



AFRICA STARTUP FORUM



“FOSTERING INNOVATION,
COLLABORATION, AND
GROWTH FOR AFRICA'S
FUTURE”

27 - 30 April 2025
Agadir, Morocco

In collaboration with



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FOREWORD

I am proud to introduce **the Africa Start-Up Initiative**, a platform designed to empower and propel the next generation of African entrepreneurs. The African continent brims with youthful potential, teeming with innovative ideas and a burning desire to shape a brighter future. This initiative recognises and seeks to nurture that potential, providing the tools and support needed to transform dreams into reality.

As Secretary General of the Pan-African Youth Union, my unwavering commitment lies in fostering an Africa where young people are not just spectators but active architects of change. The Africa Start-Up Forum embodies this vision. It seeks to dismantle barriers, bridge the gap between aspiration and action, and equip young minds with the resources to translate their ideas into thriving businesses. Africa's future is undeniably tied to the ingenuity and drive of its youth. We are the generation poised to propel the continent towards a future brimming with prosperity, sustainability, and social progress.

This Africa Start-Ups Forum serves as a launchpad for innovation that will benefit individual entrepreneurs and create a ripple effect, fostering economic growth, job creation, and positive social change across the continent. I urge all young Africans brimming with entrepreneurial spirit to seize this opportunity. Let your creativity flourish, and don't be afraid to challenge the status quo. The Africa Start-Up Forum is here to support you on your journey, providing guidance, mentorship, and the resources needed to turn your dreams into the building blocks of a brighter African future.

Together, let us write a new chapter for Africa, a chapter where young minds lead the charge towards a more prosperous and equitable future.

Wiisichong Bening Ahmed
Secretary-General
Pan-African Youth Union



INTRODUCTION

The African continent stands at a pivotal moment in its history, with the recent establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) heralding a new era of economic cooperation and growth. The startups are at the heart of this transformation – the engines of innovation, job creation, and economic prosperity. With great enthusiasm and foresight, the **Pan-African Youth Union (PYU)**, in collaboration with the **SOUSS MASSA Region**, the **Independent Continental Youth Advisory Council on AfCFTA (ICOYACA)** and the **Commonwealth Alliance of Young Entrepreneurs- Africa (CAYE Africa)**, presents the inaugural **Africa Startup Forum 2025**. Set to take place from **April 27th to 30th** in the vibrant city of **Agadir, Morocco**, this landmark event aims to galvanise the entrepreneurial spirit across the continent and unlock the full potential of Africa's startup ecosystem.

BACKGROUND

With 60% of its people under 25, Africa has the youngest population in the world. This youthful population is both a challenge as well as an opportunity for the economic development and diversification of the continent. Young people are becoming progressively more significant drivers for social change, economic expansion, and innovation. Young business owners have the opportunity to boost the economy, encourage innovation, and generate jobs. Unfortunately, there are still an array of concerns that African youth must deal with, such as limited financial, educational, and mentoring opportunities.

According to the African Development Bank (AfDB), in certain African countries, the GDP is accounted for by up to 40% of firms held by young people. However, these businesses need help securing funding, so many of them do not survive past their early years. Furthermore, with an estimated 23.5% youth unemployment rate in sub-Saharan Africa, young unemployment remains a major problem.

The African Youth Charter was promulgated by the African Union in response to these problems, to promote and defend the welfare, advancement, and rights of youth throughout Africa. The charter seeks to empower youth to contribute to the improvement of the continent by acknowledging their critical role in furthering economic growth and societal progress.

Commitment to the African Youth Charter: Throughout the event, we commit to upholding the principles of the African Youth Charter, ensuring that the youth's voice is heard, their ideas are valued, and their ventures are supported. The development of local interdependent ecosystems is fundamental to achieving peace and security, and this event is a step towards that lofty goal.



OBJECTIVES

The Africa Startup Forum 2025 seeks to address these challenges and unlock the full potential of Africa's startup ecosystem through the following objectives:

Facilitate Knowledge Exchange:

Provide a platform for startups, investors, policymakers, and industry leaders to exchange ideas, best practices, and insights on fostering innovation and entrepreneurship in Africa.

Promote Collaboration:

Foster partnerships and collaboration among startups, investors, corporates, and government institutions to drive sustainable growth and impact across the continent.

Empower Young Entrepreneurs:

Empower young entrepreneurs with the skills, resources, and networks needed to scale their ventures, create jobs, and drive economic development in their communities.

Highlight Success Stories:

Showcase and celebrate the success stories of African startups, highlighting their resilience, creativity, and impact on the continent's socio-economic landscape.



JUSTIFICATION

Organizing the **"The Africa Start-Ups Forum"** under the auspices of the **Pan African Youth Union (PYU)** is strategic, imperative and aligns with the organization's core mission and values. Such an event serves as a catalyst for several compelling reasons. Firstly, it recognizes the intrinsic potential of African youth as dynamic agents of change and economic progress, a key demographic within the AfCFTA framework. By showcasing and promoting youth-led entrepreneurial ventures and innovative solutions, the PYU empowers young people to play a pivotal role in addressing the socio-economic challenges.

