sustainable, resilient infrastructure projects that would elevate Africa toward shared, lasting prosperity.



Strategic Action Points

1. Bridge the Gap Between Finance and Project Readiness

Strategic Action:

Develop structured mechanisms to transform infrastructure ideas into mature, bankable projects that can absorb available financing.

Implementation Priorities:

- Establish Project Preparation Facilities within national technical institutions (like INET) to conduct feasibility studies and structure projects to investment-grade standards.
- Create joint project pipelines between governments, DFIs (Development Finance Institutions), and private investors to ensure coordination and visibility of opportunities.
- Introduce capacity-building programs for project developers and policymakers to align technical design with investor expectations.

2. Institutionalize Sustainability and Resilience in Infrastructure Planning

Strategic Action:

Embed environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles into all stages of infrastructure development, from conception to implementation.

Implementation Priorities:

- Mandate ESG impact assessments at the project design phase, not post-approval.
- Partner with international organizations (e.g., GGGI, CDRI) to build national expertise in climate-resilient engineering and risk assessment.
- Establish green infrastructure standards and certification frameworks to attract sustainability-linked financing.

3. Strengthen Regional Collaboration and Knowledge Systems

Strategic Action:

Leverage cross-border partnerships and data-driven innovation to enhance planning, implementation, and monitoring of infrastructure projects.

Implementation Priorities:

- Expand participation in regional technical consortia like the Open Geospatial Consortium to harmonize data and standards across borders.
- Develop shared infrastructure databases and geospatial platforms to improve decision-making and transparency.
- Convene annual regional infrastructure innovation forums to connect technical experts, financiers, and policymakers for co-creation and collaboration.

Panel Discussion: Sustainable Infrastructure for Economic Transformation



Moderator: Mr. Peter O. Jolapamo, Partner and Managing Director, Alirity

Panelists:

- Mr. Kinapara Coulibaly, CEO, Bureau National d'Études Techniques et de Développement
- Ms. Zurina Saban, General Counsel, Africa50
- Kuso Kamwambi, Head of the Presidential Delivery Unit of Zambia
- Dr. Elizabeth Jack-Rich (FIMS), Founder and President, Elizabeth Jack-Rich Aid Foundation (EJRAID).





The moderator noted that nearly 70% of the infrastructure Africa will need by 2040 has yet to be built, to serve a workforce projected to outsize those of China and India combined. Yet, he cautioned, climate change is already eroding 2–4% of Africa’s GDP annually, diverting resources from investment into disaster repair. With that, he posed the central question to the high-level panel: What is the single most significant bottleneck in Africa’s infrastructure story: financing, governance, or execution?

Ms. Saban from Africa50 began by asserting that the challenges are intertwined: “Governance attracts financing, and without financing, execution is impossible.” She cited an annual financing gap of \$130–\$170 billion, with only 10% of projects reaching financial close. Still, she urged that the focus shift to potential, reminding the audience that Africa holds the capacity to produce 60% of the world’s solar energy.

A technical expert on the panel, Mr. Coulibaly, countered that financing is not the real problem, arguing that regulatory delays and policy inconsistencies have created an unpredictable investment environment in Africa. “Until governance is fixed,” he said, “we are not ready

for a serious conversation about financing.”

A policy advisor, Ms Kamwambi agreed, emphasizing that most execution challenges stem from weak governance foundations—specifically the absence of clear policy frameworks, reliable data, and transparency. “Fix governance,” she said, “and both execution and financing will follow.”

Offering a government perspective, a representative from Zambia acknowledged the global inequities in value distribution: Africa holds over 50% of the world’s strategic minerals but earns less than 5% of the revenue. She criticized the conditionalities of international financing, arguing that they often set African nations up for failure. She urged a rebalancing of global finance, where African leaders help shape the rules rather than merely follow them.

When asked to prioritize sectors, the panel unanimously identified energy as the backbone of transformation, critical to powering homes and industries and creating opportunity for the 600 million Africans still without electricity. Transport and digital infrastructure were also flagged as essential enablers of trade, efficiency, and governance.



Dr. Jack-Rich, an operator in Nigeria’s aviation and mining sectors, grounded the discussion with real-world obstacles. She pointed to regulatory delays, foreign exchange instability, and weak local content policies as major deterrents to innovation and investor confidence. “These gaps prevent us from building an ecosystem around our resources,” she said.

In response, the Zambian official shared examples of reforms from her country’s “polycrisis” response to drought, debt, and the pandemic. Zambia, she said, had introduced Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) for key infrastructure, presumptive approvals to fast-track licensing, and one-stop investor centers to simplify project preparation, transforming the government’s role from regulator to facilitator.

Returning to financing, Ms. Saban clarified that capital is not scarce; bankable projects are. She explained that many investors seek scale and reliability, while perceived risk inflates financing costs. Her prescription was threefold:

1. Build technically sound, investable projects.
2. Aggregate smaller assets into scalable investment clusters.

3. Mobilize domestic capital, noting that African pension funds and insurers control \$2 trillion in assets, yet invest barely 3% within the continent.

