The EastAfrican

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Africa after the virus

KUSI IDEAS FESTIVAL

HOW AFRICA TRANSFORMS AFTER THE VIRUS

TEA
TheEastAfrican

Publisher
Nation Media Group

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Contributors
Wilfred Kiboro
Rebeca Grynspan
Anyang' Nyong'o
Oliver August
Isaac Kwaku Fokuo
Fatima Alimohamed
Raphael Obonyo
Prudence Sebahizi
Raila Odinga
Peter Mathuki
Tilahun Amede

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Published at Nation Centre, Kimathi Street,
P.O. Box 49010-00100 G.P.O. Nairobi.
Tel. 3288000, 2221222, 337710,
Fax 214531, 213946.

Dr Wilfred Kiboro welcomes participants to the inaugural Kusi Ideas Festival held in Kigali, Rwanda in 2019. Pic: File

Our journey of ideas is not slowing down any time soon

Our journey of ideas, which we started exactly two years ago in Kigali, Rwanda, continues. It's a remarkable one, made all the more captivating and enriching by the men, women, and organisations that continue to share their ideas as we explore Africa's prospects in all its permutations.

The first Kusi Ideas Festival looked ahead to how the next 60 years would look like for the continent. We met in a relatively free environment, without the encumbrances of the life-changing Covid-19 pandemic.

However, by the time of the second festival in Kisumu on the shores of Lake Victoria, the virus was already ruling the roost. Hence the theme, "Towards a Post-Covid Africa".

In hindsight, and as evidenced by the unrelenting spread of the virus, we were overly presumptuous. The virus doesn't seem to be going away any time soon or at all. This is our new normal – of uncertainties and dread, but also opportunities.

Kusi III sets out to explore those opportunities anchored in the overarching theme of transformation within the constricting framework of the Covid-19 pandemic which, as at December 7, 2021, had killed 152,784 people with a cumulative case load of 6,294,435 across 47 countries, according to the World Health Organisation's Regional Office for Africa. It could have been worse, as seen in the devastating effect of the pandemic elsewhere in the world.

So, what lessons can we learn from our experience so far and what opportunities can we seize to accelerate Africa's march into the future?

These are numerous, and the African Continental Free Trade Area, headquartered in Accra, is a ringing affirmation of that. Its key objective, we're told, is to create a single continental market for goods and services, and to expand intra-African trade. That will be a mighty game-changer.

Over the course of the festival's two-day programme, we'll have a wide-ranging conversation – the promise of the African diaspora, infrastructure challenges, the bountiful low-hanging fruits flung our way by new technology and our dazzling innovative energy, the existential threat presented by the gathering dark and ominous clouds of climate change, the ever-present challenge of feeding the continent, and our flourishing story-telling culture that, unfortunately, still struggles to command the high value it richly deserves on the world market.

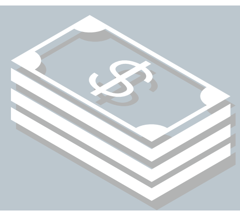
As with Kusi I and II, the ideas we generate will open new pathways for the future, moonshots to inspire a new development agenda that will keep Africa bubbling with optimism and pride. It's worth repeating here that at the Nation Media Group, we truly believe in Africa and its future and, with God's help, we shall continue to provide a platform through the Kusi Festival platform for Africa and Africans to have a robust and honest discussion about ourselves and our continent, and where we want to be among the community of nations.

Welcome to Kusi Ideas Festival III.

Wilfred Kiboro is the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Nation Media Group

Africa poised for a multispeed recovery

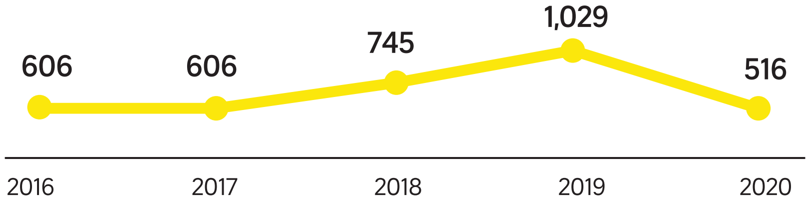
The largest economies — Nigeria, South Africa and Egypt — slowed drastically through 2020, and their ability to recover will be driven by a sustained recovery in commodity prices



FDI in Africa was hit significantly by the pandemic, but the shift from extractives brings new opportunities

In 2020 there were 516 projects | **creating 69,566 jobs** | **attracting $28.5b in capital**

Five-year FDI by project numbers

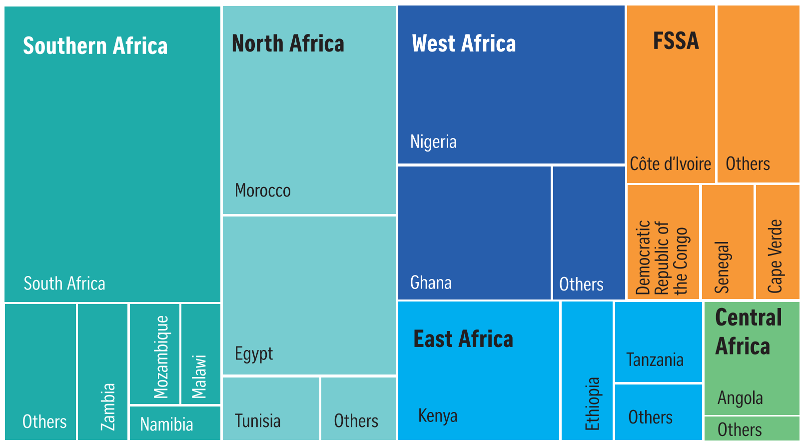


France was the largest African investor in 2020, followed by the US, based on FDI project numbers. Between 2016 and 2020, emerging markets