Secondly, the forum fosters knowledge exchange, capacity building, and networking opportunities, creating a nurturing environment for budding entrepreneurs to access mentorship, capital, and market access, thus facilitating their active participation in the AfCFTA's vision of an integrated African market. Additionally, it highlights the critical importance of youth-driven innovation in achieving the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, reinforcing the PYU's commitment to advancing these global agendas within the context of AfCFTA's transformative potential.

Lastly, by demonstrating its commitment to youth development and entrepreneurship as drivers of economic growth, the PYU enhances its credibility and influence, attracting potential partners, donors, and supporters who share the vision of a prosperous and empowered African youth within the framework of the AfCFTA.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

African youth is a formidable asset base for the continent across multiple fronts. Firstly, sub-Saharan Africa boasts the world's highest rate of entrepreneurship, with over 25% of adults engaged in early-stage entrepreneurial activities. Remarkably, women outpace men in this domain, with a 31.8% entrepreneurship rate for women compared to 22.9% for men. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, African start-ups secured a record \$2.7 billion in funding in 2020, underscoring their resilience. Additionally, the continent harbors abundant natural resources, particularly rare elements, though challenges like infrastructure limitations and funding constraints hamper their exploitation. Africa's total GDP reached \$2.6 trillion in 2020, with a projected growth rate of 3.4% in 2021, and a growing number of millionaires and billionaires. Lastly, Africa's vast human capital, encompassing over 1.3 billion people, presents substantial potential, especially with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) now in effect, offering prospects for extensive intra-African trade and investment.

These statistics vividly depict the enormous potential for young Africans to drive economic development across the continent, spanning entrepreneurship, innovation, resource utilization, wealth creation, and regional trade expansion.

The Africa Startup Forum 2025 aims to empower African startups by addressing critical challenges related to policy frameworks, investment, and scaling. By aligning the forum with key African Union initiatives, UNECA's policies, and AfDB's financial structures, the forum will create a conducive environment for startups to thrive and become drivers of Africa's economic transformation.

Broadly, the Africa Start-Up Forum is aligned with three main focal overarching daily overviews for the forum. The first focus overview is the policy and frameworks within which African startups can confidently draw structure and operate. The second focus overview pivots around investments and financing mechanisms available and one that can be created to robustly support the continental youth entrepreneurial development drive. The final focus overview attempts to explore start-up mentorship and markets upscale with support from existing continental business giants to ensure survival, mitigate risks, and sustainably promote steady economic growth.

POLICY AND FRAMEWORKS FOR AFRICA STARTUPS



FOCUS OVERVIEW

This focus area will explore how African startups can leverage existing policy frameworks and protocols to thrive in the continent's rapidly evolving business environment. It will address how to align with the **African Union's Agenda 2063**, the **African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA)**, and the **African Youth Charter**, while focusing on the regulatory environment that can foster innovation and startup growth across Africa.

ALIGNMENT WITH EXISTING POLICIES



- **AfCFTA:** AfCFTA's framework aims to facilitate cross-border trade, and the Africa Startup Forum will highlight how startups can capitalize on this to expand into new markets. Discussions will center on reducing barriers to market access, simplifying trade logistics, and tapping into continental-wide trade.
- **African Youth Charter:** The African Youth Charter emphasizes youth empowerment and development, providing a legal and political framework to ensure youth participation in economic, social, and political development. The forum will advocate for supportive policies that empower youth entrepreneurs.
- **UNECA's Startup Policy Framework:** The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa provides a policy framework for fostering innovation, promoting entrepreneurship, and enhancing startup ecosystems. These policies will guide discussions on how governments and startups can work together to create supportive business environments.

INVESTMENT AND FINANCING MECHANISMS

FOCUS OVERVIEW

This area will focus on the financing challenges faced by startups in Africa and how they can leverage innovative financing mechanisms to scale. The forum will dive into venture capital, angel investing, impact investing, crowdfunding, and the role of **African Development Bank (AfDB)** and **Afreximbank** in supporting startups.



ALIGNMENT WITH EXISTING STRUCTURES

- **AfDB’s High-5 Initiative:** The AfDB has several key initiatives focused on economic growth, including “Light Up and Power Africa,” “Industrialize Africa,” and “Integrate Africa,” all of which foster an environment conducive to startups. The Africa Startup Forum will align its discussions with AfDB’s goals of improving access to finance and driving investment to promising businesses.
- **Afreximbank’s Investment Initiatives:** Afreximbank provides financial solutions to promote intra- and extra-African trade. The forum will engage investors, financial institutions, and stakeholders to ensure African startups can access trade financing and working capital.
- **UNECA’s Financing Frameworks:** UNECA supports mechanisms that foster private sector development, including startups. The forum will discuss UNECA’s proposals for strengthening domestic capital markets and encouraging public-private partnerships to fund innovation.

STARTUP MENTORSHIP AND UPSCALING

FOCUS OVERVIEW

This focus area will be dedicated to providing mentorship, networking, and capacity-building opportunities to help African startups scale beyond their local markets. By connecting startups with experienced mentors and business leaders, the forum aims to foster a culture of knowledge exchange and long-term mentorship to support sustainable growth.