As the discussion closed, the moderator asked each panelist for a single continental commitment to accelerate infrastructure. Their unified calls to action were:

1. For Africa to invest in itself by leveraging domestic pension funds and institutions to de-risk projects and craft homegrown financial solutions.
2. To move from intent to impact through a live, transparent dashboard of fundable projects, ensuring forums like Elevate Africa lead to real deals.
3. To share success stories across borders, fostering collaboration and replication of proven models.
4. To empower African innovators and businesses to lead in strategic sectors, ensuring Africa does not just rise, but leads.

The session closed on a powerful note of consensus: Africa possesses the resources, talent, and technical capacity to build its own future. What remains is the will to unlock domestic capital, reform governance, and execute with purpose, to turn ambition into tangible transformation.

Strategic Action Points

1. Strengthen Governance to Unlock Infrastructure Investment

Strategic Action: Reform regulatory and policy frameworks to create a predictable and transparent environment that attracts both domestic and international capital.

Implementation Priorities:

- Streamline licensing and approval processes, introducing measures like presumptive approvals and one-stop investor centers.
- Standardize policy frameworks and data transparency to reduce uncertainty and improve project execution.
- Establish inter-agency coordination mechanisms to ensure consistent regulations and timely implementation of infrastructure projects.

2. Mobilize Domestic Capital for African-Led Projects

Strategic Action: Tap Africa's own financial resources, pension funds, insurance assets, and domestic investors, to fund infrastructure projects and reduce reliance on external financing.

Implementation Priorities:

- Develop investment-ready project

pipelines

with technical and financial due diligence to meet investor standards.

- Aggregate smaller projects into scalable, bankable clusters to attract larger domestic and international investors.
- Create incentives and risk-mitigation mechanisms for domestic institutions to increase local investment, targeting currently underutilized assets (e.g., the \$2 trillion in pension funds and insurance holdings).

3. Prioritize Strategic Sectors and Cross-Border Collaboration

Strategic Action: Focus on high-impact sectors such as energy, transport, and digital infrastructure while fostering collaboration across African nations to maximize efficiency and regional integration.

Implementation Priorities:

- Expand energy access initiatives to reach underserved populations, ensuring electricity is available for households and industries.
- Invest in transport corridors and logistics networks that enable intra-African trade and connectivity.
- Promote knowledge sharing and replication of successful models across countries, including joint planning forums and shared project dashboards to track progress and impact.

Plenary 3: Bridging Borders – Unlocking Trade Through Seamless Intra-African Payments

Panel Discussion: Bridging Borders – Unlocking Trade Through Seamless Intra-African Payments

Moderator: Karen Matsiko, Founder, Pivotedge Advisory and Consultancy Group



Panelists:

- Mr. Abraham Osio, Head of Strategy, Pan African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS)
- Mr. Ali Athman, Head of Partnerships, Visa Government Solutions CEMEA, Visa Middle East FZ-LLC,
- Mr. Binitie Ehi, Founder, Rancard
- Mrs. Adesuwa Okunbo-Rhodes, Founder and Managing Partner, Aruwa Capital Management
- Mr Kabo Sebele, Director of Trade, Botswana Investment Trade Centre
- Dr Akin Akinpelu, Akinpelu Consulting



The moderator framed the conversation not merely as a technical discussion of systems and platforms, but as a deeper reflection on power, sovereignty, and Africa's digital destiny. She posed a defining question to the audience: What will it take to build a borderless Africa, one that trades with itself, trusts itself, and transforms itself through digital finance?

She then introduced a diverse panel of experts spanning finance, technology, policy, and investment. Opening the discussion on interoperability, a Visa representative described it as more than a technical feature; it is about inclusion and cultural respect. He explained that trust, the foundation of African markets, must be embedded in the design of payment gateways and dispute-resolution systems. He added that Visa's approach is to work within local ecosystems without eroding their sovereignty, thereby enhancing efficiency while preserving local identity.

The conversation turned to the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS). A representative traced its origins to the vision of Africa's founders 60 years ago and reported that PAPSS now connects 19 countries, over 150 commercial banks, and 17 national switches, enabling cross-border trade in local currencies. Citing Kenya's mobile money revolution as a model, he noted that digital finance can be a powerful economic catalyst, pointing to the country's fivefold GDP growth since 2007.

A fintech CEO shifted the focus to deeper structural barriers, arguing that Africa's real bottleneck lies not in payments but in regulatory fragmentation and shallow financial markets. He warned that while payment systems are being built, the underlying infrastructure, monetary policies, liquidity, and regulatory alignment remain weak. In a striking remark, he observed that "artists and entrepreneurs have done more to unite Africa than politicians," urging greater

involvement of the creative and private sectors in shaping financial innovation.