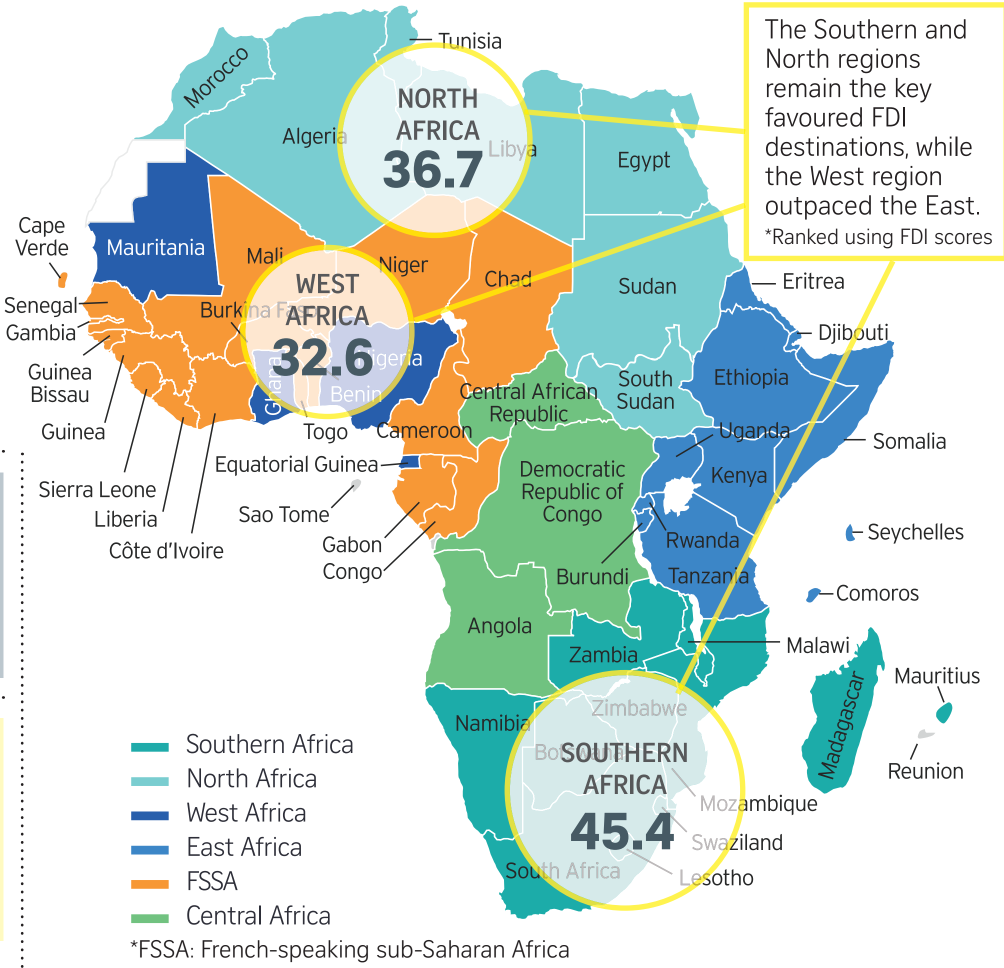
made up **38pc** of FDI byproject numbers — but created **50pc** of the jobs — and provided **53pc** of the capital

FDI by destination

Southern Africa regained its lead as the largest FDI destination in Africa, with South Africa's more diversified economy attracting the most FDI (2020)



* FDI is based on three criteria, reflecting a roughly equal contribution of jobs, capital and project numbers. A weighted average of projects, jobs created, and investment (measured in US$m) determines the FDI score.



Africa is projected to grow by **4.6pc** in 2021, then averaging **4pc** up to 2025.

Share of extractives FDI has been declining as the content shifts focus to technology, manufacturing and services capabilities to stimulate growth

Africa's economy contracted in 2020, but less severely than the global economy

–2.4pc decline in Africa overall, versus a
–3.6pc contraction in global GDP
–4.3pc in the Americas, and
–6.7pc in the Eurozone

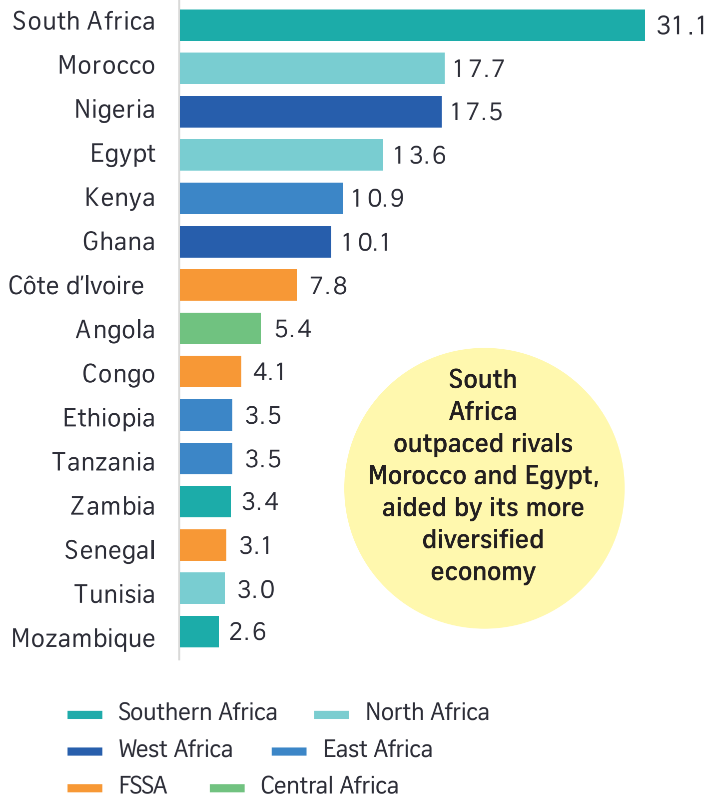
By country, growth was uneven
Most economies contracted in 2020 ...

- Morocco's GDP fell –7.1pc
- South Africa fell –6.4pc
- Angola fell –5.2pc
- Nigeria contracted –1.8pc

... but a few African countries proved resilient

- Tanzania and Ethiopia rose 4.8pc and 3.3pc respectively
- Egypt's GDP rose 1.5pc
- Côte d'Ivoire grew 1.2pc

Fifteen largest recipients by FDI score in 2020

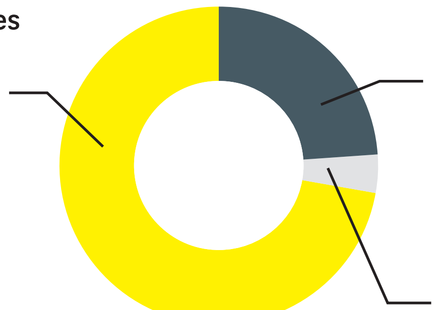


South Africa outpaced rivals Morocco and Egypt, aided by its more diversified economy

Source: fDi Markets (Financial Times), EY analysis.