ALIGNMENT WITH EXISTING FRAMEWORKS

- **AfDB’s Entrepreneurship and Innovation Program:** AfDB’s programs focus on entrepreneurship development and innovation to create jobs and boost economic growth. The Africa Startup Forum will feature AfDB’s resources and mentorship programs.
- **UNECA’s Role in Upscaling Startups:** UNECA’s initiatives for entrepreneurship provide guidance on how startups can expand, internationalize, and leverage technology for growth. UNECA’s frameworks for entrepreneurship will guide the forum’s mentorship programs.
- **AU’s Innovation Agenda (STISA-2024):** The African Union’s Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA-2024) aims to harness innovation for economic growth and social development. The forum will showcase AU’s goals of fostering a culture of innovation across sectors such as agriculture, health, and finance.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Africa Start Up Forum is guided by the following principles:



- **Inclusivity:** The Forum is open to young African entrepreneurs from all African countries, irrespective of their gender, religion, or ethnicity.
- **Youth empowerment:** The Forum seeks to empower young Africans by providing them with access to finance, business incubation, mentorship, and investment opportunities.
- **Collaboration:** The Forum seeks to foster collaboration among young African entrepreneurs, investors, and industry experts.
- **Innovation:** The Forum seeks to promote innovative solutions to the socio-economic challenges facing Africa.

KEY THEMATIC AREAS

The Africa Startup Forum 2025 will explore a wide range of topics relevant to Africa's startup ecosystem, including:

01



Access to Finance:

Exploring innovative financing mechanisms and investment opportunities for startups, including venture capital, impact investing, and crowdfunding.

02



Market Access:

Addressing barriers to market entry and expansion, including trade regulations, cross-border trade facilitation, and market intelligence.

03



Technology and Innovation:

Harnessing the power of technology and innovation to address critical challenges facing Africa, including healthcare, agriculture, education, and energy.

04



Policy and Regulation:

Engaging policymakers and regulators to create an enabling environment for startups, including tax incentives, regulatory reforms, and intellectual property rights protection.

SECTORS OF FOCUS

The summit will focus on startups in the following sectors but not limited to:



Technology



Trade and Commerce



Fintech



Climate change and Green and Blue Economy



Agriculture



Education & EduTech



Manufacturing and production



Health



Logistics



Tourism



EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- **Enhanced Knowledge Sharing:** Participants will gain valuable insights and knowledge through interactive sessions, workshops, and discussions, enabling them better to understand the dynamics of the African startup ecosystem and leverage best practices to overcome common challenges.
- **Strengthened Collaboration:** The forum will facilitate meaningful connections and partnerships between startups, investors, corporates, and government institutions, fostering a collaborative environment that supports sustainable growth and impact across the continent.
- **Empowered Entrepreneurs:** Young entrepreneurs will have the skills, resources, and networks needed to scale their ventures, create jobs, and drive economic development in their communities, contributing to poverty alleviation and social progress.
- **Inspired Innovation:** By showcasing success stories and innovative solutions from African startups, the forum will inspire participants to think creatively and explore new opportunities for leveraging technology and innovation to address the continent's critical challenges.
- **Policy Advocacy:** Engaging policymakers and regulators in discussions on creating an enabling environment for startups will lead to actionable recommendations to promote entrepreneurship, remove regulatory barriers, and incentivise investment in the African startup ecosystem.
- **Increased Access to Finance:** Through discussions on innovative financing mechanisms and investment opportunities, startups will gain insights into securing funding and attracting investment, fueling growth and expansion across various sectors.
- **Expanded Market Access:** Addressing barriers to entry and expansion will enable startups to tap into new markets domestically and internationally, driving economic diversification and trade facilitation across the continent.
- **Networking and Mentorship:** Networking sessions and mentorship opportunities will provide entrepreneurs access to seasoned industry professionals, mentors, and peers, fostering a supportive ecosystem where knowledge and experience are shared to accelerate growth and success.
- **Showcasing Impact:** By highlighting the impact of African startups on socio-economic development, the forum will demonstrate the tangible benefits of entrepreneurship and innovation, inspiring further investment and support from stakeholders across sectors.
- **Commitment to Action:** Participants will leave the forum with a renewed commitment to driving positive change and contributing to the development of Africa's startup ecosystem, with concrete action plans and partnerships formed during the event.



FORMAT AND STRUCTURE

The Africa Start-Up Forum 2025 promises a high-level event with an engaging blend of keynote speeches, Policy Dialogue, panel discussions, workshops, networking sessions, and startup pitches. Participants will have abundant opportunities to learn, connect, and collaborate. Additionally, the event will feature an exhibition hall showcasing the latest innovations, products, and services from African startups and ecosystem enablers.

PARTICIPANTS

The forum will host over **1000 participant**, from youth start-ups across Africa & diaspora, ministers and policy makers, entrepreneurs, students, and International corporate organizations in Africa & Global.



ASF2025



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