The issue of inclusion was passionately advanced by a venture capitalist who highlighted the continent's gender finance gap. She observed that while Africa boasts the world's highest rate of female entrepreneurship, only 2% of available capital reaches women. She argued that digital payments could close this gap, explaining that transaction data from point-of-sale systems can unlock credit for women in the informal sector. Citing portfolio evidence that women have higher loan repayment rates, she called for intentional, data-driven lending to tap into what she termed a trillion-dollar opportunity.

From a policy perspective, a representative of the Botswana Investment and Trade Center outlined Botswana's ambition to become a competitive digital hub. He emphasized the urgent need to harmonize policies on digital infrastructure and data exchange to enable frictionless trade and attract investment.

Addressing the critical issue of trust, an institutional consultant underscored that continental payment integration will succeed only if central banks lead in establishing shared standards on technology, cybersecurity, and transaction tracking. He stressed that "trust is not built by systems alone, it is built by people and institutions that consistently deliver."

In the closing round of commitments, panelists offered a unified vision for action:

- The PAPSS representative urged more governments and banks to join the platform, emphasizing that "the future must be co-created by Africans."
- The venture capitalist called for adopting proven models like India's Unified Payments Interface and simplifying regulations for cross-border entrepreneurship.

- The fintech CEO insisted that the digital finance revolution will be private-sector-led but requires public-sector navigation.
- The institutional expert concluded that the ultimate test of success will be “a market woman in Accra confidently receiving a payment from Kigali.”

The moderator closed by affirming that collaboration is power, and that by moving from fragmented ambition to unified institutional action, Africa can bridge its borders and truly unlock the full potential of intra-African trade.

Strategic Action Points

1. Accelerate Regulatory and Policy Harmonization Across African Markets

Action Point:

Governments and regional economic blocs should urgently collaborate to align digital finance regulations, data exchange policies, and cross-border payment frameworks. This will create a unified digital trade environment that enables the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS) and other fintech innovations to operate seamlessly across borders.

Implementation Step:

Establish a Continental Digital Finance Policy Taskforce under the AU or AfCFTA Secretariat to develop and monitor standardized regulatory guidelines for member states.

2. Embed Trust and Security in Continental Digital Payment Systems

Action Point:

Central banks, payment regulators, and financial institutions must co-develop

shared standards on cybersecurity, transaction tracking, and technology certification to strengthen confidence in cross-border digital transactions.

Implementation Step:

Launch an African Central Bank Digital Security Council to define interoperable trust frameworks and implement continent-wide transaction integrity protocols.

3. Bridge the Gender Finance Gap Through Data-Driven Digital Lending

Action Point:

Investors, fintech firms, and development partners should leverage transaction data from digital payment platforms to extend credit to women entrepreneurs, especially in the informal sector, where traditional finance systems have failed.

Implementation Step:

Pilot Digital Credit Inclusion Hubs in at least five member states, using point-of-sale data analytics to design gender-responsive loan products and track repayment patterns.

Plenary 4: She Leads - Innovating for Inclusive Power in Africa

Panel Discussion: She Leads: Innovating for Inclusive Power in Africa



Moderator: -Dr.Vumile Msweli, Founder of the Hased Africa Foundation, South Africa.

Panelists:

- ⚙️ Sophia Wanyonyi, CEO and Co-founder, Rainbow Room Foundation (RRF), Kenya
- ⚙️ Lesley Osei, Co-Pastor, Kingdom Full Tabernacle International Ministry, United States of America





The moderator set the tone for an engaging conversation on the transformative leadership of African women across various fields, from social enterprise and spirituality to real estate and governance. She framed the discussion around the urgency of accelerating gender equality. Citing the African Development Bank, she noted that closing the gender gap in entrepreneurship could add \$360 billion to Africa's GDP annually. Yet, she pointed out, women still hold less than 30% of senior leadership positions and receive only 3% of venture capital, an imbalance that calls for immediate action.

Turning to the panelists' work, the moderator asked Ms Wanyonyi how her foundation's inclusive education model was helping to bridge Kenya's economic gaps. Sophia detailed the foundation's flagship TIFIA Mentorship Program, which equips teenage girls with life skills often absent in formal education, such as mental health awareness and sexual and reproductive health education. She described initiatives to remove poverty-related barriers to education, including providing sanitary pads to keep girls in school. For younger children, she highlighted a creative book club that integrates drama and art into learning, as well as a micro-education hub complete with a library and computer lab to deliver digital literacy to underserved schools.

Pastor Osei, responding to a question on harnessing faith for inclusive governance, asserted that faith remains one of Africa's most underutilized assets. She argued that a faith-based society cultivates a stronger moral compass, grounded leadership,

and more respectful public discourse. Drawing a comparison with the United States, she noted that American politicians actively engage with churches because of their significant societal influence, an approach African leaders could learn from.

Asked about the lessons emerging from her leadership retreats, Pastor Osei emphasized that holistic empowerment was key. She explained that when women are immersed in an environment designed for personal and professional growth for a week, they return home ready to lead, speak up, and take up governance roles with confidence.