The share of FDI in services has increased sharply, accounting for **72pc** of total FDI in 2020.

The share of FDI in extractives is declining with rising diversification and urbanization.



FDI into industry made up **24pc**

with the remaining share in extractives accounting for only **4pc**

AfCFTA on track to lift 100 million Africans out of poverty by 2035

New opportunities: Boosting intra-Africa trade is critical to achieving the agreement's goals, including job creation, developmen and poverty alleviation

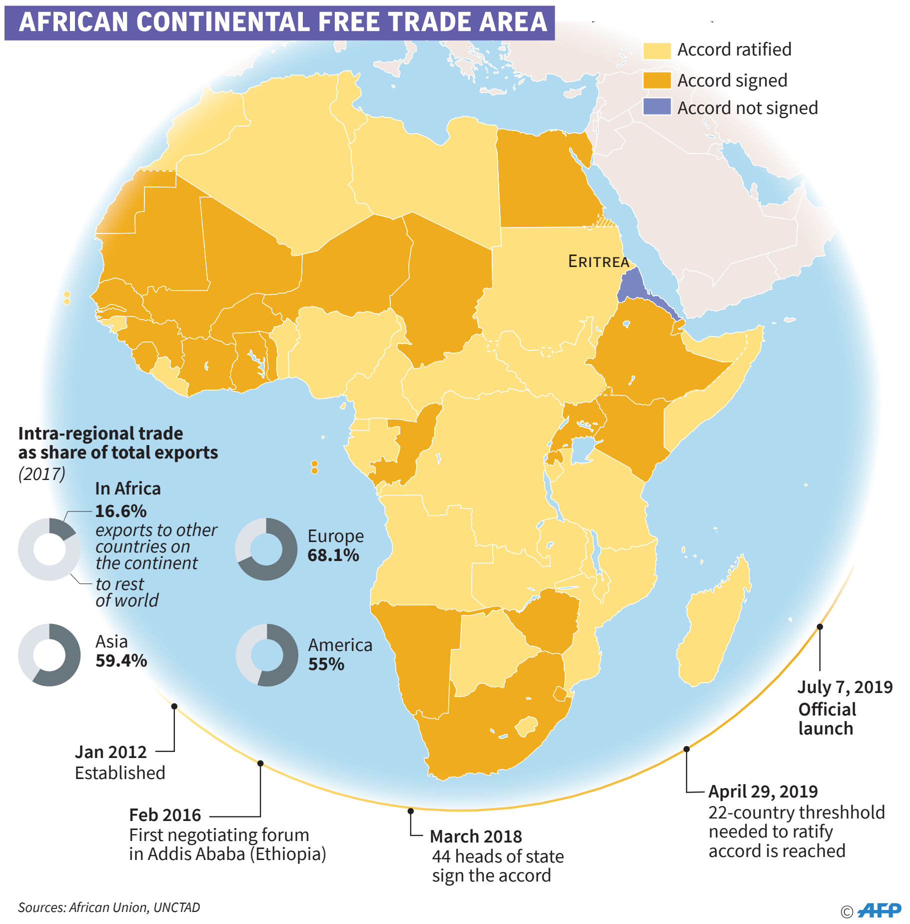
PRUDENCE SEBAHIZI

The African Continental Free Trade Area is the world's largest free trade area,and the largest trade organisation since the establishment of the World Trade Organisation, bringing together 54 countries of the African Union and eight regional economic communities to create a single market. It has a population of about 1.3 billion people and a combined GDP of about $3.4 trillion.

In addition to being a free trade area, the AfCFTA is a flagship project of the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063, Africa's long-term development strategy for transforming the continent into a global powerhouse of the future.

The agreement establishing the AfCFTA was signed in Kigali, Rwanda, on March 21, 2018 by 44 AU member states. Ten more countries have since signed the pact. The AfCFTA Agreement entered into force on May 30, 2019, 30 days after the deposit of the 22nd instrument of ratification, as specified in its Article 23. Trading under the AfCFTA started on January 1, 2021.

The AfCFTA market comes with many opportunities, some of which are highlight in this article.



Consumer welfare gains: Consumers will have limitless choice of quality products at an affordable price. This is due to the fact that AfCFTA aims at eliminating import duties on products that are produced within Africa and thus satisfy the rules of origin. It also defines standards that shall apply to those products in order to ensure quality.

Attract investments: The size of the market will attract both African and foreign investors. The AfCFTA's legal framework provides for a protocol that will set rules and regulations for investment facilitation and investor protection.

Job creation: The trade area will spur industrialisation through development of regional and continental value chains. The AfCFTA rules of origin provide for criteria that have to be fulfilled by a product in order to enjoy duty-free, quota-free preference in the market. These include products that are wholly obtained in that state party and products that have undergone substantial transformation in that country.

Eliminate poverty: The World Bank estimates that the AfCFTA could boost Africa's GDP by 7 percent – almost $450 billion – by 2035, in part by reducing import tariffs, but more importantly by eliminating non-tariff barriers (NTBs). It should also deliver notable benefits in how income is distributed, potentially lifting some 30 million people out of extreme poverty and 68 million out of moderate poverty.

Income distribution: The AfCFTA will bridge salary gaps between men and women. The World Bank study revealed that African women will greatly benefit as they constitute the majority of those engaged in intra-African trade.

A growing manufacturing sector would provide new job opportunities, especially for women. The report estimates that compared with a business-as-usual scenario, implementing the agreement would lead to an almost 10 per cent increase in wages, with larger gains for unskilled workers and women.

Wages would grow slightly faster for women than for men as output expands in key traditionally female labour–intensive industries. According to World Bank estimates, by 2035, wages for women would increase by 10.5 per cent with respect to the baseline, compared with 9.9 per cent for men.

A large proportion of small-scale operators at border crossings tend to be female. Women assume a variety of roles in small-scale trade as border traders, transporters, processors, or vendors. Often, they face more severe impediments to trade than their male colleagues in the form of higher trade costs and more pervasive corruption, more limited access to price and market information, and more frequent harassment and abuse.

Elimination of non-tariff barriers:

Elimination of NTBs is critical to boosting intra-Africa trade and achieving the objectives of the AfCFTA. It will reduce the costs of trading across borders and ease the cross-border movement of goods. The bulk of the AfCFTA benefits will be realised if state parties efficiently manage and eliminate NTBs.

Annex 5 of the Protocol on Trade in Goods establishes a reporting, monitoring, and elimination mechanism where traders can file a complaint on a specific trade obstacle they have encountered during the process of moving goods and services across borders. The mechanism is available online at www.tradebarriers.africa

Private sector development:

To achieve the aspiration of AfCFTA and ensure that gains in economic growth are inclusive – of women, youth, and SMEs – and ultimately sustainable, real action is needed on the ground. The private sector, composed of traders, investors, and producers, is the engine of economic growth and main driver of job creation. In recognition of the central role of the private sector to deliver on the promises of the AfCFTA, an inclusive private sector strategy has been developed to identify the main barriers to trade and production in four initial priority value chains – agro-processing, automotive, pharmaceuticals, and transport and logistics.

These value chains were prioritised based on the relatively high level of import substitution today – an indicator of existing demand in local markets, and some level of existing exports – an indicator of the ability to produce these goods locally. Sectors identified for future waves include horticulture, textiles, financial services, telecommunications, and IT.

Women and youth inclusiveness:

The AfCFTA can provide a significant opportunity for women, giving them a head start towards increasing their economic empowerment. African leaders have signalled their willingness to create an enabling environment for women to fully exploit the trade opportunities offered by the AfCFTA. The Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union thus committed "to broaden inclusiveness in the operation of the AfCFTA through interventions that support young Africans, women, and small and medium enterprises, as well as integrating informal cross-border traders into the formal economy by implementing the simplified trade regime".

In line with the directives of African leaders, a protocol on women and youth in trade is being developed. It is expected to address the specific constraints and barriers women face when trading on the continent. The protocol will enable AfCFTA state parties to effectively address the constraints women in trade face and create an environment that allows women to utilise the agreement by accessing wider markets, improving their competitiveness and participating in regional value chains.

Agriculture:

Article 3(g) of the AfCFTA provides that one of the general objectives is to "promote industrial development through diversification and regional value chain development, agricultural development and food security". The agricultural sector is a key feature of African economies. It contributes more than 60 per cent of employment for the population and more than a third of total GDP. In addition, Africa mainly exports traditional agricultural products such as cocoa, coffee, cotton, tea, and spices outside the continent; and imports food products like cereals, vegetable oils, dairy, fish, and meat products in order to meet food security requirements.

That said, boosting intra-Africa agricultural trade (and agro-processing development) is critical to achieving the aspirations of Agenda 2063 and the AfCFTA to create jobs, promote inclusive development, alleviate poverty, and secure food for Africans.

Prudence Sebahizi is the Chief Technical Adviser on AfCFTA

WOMEN'S WAGES GROW

The participation of women is 31.9 per cent continent-wide, but services tend to employ a larger proportion. For example, women as a percentage of labour in recreational services is 49.7 per cent; in air transport, 42.0 per cent; and in public services, 40.4 per cent. In contrast, some industries attract fewer women, such as construction (13.2 per cent); road and rail transport services (12.5 per cent); and minerals (25.8 per cent). Textiles and wearing apparel is above the average at 33.4 per cent, masked by large variations across countries. Previous research has revealed that small-scale traders and the producers and consumers with whom they connect fall into the bottom third of the population by household income. Thus small-scale cross-border trade is directly relevant to poverty reduction.

- Prudence Sebahizi

Elimination of NTBs will reduce the costs of trading across borders

New opportunities for accelerating pan-African trade

African growth: Continent must leverage trade pact to reduce poverty, cut inequality, and foster inclusive development

REBECA GRYNSPAN

The African Continental Free Trade Area has opened a new chapter for the continent and rekindled hopes for recovery through trade in a post-Covid-19 world.

As nations continue to battle a pandemic that does not respect national borders, the $3.4 trillion borderless market created by the AfCFTA presents an opportunity to reduce Covid-19-induced growth contraction, poverty and inequality trends, and spur sustainable and inclusive growth on the continent.

Intra-African trade is currently low at 14.4 per cent of total African exports. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) estimates that the AfCFTA could boost intra-African trade by about 33 per cent and cut the continent's trade deficit by 51 per cent.

Before the pandemic hit, the continent had experienced rapid economic growth, but it was hardly inclusive – the gains were not distributed fairly across society. Economic growth can only be inclusive if it reduces both poverty and inequality.

Our latest Economic Development in Africa Report 2021 shows that Africa's unprecedented growth in the 2000s has not translated to significantly improved livelihoods for most Africans, as the income gap between the rich and the poor has widened.

About 34 per cent of African households live below the international poverty line ($1.9 per day), and around 40 per cent of the total wealth is owned by approximately 0.0001 per cent of the continent's population, according to the report. The pandemic has exacerbated inequalities and vulnerabilities of marginalised groups, resulting in an additional 37 million people in sub-Saharan Africa living in extreme poverty.

A key question is how economic growth through regional integration can contribute to poverty reduction, cut inequality, and foster inclusive development, a main objective of the African Union's Agenda 2063.

Our report shows that the continent's free trade area can deliver considerable inclusive economic growth for Africa's 1.3 billion people, but it needs measures to boost productivity and expand opportunities, as these gains will not come automatically.

Trade policies alone are unlikely to support inclusive economic growth on the continent. Other required measures include cooperation in promoting investment and competition policies, accelerating financing of infrastructure that facilitates rural-urban linkages, and providing equal access to socioeconomic opportunities and productive resources.

The AfCFTA needs stronger support measures targeting women, who make up the largest share of informal traders, representing 70 per cent to 80 per cent in some countries, the youth, small businesses, and cross-border traders, as these groups have experienced a complete depletion of their savings due to pandemic-induced restrictions.

Informal cross-border trade can account for up to 90 per cent of official trade flows in some countries and contribute to up to 40 per cent of total trade within regional economic communities such as the Southern African Development Community and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa.

Untapped $22 billion opportunity

Our data show that the continent's current untapped export potential amounts to $21.9 billion, equivalent to 43 per cent of intra-African exports. An additional $9.2 billion of export potential can be realised through partial tariff liberalisation under the AfCFTA over the next five years.