Regarding financial sustainability for social enterprises, Ms Wanyonyi stressed the importance of community buy-in. She explained that by operating within the communities they serve and maintaining open dialogue, the foundation ensures its programs remain relevant and trusted. This grounding, she said, combined with partnerships with value-aligned donors, sustains both legitimacy and longevity.

Addressing the challenge of advancing gender equality while respecting cultural values, Ms Wanyonyi described how mentorship helped young girls envision futures beyond early motherhood. She shared that educational trips, such as visits to the Kenyan Parliament, and exposure to female role models demonstrate the transformative message that "if you can see it, you can be it."

When asked how she managed her multiple roles, Pastor Osei spoke candidly. Her faith in Jesus, she said, is her anchor and compass. She dismissed the notion of perfect balance, advocating instead for faith-led prioritization. With conviction, she declared that "excellence shuts people up," insisting that deep knowledge and skill are the

surest ways for women to silence doubt and command respect, whether in ministry, real estate, or public life.

In her discussion of intergenerational learning, Ms Wanyonyi outlined how her foundation fosters connections across age groups. Teenagers, she said, learn history and cultural wisdom from elders through community service, and then mentor younger girls, creating a self-sustaining cycle of inspiration and shared growth.

As the discussion drew to a close, the moderator invited final reflections on how to elevate Africa. Ms Wanyonyi urged that every initiative must center the community, ensuring that support uplifts without alienating. Pastor Osei left the audience with a powerful charge: that African women must be both “spiritual and strategic.” Like the biblical Daniel, she said, the modern African woman must blend faith with exceptional competence to lead effectively.

In her closing remarks, the moderator underscored that inclusive power is not solely a women’s issue; it is an economic imperative, a governance accelerator, and a cultural renaissance. She expressed hope that the conversation would spark purposeful action, inspiring a future where every African woman finds her rightful place in shaping the continent’s next chapter.

Strategic Action Points

1. Embed Gender Equity in Education and Skills Development Systems

Action Point:

Governments, NGOs, and private-sector partners should institutionalize inclusive education programs, like mentorship and life-skills training for girls, that address both academic and social barriers. This includes integrating modules on reproductive health, digital literacy, and leadership into school

curricula and ensuring that basic needs (e.g., sanitary products) are met to prevent dropouts.

Intended Outcome:

A stronger pipeline of educated, confident young women ready to enter higher education, entrepreneurship, and governance.

2. Strengthen Community-Rooted and Financially Sustainable Social Enterprises

Action Point:

Social impact organizations must operate from within the communities they serve, establishing participatory feedback loops to ensure programs reflect local priorities. Partnerships should be built with donors and investors who align with the mission, ensuring sustainability beyond grant cycles.

Intended Outcome:

High-impact, community-owned initiatives that achieve long-term legitimacy, trust, and measurable progress on gender empowerment.

3. Integrate Faith and Values-Based Leadership into Governance Frameworks

Action Point:

Leverage Africa’s faith institutions as active partners in leadership development and civic education. Design cross-sector leadership academies that combine moral formation with technical competence, training women (and men) to lead with integrity, excellence, and service.

Intended Outcome:

A new generation of African leaders who are both spiritual and strategic.

Plenary 5: Marketing Africa to the World - From Narrative to Commerce

Panel Discussion: Marketing Africa to the World - From Narrative to Commerce

Moderator: Pat Dambe, Executive Secondment, Director of Marketing and Branding, Diamond Hub, Ministry of Minerals and Energy, Botswana



Panelists:

- Oabona Kgengwenyane, Founder, Innolead Consulting
- Josh Wilson, Founder and Managing Director, Global Venture Partners (GVP); Managing Director, TIME Africa
- Dr Tochukwu Macfoy, Chief Storyteller for Elevate Africa



The panel on Marketing Africa opened with a personal reflection from moderator Pat Dambe, who grounded the discussion in her lived experience. She recounted working in remote parts of Botswana, places like Orapa and Jwaneng, long before they had paved roads, often hitchhiking on trucks as a student. That journey, she said, shaped her deep pride in Botswana's diamonds, whose revenues funded her education, broadened her worldview, and enabled her to give birth to her son in a first-class hospital. For her, this personal benefit captured the essence of effective marketing: showing people how value translates into real human impact.

Danby outlined her professional background, noting her work with major blue-chip companies such as Coca-Cola and De Beers, and that she is currently on secondment to the Botswana government to develop a national brand strategy. She identified the central challenge: when a consumer in London or New York buys a diamond, they may know the retailer, Tiffany or De Beers, but not its origin in Botswana. This invisibility of African provenance, she argued, was symptomatic of a broader continental issue, seen across sectors from diamonds to oil and cobalt.

Introducing her co-panelists, the Moderator presented Oabona Kgengwenyana, a Botswana-based consultant and entrepreneur known for transforming local companies and his deep understanding of the diamond value chain, and Josh Wilson, a global media and investment executive whose firm owns renowned brands like Billboard, Rolling Stone, and Robb Report. She highlighted Wilson's investments in Africa, including the establishment of a digital bank in Rwanda, as proof of his commitment to the continent's growth.