To unlock the untapped potential, various intra-African non-tariff barriers, including costly non-tariff measures, infrastructure gaps, and market information gaps, need to be successfully addressed. This requires joint efforts under the AfCFTA.

In addition, long-term cooperation in investment and competition policies will be essential to overcoming market dominance by a few actors and to reducing structural and regulatory barriers to market entry.

Intra-African trade comprises 61 per cent processed and semi-processed goods, suggesting higher potential benefits from greater regional trade for transformative and inclusive growth.

UNCTAD's most recent Review of Maritime Transport 2021 shows that the AfCFTA could also boost maritime trade in Africa, as it's expected to raise demand for different modes of transport on the continent, which will in turn increase investment requirements for infrastructure and equipment – ports and vessels in the case of maritime transport.

But to fully realise the benefits of the AfCFTA, we must address the critical need to finance and develop adequate infrastructure and services in Africa to support maritime connectivity.

Intra-African trade is currently low at 14.4 percent of total African exports. Picture: File

Promise of regional value chains

The reconfiguration of global value chains amid the pandemic will have profound implications for inclusive and sustainable economic growth on the continent.

The pandemic is an inflection point in a shift towards a new more localised global economic geography with shorter, greener and more regional value chains, greater digitalisation and a lighter global production footprint.

Under the AfCFTA, the continent can develop and strengthen regional value chains and offer countries an opportunity to use regional advantages to boost competitiveness, diversify product supply, and export products with higher value added, helping cushion Africa from future economic shocks.

Globalisation trends are also being accompanied by a shift to more intangible, more digital, and more services-led value chains. African countries need therefore to look carefully at how they create and capture value from their engagement with each other and the wider world.

The AfCFTA's success will hinge on its ability to put in place simple, transparent, and predictable rules that can help create more viable region-wide value chains, closer to home across the African market.

Prospects are good for viable African value chains in industries like tea, cocoa-chocolate, cotton-apparel, beverage, cement, and automotive, as well as for creative, pharmaceutical, and other industries that offer paths towards economic diversification.

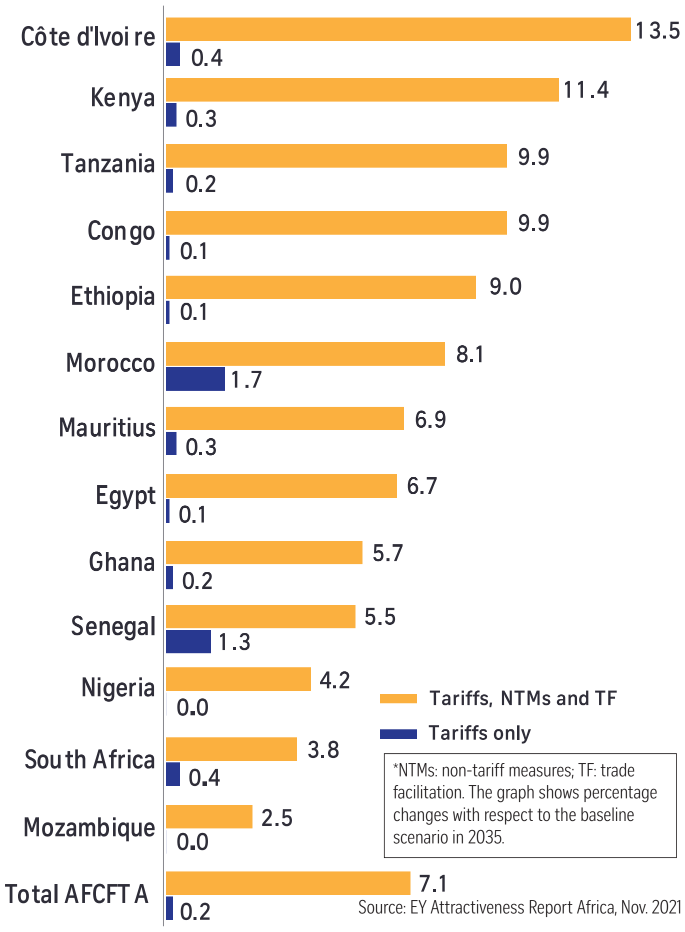
Changing the game for industry

The continent's free trade area must be a game changer for pan-African industry. A focus on more intra-African trade in industrial goods promotes African industrialisation and the advancement of its manufacturing sector, providing more employment opportunities for the continent's booming youth population.

Also critical is enhanced pan-African collaboration in science, technology, and innovation, which will play a key role not only in post-Covid-19 recovery plans, but also in the decade of action to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The AfCFTA can also galvanise regional collaboration to tackle the scourge of illicit financial flows, which generate nearly $90 billion in lost financing from Africa every year, accounting for nearly half the Sustainable Development Goals investment gap in the region.

Expected AfCFTA income gains: 2035* (percent)



Source: EY Attractiveness Report Africa, Nov. 2021

Rebeca Grynspan is the UNCTAD Secretary-General

Travellers queue at a check-in counter at OR Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg on November 27, 2021, after several countries banned flights from South Africa and eight other African countries following the discovery of the Omicron variant. Picture: AFP

Africa must redefine its tourism as it sets post-Covid recovery strategy

Open borders: The Single African Air Transport Market is one of the methods that can be used to liberalise the continent's skies

8.1
Percentage that tourism has contributed to the GDP of the whole of East Africa

12
The minimum number of hours one could spend on connecting flights trying to get to another African city

2.25
Number in millons of tourist arrivals in the East African partner states in 2020, down from 7 million in 2019

PETER MATHUKI

The Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted our societies and economies, and continues to reshape the world with the emergence of new variants. The crisis has tipped the scales for the tourism sector in the region, which pre-pandemic, contributed significantly to the bloc's economic growth.

In 2019, the sector contributed an average of 8.1 per cent to the gross domestic product of East African Community (EAC) partner states and brought about an average increase of 17.2 per cent to total exports. Tourism plays a catalytic role in the broader economy through direct revenues for airlines, travel agents, hotels, shops, restaurants, and other tourist facilities. It also contributes to indirect economic impact through induced spending in agricultural produce, manufactured goods, transportation, entertainment and handicraft.

Travel restrictions to curb the pandemic saw EAC partner states lose 92 per cent of revenues in tourism. Arrivals dropped from approximately 7 million in 2019 to 2.25 million in 2020 (Sixth EAC Development Strategy). With Omicron, the latest variant of the coronavirus, prompting fresh border closures, it is about time we started to interrogate the effectiveness of travel restrictions by weighing their disruptive social-economic impact. This seems timely as recent studies suggest that reducing community transmission rates could be more effective in containing the spread of the virus than border closures.

Coordinated response

To trigger travel demand and keep global borders open, we must ensure equitable access to vaccines, coordinate international travel procedures, and embrace technology to authenticate test and vaccination certificates. Like the rest of the world, the resumption of travel and tourism in Africa will depend largely on a coordinated response among countries regarding travel restrictions, harmonised safety and hygiene protocols, and effective communication to help restore consumer confidence.

We must, however, appreciate that the current global health concerns and barriers to travel may take time to wane. As such, the continent must self-reflect, and promote domestic and intra-continental tourism for a more sustainable recovery. Africa needs to address critical tourism competitiveness drivers, to foster intra-continental tourism. Top on our agenda should be visa openness. The *Africa Visa Openness Report 2020* findings show that African citizens still need visas to travel to 46 per cent of other African countries, while only 28 per cent can get visas on arrival. These restrictive and cumbersome visa requirements diminish tourists' motivation to travel and indirectly reduce the availability of critical services. The continent should prioritise ongoing efforts to enhance its visa openness.

Another critical pillar to address is the liberalisation of African skies to improve intra-continental connectivity. Try flying from any East African capital to northern Africa, and you will quickly discover how poorly connected we are as a continent. A trip that should take no more than five-and-a-half hours in some cases takes an estimated 12 to 25 hours, as one has to take connecting flights via Europe or the Middle East! A direct flight would probably cost an estimated \$600; however, you will be lucky to get a flight for less than \$850. The African Union has taken steps to make open skies a reality through the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) created to expedite the full implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision. Once operationalised, greater African connectivity will reduce air travel time and costs, catalysing intra-continental trade and tourism growth.

Passengers from an Ethiopian Airlines flight queue to have their temperature taken at the N'Djili International Airport in Kinshasa, DRC, on August 15, 2020. The airport had been closed for five months due to Covid-19. Picture: AFP

Early warning

The current Covid-19 crisis and past disease outbreaks have demonstrated Africa's preparedness to manage pandemics. Early warning systems and continuous investments in public health have seen the continent handle infectious outbreaks relatively better. However, though well-intended, the requirements for testing before departure, confirmatory testing on arrival, and in some cases quarantine, are both costly and inconvenient, hence deterring travel, particularly for leisure purposes.

The African Union-backed PanaBIOS has been critical in disseminating Covid-19 test results on a secure digital platform accessible to all member states. The EAC has also developed an EACPass that integrates and validates EAC partner states' Covid-19 tests and vaccination certificates to ease entry across the region. Once fully rolled out, the EACPass will be integrated with other regional and continental digital health platforms to enhance transparency and guarantee the authenticity of certificates.

The continent could benefit from investing in targeted and effective tourism promotion campaigns for the African market. The EAC's recently launched "Tembea Nyumbani" campaign is a key step towards catalysing intra-regional tourism. A similar approach across all regional economic communities could fundamentally transform the continent's tourism and reduce our reliance on international arrivals, as has happened in Europe over the years, where intra-regional tourists account for 80 per cent of total tourism arrivals.

Finally, allow me to quote an African proverb: "Until the lion learns how to write, every story will glorify the hunter." For years, international media has created negative perceptions and representations about Africa. Scenes of civil wars, hunger, corruption, greed, diseases, and poverty have defined us. Perhaps it is time to start interrogating our role in their narratives, but even more importantly, define Africa ourselves.

Dr Peter M. Mathuki is the Secretary General, East African Community. Email: sgoffice@eachq.org; Twitter: @pmathuki

We can still make up for lost time, missed opportunities

Recovery strategy: In matters development, Africa must stop walking with chickens and begin flying with the eagles

ANYANG' NYONG'O

The monsoon winds filled the sails of the ships crossing the Indian Ocean from the Eastern Africa coast to the Southeast Asia sub-continent. These ships were captained by Africans from Lamu, Malindi, Mombasa, and as far south as Dar es Salaam and the islands of Pemba and Zanzibar. The captains knew when the winds would blow south-easterly, and they would then set sail, crossing the vast Indian Ocean to dock in Goa or Kerala, exchanging their gold and spices for textiles from Asia. They would return when the northeast monsoons once more filled their sails with power. The economics of trade and the science of sailing were known to these monsoon-driven masters of commerce in East Africa of yore. They were creative. They dared the impossible. Failure was not part of their vocabulary.

Richard Dowden is right when he writes: "Beneath the surface of Africa's weak nation states (today) lie old cultures, old societies and communities and a deep sense of spiritual power." And I would dare add: a deep knowledge of science and technological innovation that never failed them.

Kisumu is in Kenya; Accra is in Ghana. Both cities have a history of being centres of trade and commerce in pre-colonial times, and also of suffering under the weight of slave traders and imperialist fortune seekers. We in Kisumu learnt that, although colonialism had deflected us from a historical trajectory that would have led us far by now in terms of development, it is not too late to recapture our lost moment and, with the speed of monsoon power, make up for lost time and missed opportunities. As Satan says in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, "though heaven be lost, all is not lost!"

Hence our conviction is that Kisumu, and Africa for that matter, must stop walking with the chickens and begin flying with the eagles. And we have been even more passionate about this conviction since the Second Kusi Ideas Festival was held here on December 8-9, 2020, in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. Some 230 people attended in person while thousands of others attended virtually. For us it was a successful trial run for the much larger ninth edition of the Africities Summit that we are hosting from May 17 to 21, 2022 to reflect on how fast-growing intermediary African cities such as Kisumu will cope with being the African metropolis of the future, given the challenges of global warming, overcrowding, and other problems of underdevelopment that our big cities like Nairobi and Accra already face.

After two days of intensive discussions at that Second Kusi Ideas Festival, we were more than convinced that the answer lies in pulling ourselves up by our own bootstraps in the spirit of self-reliance, regional cooperation, and Pan-Africanism in this forward march to socio-economic progress that leaves no one behind.