To frame the conversation, the moderator engaged the audience in an interactive exercise, asking them to call out what came to mind when they heard the names of cities such as Paris, Milan, New York, and Dubai. Responses: "the Eiffel Tower," "fashion," "Times Square," "bling", illustrated how these cities had successfully marketed powerful singular identities that drive tourism and commerce. She then posed a pivotal question: What does Africa represent to the world in the same way?

Taking up the question, Mr Kgengwenyane argued that Africa's struggle to convert narrative into commerce was rooted in historical and psychological legacies. He traced these to key moments such as the transatlantic slave trade, the 1885 Berlin Conference that divided the continent, and the formation of the OAU, which largely preserved those colonial borders. These events, he said, had imprinted a collective psychology that still shapes how Africans perceive and project themselves. Citing sobering data, he noted that Africa contributes only 6% of global trade and has just one high-income country (Seychelles), while China has lifted over 800 million people out of poverty. He lamented the limited investment in research and development for indigenous products, using Botswana's premium beef as an example, calling it both a symptom and a cause of Africa's marketing deficit.

Josh Wilson built on this point, asserting that marketing must lead, not follow. He illustrated with an American example: companies there often spend 80% of their budget on marketing and only 20% on the product, and yet outsell better-quality competitors because of compelling storytelling. In contrast, Botswana, he observed, possesses many of the same advantages that fueled Dubai's rise:

sound legislation, public safety, free education, and healthcare, yet these strengths remain largely unknown globally. Wilson attributed this gap to a failure of marketing and narrative control, warning that if Africans do not tell their own stories, external media like the BBC will, often through a negative lens. He explained that his motivation for acquiring major media brands was to reclaim editorial control and showcase Africa's growth, innovation, and cultural influence, especially in music, fashion, and luxury.

Dr. Macfoy, Chief Storyteller for Elevate Africa, diagnosed the problem as one of mispositioning. He argued that Africa's diversity is an asset, but nations have failed to define clear and differentiated "handles" for global audiences. He cited Afrobeats' success as a case study: while Nigerian artists earn millions globally, the country itself misses out on economic spillovers from tourism, merchandise, and cultural branding due to weak infrastructure and fragmented storytelling. He further identified two entrenched barriers: mistrust and unhealthy competition among African nations, and a dependency on "trauma narratives" to attract funding. Yet, he expressed optimism about Gen Z Africans, whom he described as "global, trauma-free, and digitally empowered," capable of shaping a new narrative on their own terms.

In closing, the panelists converged on practical solutions. Mr Wilson emphasized execution, intellectual property protection, enabling legislation, and robust public-private partnerships as the building blocks of Africa's next marketing frontier. Mr Kgengwentane called for symbolic and structural action, such as removing colonial-era monuments that reinforce psychological subordination, to make space for a self-defined

African identity. The discussion ended on a note of defiant optimism: a call for Africans to rewrite their own story, grounded in confidence, creativity, and commercial intent.

Strategic Action Points

1. Develop and Institutionalize a Unified African Brand Narrative

Action Point:

African governments, regional bodies (such as the AU and AfCFTA), and private-sector players should collaborate to craft and institutionalize a continent-wide brand strategy that highlights Africa's strengths like innovation, youth, creativity, and resource value. This includes establishing dedicated national and regional branding agencies to coordinate storytelling across tourism, trade, and investment promotion.

Implementation Steps:

- Commission research to identify core value propositions unique to African nations.
- Create media toolkits and global campaigns to position African excellence in key sectors (e.g., diamonds, beef, tech, culture).
- Partner with African media houses and influencers to amplify authentic stories.

Intended Outcome: A unified and compelling African narrative that drives trade, tourism, and investment through controlled, positive storytelling.

2. Prioritize Marketing and Narrative Control in Economic Policy

Action Point:

Governments and businesses should allocate significant budgetary and policy resources to marketing and communications, treating storytelling as a strategic economic function rather than an afterthought. This includes training policymakers and entrepreneurs in branding, leveraging digital platforms, and incentivizing locally owned media to shape Africa's global perception.

Implementation Steps:

- Introduce national "Brand Africa" funds to support creative industries and export marketing.
- Embed marketing and communication strategy within trade, tourism, and investment frameworks.
- Protect and promote African intellectual property in global markets.

Intended Outcome: Increased visibility and competitiveness of African products, services, and destinations through coordinated narrative management.

3. Invest in Indigenous Product Development and Pan-African Collaboration

Action Point:

To convert narrative into commerce, African countries must strengthen R&D, protect local industries, and collaborate across borders to market indigenous products such

as Botswana's beef or Nigeria's music under unified regional brands.

Structural reforms should address mistrust and competition among nations to foster shared continental value chains.

Implementation Steps:

- Establish joint innovation and export hubs for creative and agricultural industries.
- Promote co-branding initiatives that package products with African identity and heritage.
- Facilitate policy dialogues and trade pacts that reward collaboration over competition.