Ships docked at the newly inaugurated Kisumu port in Kenya. The Lake Victoria port's oil loading jetty will facilitate transportation of petroleum products in the region. Picture: AFP

Blue economy

We have since worked together with the national government, particularly the State Department of Devolution, to speed up preparations for the Africities Summit following the successful holding of the national Madaraka Day celebration here last June. On that day we displayed the splendour of the culture of the Lake Region in dance, music, and poetry. The re-opening of the Kisumu port, thereby relaunching maritime transport on the lake to re-awaken the vibrant blue economy that went under when the East African Community broke up in 1977, is yet another "Kusi moment" for Kisumu.

The provision of social services for urban as well as rural dwellers, particularly the poor, is a major challenge for us in Kisumu County. As a devolved unit in Kenya's political system, providing health services is our responsibility. Yet this responsibility is both costly and bedevilled by many ghosts of poor policy frameworks and institutional shortfalls of pre-devolution times. We have learnt not to cry over spilt milk but to be innovative within the resource envelop available to us so as to keep on sailing into the future as we seek to fly with the eagles.

Our daring initiative to have a home-grown health insurance scheme for the indigent (the poor or vulnerable) is beginning to pay dividends. We call it "The Marwa Solidarity Health Insurance Scheme." At least 90,000 vulnerable families in Kisumu County now have access to free medical services under the Marwa (a Luo word meaning "ours") scheme. Assuming that a family has, on average five members, that brings the total number of people under the scheme to 450,000 a population of 1.2 million.

We have invested substantial resources in improving health infrastructure, especially during the difficult times of the Covid-19 pandemic. Some of our ambitious initiatives, like the Comprehensive Cancer Care Centre at the Jaramogi Oginga Odinga Teaching, Research and Referral Hospital, are moving ahead at a fast rate. We have assembled a team of local and international experts in an implementation committee to drive this process in the spirit of Kusi, and the results are encouraging. Our doors are open to ideas and material support from all the people who would be happy to sail with us in the rough and unstable sea that such development initiatives will inevitably face.

From December 19 to 22, hardly 10 days after the Kusi Ideas Festival in Accra, we shall hold an International Investment Conference to showcase investment opportunities in the county and will sign deals with potential investors. We do not want to participate in Kusi simply to share ideas; we want to put these ideas into practice by changing the lives of our people through capital investment. As it were, our post-Covid-19 economic recovery programme is based on focusing our efforts on creating more wealth through capital investment and expanding opportunities for productive employment in the agriculture, manufacturing, and service sectors.

Our project for affordable housing in urban areas, for example, may not succeed if it is not accompanied by putting money in the pockets of those who can buy the houses.

The sails of our ship must keep on getting the wind it needs in the form of growing incomes and continuous poverty eradication in our societies to enable it to sail through the ocean of development. In the final analysis, this is the bottom line for the Kusi Ideas Festival.

We have learnt not to cry over spilt milk but to be innovative within the resource envelop available to us

Prof Peter Anyang' Nyong'o is the Governor, Kisumu County

A FAST GROWING CITY

Kisumu is one of the fastest growing cities in Kenya. It is thriving with rich sugar and rice irrigation sectors, whose contribution to the national economy is immense due to its natural resources and as the epicentre for business in East Africa.
The city's growth and prosperity slowed down temporarily in 1977, as a result of the collapse of the East African Community.
However, the city spurred with the return of the Community in the mid 1990s and with its designation as a "city."
The Kisumu port has been stimulated by the transformation of international business and trade, as well as the shipments of goods destined for Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo.

Source: https://www.kisumu.go.ke/

Wagons carrying fuel on the railway near the Kisumu port, which has an oil loading jetty. Picture: AFP

Adjusting to new normal, recovering together

Pictorial: Memorable moments at the Second Kusi Ideas Festival, which was held in the lakeside city of Kisumu, Kenya, last year. Its theme was 'Toward a Post-Covid Africa: Recovering Together'

Traditional dancers welcome guests to the second edition of the Kusi Ideas Festival at the Ciala Resort, Kisumu, on December 8, 2020. Picture: Pool

Some of the youth who attended Kusi I at Itare Conference Arena in Kigali, Rwanda, on December 9, 2019. Picture: Joseph Kanyi

Traditional musicians perform at the second edition of Kusi at Ciala Resort in Kisumu on December 8, 2020. Picture: File

GoDown Arts Centre Exec
at Kusi I in Kigali with film
African Story Tellers CEO

Yvonne Mbaka, a popular author, speaks at the Kusi Ideas Festival in Kisumu on December 8, 2020. Picture: File

LEFT: Nation Media Group CEO Stephen Gitagama (right) and Head of External Affairs and Marketing Clifford Machoka present a gift to Kisumu Governor, Prof Anyang' Nyong'o (centre), on March 4, 2021 in appreciation of Kisumu County's partnership in Kusi. Picture: Pool

RIGHT: Mr Gitagama addresses Kusi Festival II at Ciala Resort, Kisumu, on December 9, 2020. Picture: Pool

LEFT: A panel discussion at the Kusi II in Kisumu featuring former UNCTAD Secretary-General Dr Mukhisa Kituyi (centre), Wanjiru Gikonyo of the Institute for Social Accountability, and NTV's Julians Amboko. Picture: Tonny Omondi