Intended Outcome:

A commercially integrated Africa that monetizes its culture, creativity, and natural resources while projecting a confident, self-defined global identity.

Plenary 6: How Africa Can Leverage Technology to Leapfrog Ahead

Panel Discussion: How Africa Can Leverage Technology to Leapfrog Ahead

Moderator: Miriro Munodawafa, Chief of Staff and Company Secretary, Shona Prince Tech



Panelists:

- Dr Maya Fakhfakh, Founder of MednTech
- Hon. Edem Agbana, Member of Parliament, Ketu North Constituency, Ghana
- Nonye Ujam, Public Policy Leader.
- William Bao Bean, Managing General Partner, Orbit Startups



The panel on leveraging technology for Africa's advancement brought together experts from health, venture capital, and governance to explore how the continent can use innovation to accelerate development.

Dr Fakhfakh, a medical doctor and founder of a health-tech non-profit, opened by explaining that her organization harnesses technology and AI to bridge critical gaps in women's health. Mr Bean, Managing General Partner at a venture capital firm, shared that he had spent two decades investing in emerging markets, witnessing China's technology sector grow from \$1.5 billion to \$3.5 trillion. His firm, he said, was now applying those lessons to support African founders. Hon. Agbana, a Member of Parliament from Ghana, brought a governance perspective rooted in pan-Africanism and energy policy.

The discussion began with the moderator posing a pivotal question: Should Africa view the rise of artificial intelligence as a threat or an opportunity? She acknowledged that automation would inevitably displace some jobs but framed AI as an extraordinary opportunity to redefine the future of work. She cited Africa's youth advantage, noting that one in four people globally will be African by 2050, and urged governments to invest decisively in education for emerging sectors such as software engineering, data science, and AI development to turn this demographic trend into an economic dividend.

When asked about policy priorities, Hon. Agbana emphasized that governments must first meet citizens' basic needs before technology can thrive. "You cannot discuss AI in communities without electricity or internet," he argued. Technology, he continued, should be recognized as the primary job creator of this era, highlighting

Ghana's One Million Coders Program as an example of proactive digital skilling. He also underscored technology's role in enhancing transparency and accountability in governance by creating direct channels for citizen engagement.

Building on that, Mr Bean illustrated how Africa's constraints can spur innovation. He cited Price Pally, a Nigerian company using AI to connect farmers directly to community agents, in the process cutting out intermediaries, reducing food waste by a third, and lowering costs by 20%. His central insight: governments must sometimes "get out of the way" to allow practical, income-generating innovations to scale.

Turning to sustainability in health tech, Dr Fakhfakh traced the sector's donor dependency to the unfulfilled commitments of the Abuja Declaration. She argued that the challenge went beyond financing; it was about sovereignty and ownership of Africa's health agenda. Sustainable transformation, she said, required governments to finally meet their funding pledges and invest in robust digital health infrastructure capable of integrating homegrown innovations.

On public-private collaboration, Hon. Agbana outlined a three-part government role:





establishing
clear regulatory
frameworks, expanding
broadband and digital

infrastructure, and enabling regional integration. He cautioned against premature taxation of young digital industries, warning that such measures would stifle innovation and discourage investment.

When the conversation turned to implementation, the moderator offered a sharp critique: "Africa doesn't need more policies, it needs to execute the ones it already has." She called for rigorous enforcement of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), lamenting that national regulations often contradict its principles. She also urged clarity on the concept of data sovereignty, emphasizing

that it should not be misused to restrict cross-border data flows that are essential to a unified digital market.

Addressing the investment gap, Mr Bean countered the narrative that Africa needs massive capital inflows. What the continent truly requires, he said, are creative, problem-solving approaches. He cited a fintech startup that used stablecoins to enable instant, low-cost cross-border payments for gig workers, and another that offered health insurance in exchange for recycled bottles. His philosophy: "ask for forgiveness, not permission," innovate boldly until solutions become indispensable.

In envisioning Africa's technological future, Dr Fakhfakh offered a powerful image: a nurse in a rural clinic using an AI-powered tool as a trusted assistant, supported by interoperable systems across multiple African countries. True leapfrogging, she said, would be achieved not through isolated success stories but through shared progress driven by aligned policies, integration, and mutual trust.

The session closed with a moment of reflection, during which a young audience member, fresh out of university, voiced concern that many African youths still use technology mainly for consumption

rather than for creation or income. In response, Mr Bean highlighted AI-driven e-commerce platforms that enable African creators to monetize their work globally, showing that, with the right ecosystem, technology could transform Africa's vast youthful energy into sustainable prosperity.

Strategic Action Points

1. Invest in Foundational Infrastructure and Digital Skills for Inclusive Tech Growth

Governments must prioritize universal access to electricity, broadband, and digital education as prerequisites for AI and tech-driven development. This should include:

- Integrating digital literacy and coding programs into national education systems.
- Expanding initiatives like Ghana's "One Million Coders Program" across the continent.
- Partnering with private tech companies to extend connectivity and create tech-enabled job opportunities in underserved communities.

2. Strengthen Implementation of Existing Regional and Policy Frameworks

Rather than creating new strategies, governments and regional bodies should focus on executing existing frameworks such as the AfCFTA and digital economy policies. Implementation steps should include:

- Aligning national policies to support cross-border data exchange and a unified digital market.

- Establishing monitoring and accountability mechanisms to track policy execution.

- Reducing regulatory barriers that hinder innovation, enabling startups and digital enterprises to scale regionally.

3. Build Sustainable Innovation Ecosystems through Public-Private Collaboration

Governments should rethink their approach to tech-sector engagement, focusing less on taxation and more on long-term investment in enabling environments. Key actions:

- Develop clear, adaptive regulatory frameworks that balance innovation and protection.
- Channel part of digital sector revenues into innovation funds that support local startups solving community challenges.
- Encourage co-creation between policymakers, investors, and innovators to design locally relevant, scalable solutions in areas such as health tech, fintech, and e-commerce.



Reflective Keynote and
Commitment Fund Charge - His
Royal Majesty, Ogiame Atuwatse
III, CFR, The 21st Olu of Warri
Kingdom

His Royal Majesty expressed heartfelt gratitude to all participants, noting that he felt not a sense of an ending, but the stirring of a powerful beginning. He reflected that from the opening session to the final hour, delegates had not simply discussed transformation but had actively designed it, collectively authoring the next chapter of Africa's story.

He observed that throughout the convening, one message had resonated consistently: trust remains the cornerstone of governance. Many speakers, he recalled, had affirmed that this was the moment to build African systems anchored in integrity, delivery, and shared accountability. He urged that the continent must now evolve from scattered "islands of excellence" to interconnected networks of trust, and move from conceptual dialogue to citizen-driven execution.

Turning to economic and structural reform, His Royal Majesty emphasized that the dialogues had confronted Africa's long-standing "paradox of plenty." The continent's true wealth, he asserted, lay not in its minerals, but in its people. He called for deliberate efforts to modernize legal systems, harmonize regulatory frameworks, and unlock the potential of a unified African market.

He further noted that the discussions had underscored the need for inclusive, intergenerational, values-driven leadership. He declared that Africa must normalize women's leadership, institutionalize intergenerational mentorship, and instill the principles of integrity and service from the earliest stages of education.

His Royal Majesty proclaimed that the convening had proven Africa's capacity to reclaim and redefine its own narrative, not as a continent of potential,

but as a strategic force shaping global direction. He pledged to document progress, amplify success stories, and ensure that Africa's voice is projected with coherence, consistency, and conviction.

He framed these commitments not as aspirational goals but as the scaffolding for Africa's transformation, a practical mandate to curate, capture, and communicate the continent's ongoing renewal. He then announced the formal adoption of the Gaborone Communiqué, describing it not as a ceremonial declaration but as a living covenant, one that binds governance, trade, and culture into a single, interwoven African narrative.

In his final charge, His Royal Majesty called on the audience to build systems, not speeches; to forge partnerships, not promises; and to advance Africa's renewal not someday, but today. He expressed hope that history would remember the convening not for the titles held by its participants, but for the trust they built; not for the applause they received, but for the accountability they upheld; and not for the dreams they shared, but for the destinies they shaped.

In closing, His Royal Majesty extended deep gratitude to the Government and people of Botswana, and in particular to the President, for their warmth and hospitality in hosting this historic gathering. He also acknowledged the contributions of partners, speakers, and moderators whose insights made the event a resounding success.

He ended with a resonant affirmation: that Africa's next chapter is not only bright, but brilliantly intentional.



Elevate Africa 2025 - Key Recommendations

Drawing on the official proceedings of the Elevate Africa 2025 Convening, the following key actionable recommendations provide a strategic roadmap for Africa's next chapter. Organized by theme and with responsible actors clearly identified, these recommendations are designed as concrete, measurable actions that move beyond discussion to implementation. They reflect a continent taking ownership of its future, harnessing its resources, talent, and creativity with urgency and purpose. Progress on these initiatives will be monitored and reported at the next convening, ensuring accountability and translating commitments into tangible, transformative outcomes for Africa and its people.

Theme 1: Governance and Institutional Reform

Objective: Build high-performance, transparent, and citizen-centric governments.

Actionable Recommendation

Responsible Actors

- | Actionable Recommendation | Responsible Actors |
|---|--|
| <p>1. Establish Central Performance Management Systems: Implement a whole-of-government performance architecture that ensures inter-ministerial collaboration, tracks delivery outcomes, and links results to rewards.</p> | National Governments, Public Service Commissions, Chandler Institute of Governance (CIG) |
| <p>2. Institutionalize Meritocracy: Embed transparent, merit-based recruitment and promotion systems in the civil service, overseen by independent boards to reduce political interference.</p> | National Governments, Public Service Commissions |
| <p>3. Accelerate E-Governance & Decentralization: Digitize core public services (licensing, procurement, permits) and devolve decision-making to local levels for greater inclusivity.</p> | National & Local Governments, ICT Ministries |
| <p>4. Launch Citizen Policy Labs: Create structured national and community-level labs for citizens, particularly youth, to co-design, test, and iterate policy solutions.</p> | Governments, Universities, Civic Organizations |
| <p>5. Embed Ethics in Education: Integrate anti-corruption and civic education into school curricula from the primary level to nurture future ethical leaders.</p> | Ministries of Education, National Anti-Corruption Commissions |

Theme 2: Economic Transformation and Intra-African Trade

Objective: Leverage Africa's natural resources and AfCFTA to drive local value creation and regional integration.

Actionable Recommendation	Responsible Actors
<p>1. Modernize Natural Resource Laws: Review and update all mining and resource regulations by 2026, mandate public contract disclosure, and harmonize frameworks regionally per the African Mining Vision.</p>	<p>National Governments, African Union (AU), Regional Economic Communities (RECs)</p>
<p>2. Operationalize AfCFTA for Value Addition: Establish cross-border resource-processing corridors (e.g., diamonds, lithium) and fast-track visa-free professional mobility.</p>	<p>AfCFTA Secretariat, National Governments, Private Sector</p>
<p>3. Bridge Project-Finance Gaps: Set up national Project Preparation Facilities to convert infrastructure concepts into bankable projects attractive to investors.</p>	<p>National Governments, Development Finance Institutions (DFIs), African Development Bank (AfDB)</p>
<p>4. Mobilize Domestic Capital: Develop investment-ready pipelines and incentivize African pension funds and insurers to allocate more capital to local infrastructure.</p>	<p>National Governments, Financial Regulators, Pension Fund Administrators</p>
<p>5. Accelerate PAPSS Integration: Encourage more central and commercial banks to adopt the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System for seamless cross-border transactions.</p>	<p>Central Banks, Commercial Banks, AfCFTA Secretariat</p>

Theme 3: Gender Equality and Women's Leadership

Objective: Normalize women's leadership and unlock economic potential.

Actionable Recommendation

Responsible Actors

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1. Institute Gender Representation Targets: Embed quotas or parity laws in political and corporate leadership and mandate annual public progress reporting.</p> | <p>National Governments, Parliaments, Corporate Boards</p> |
| <p>2. Create Structured Mentorship Ecosystems: Launch continental "Women Leading Women" programs pairing senior leaders with emerging professionals.</p> | <p>Women's Associations, Corporate Sector, NGOs</p> |
| <p>3. Leverage Data to Close the Gender Finance Gap: Establish Digital Credit Inclusion Hubs that use payment and transaction data to design tailored credit products for women entrepreneurs.</p> | <p>Fintech Companies, Investors, Central Banks</p> |
| <p>4. Embed Gender Equity in Education: Institutionalize life-skills programs for girls, addressing barriers such as period poverty and integrating digital literacy and leadership training.</p> | <p>Ministries of Education, NGOs, Community Organizations</p> |

Theme 4: Technology and Innovation Leapfrogging

Objective: Harness technology as a driver of inclusive growth and development.

Actionable Recommendation

Responsible Actors

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1. Invest in Foundational Digital Infrastructure: Ensure universal access to electricity and broadband; integrate coding and digital literacy into national curricula.</p> | <p>Governments, Tech Companies, Ministries of Education</p> |
| <p>2. Implement AfCFTA Digital Protocols: Align national regulations to support cross-border data exchange and develop a unified digital market.</p> | <p>National Governments, AfCFTA Secretariat, RECs</p> |
| <p>3. Foster Public-Private Innovation Ecosystems: Create adaptive tech regulations and allocate a portion of digital revenues into local innovation funds for startups.</p> | <p>Governments, Tech Regulators, Venture Capital Firms</p> |

Theme 5: Culture, Creative Economy and Narrative Shift

Objective: Transform Africa's cultural wealth into commerce and control the global narrative.

Actionable Recommendation	Responsible Actors
<p>1. Establish Pan-African Creative Guilds: Convene a founding con-gress for writers, directors, and actors to protect IP and ensure fair compensation.</p>	Creative Industry Associations, AU, ECOWAS, EAC, SADC
<p>2. Launch a Blended 'Creative Africa Fund': Combine philanthropic grants for early-stage development with commercial investment to scale creative ventures.</p>	DFIs, Philanthropies, Private Investors
<p>3. Develop a Unified African Brand Narrative: Craft a continent-wide strategy with media toolkits and campaigns to showcase African ex-celence.</p>	AU, National Governments, Marketing Agencies
<p>4. Invest in Indigenous Product Development: Create joint innova-tion hubs to market products (e.g., Botswana beef, Nigerian music) under regional brands.</p>	National Governments, Private Sector, Research Institutions



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ELEVATE AFRICA 2025 CONVENING PROCEEDINGS REPORT

30 - 31 October 2025
Gaborone, Botswana