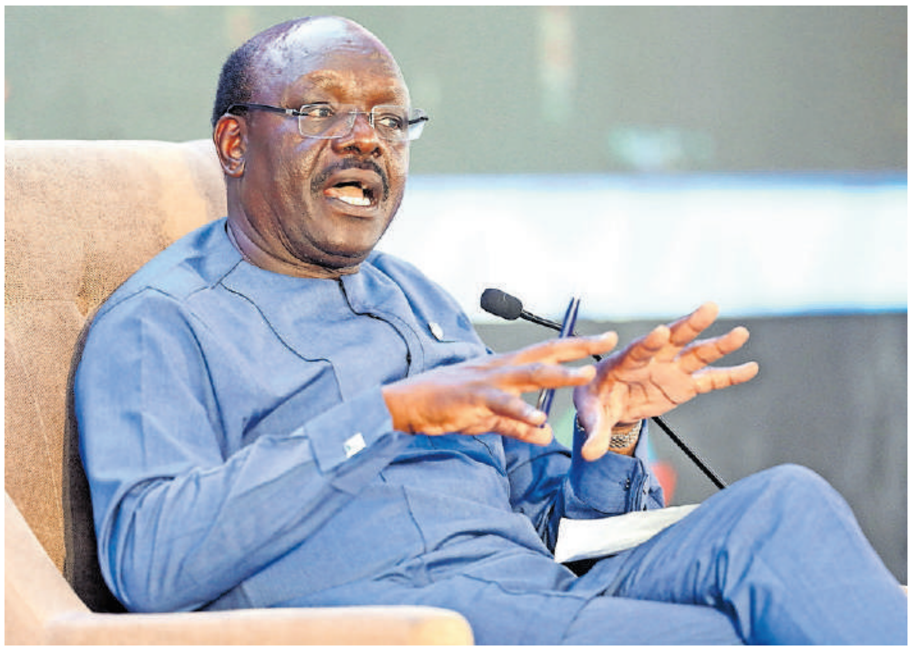
RIGHT: Nation Media Group Board Chairman Wilfred Kiboro makes a virtual address at Kusi II in Kisumu on December 8, 2020. Pictures: Pool

...cutive Director Joy Mboya (R) speaks ...nmaker Clementine Dusabijambo and Isaac Oboth. Picture: Pool

Kisumu Governor Anyang' Nyong'o and his wife Dorothy dance at the Kusi II at the Ciala Resort on December 8, 2020. Picture: Pool

Dr Azim Lakhani, an AKDN representative, speaks at Kusi II.

NMG Non-Executive Director Louis Otieno speaks on December 9, 2020.



Former UNCTAD Secretary-General, Dr Mukhisa Kituyi, speaks during a panel discussion at the Kusi II at Ciala Resort, Kisumu, on December 8, 2020. Picture: Pool

TOP: Rori Tshabalala proposes to Nozipho Mbanjwa, a moderator at the Kusi I Festival in Kigali, Rwanda, on December 9, 2019. Nozipho is a renowned global conversation strategist.

LEFT: Natalie Muyampenda, CEO of Kepler, speaks at the Kusi II at the Ciala Resort, Kisumu, on December 8, 2020. Pictures: Pool

Africa can bridge digital divide if it scales innovations in e-commerce and agritech

Herbert Agaba uses a drone to spray pesticides at a rice farm in Lukaya, Kalungu District in Uganda. Picture: AFP

Powering new possibilities: Countries can compensate for economic slowdown caused by lockdowns by leveraging innovation advances

ISAAC KWAKU FOKUO

Almost two years into the pandemic, Covid-19 has rapidly accelerated the digital transformation of economies globally. For businesses in some parts of the world, such as Pacific Asia, Covid-19 has fast-forwarded digitalisation by more than 10 years. However, not all countries have seen a boost to their digitisation efforts during the pandemic. Many countries in the developing world, including Africa, continue to be challenged by the severe digital divide largely due to infrastructure and cost barriers.

Thankfully, it is not all grim. While the digital divide persists, African countries have an opportunity to scale the innovations in the agriculture and e-commerce sectors from the past two years. Scaling these innovations, which are often driven by private sector initiatives, will require policy efforts that focus on regional integration and targeted support towards digital adoption.

These silver linings have the potential to boost economies, transform the respective sectors beyond the pandemic, and power new possibilities for the continent in terms of wealth creation and employment.

Innovation in agriculture

Agriculture is a pillar of Africa's economy, contributing 23 per cent of the continent's GDP and 49 per cent of employment. The sector, estimated to be operating at only 40 per cent of its potential, has long called for technological innovation to unlock its full capacity. While the pandemic saw the sector challenged by disruptions to access to labour, agricultural inputs, advisory services, and output markets, it also saw increased adoption of digital technologies in some parts of the continent.

Over one million farmers in Uganda, for example, have used apps to connect with customers, purchase farming inputs, and receive advisory services as well as real-time price and weather information to circumvent the mobility and accessibility restrictions of the Covid-19 world. Applications have aided productivity as well as encouraged diversification, particularly into new markets.

This rising digitalisation is also fuelling investments in the sector. According to Tech Disrupt Africa, agri-tech startups raised $60 million in 2020, representing 8.6 per cent of the total funding secured by tech startups in the continent last year. The growing investments in the agritech sector contribute to transforming agricultural into a wealth-generating sector. However, these gains need to be maximised through government efforts to support tech developers and farmers, which is often minimal.

By promoting the digital transformation of the agriculture sector, policymakers also have the opportunity to attract the more tech-savvy African youth to what has long been viewed as a traditional sector, thus creating opportunities for self-employment and changing the narrative around agriculture

Regional integration of e-commerce

A key intersection within the technological adoption phenomenon in agriculture has been the rise of the e-commerce industry. As physical shopping became restricted due to the pandemic, consumers turned to e-commerce platforms to meet their needs. A survey by Nielsen reports that in Egypt, Nigeria, South Africa, and Kenya, consumers were 40 per cent more likely to either maintain the same shopping levels or increase them from the pre-pandemic levels, translating into a boon for African e-commerce companies.

> **Consumers were more likely to either maintain the shopping levels or increase them from the pre-pandemic levels**

A major e-commerce player on the continent, Jumia Technologies, recorded one of its best financial performances in recent years driven, mostly by marketplace revenues as gross merchandise volume grew by 30.4 per cent year-over-year for the first six months of 2020.

For the e-commerce industry, it is not necessarily the lack of political will to promote it that is the concern. Countries such as Rwanda, Senegal, and Kenya have taken various measures to promote e-commerce platforms among consumers, especially during the pandemic, and as of 2019, the continent had 631 online marketplaces managing 1,900 websites in 58 countries and territories, according to the African Development Bank. However, it is the lack of ability to scale the apps beyond the borders that are a concern – 98 per cent of all digital platforms in East Africa exist only within national boundaries, often due to cost-ineffective cross-border trade regulations. For small traders on these platforms, it severely hampers their ability to tap into economies of scale as access to these platforms is restricted from many potential consumers due to the wide digital divide on the continent. Creating more comprehensive e-commerce regulations, with complementary actions on regional ICT skilling, could boost the e-commerce trade.

AfCFTA to remove trade barriers

Among the deterrents to expanding e-commerce trade beyond borders, firms and entrepreneurs have indicated tax regulations, customs procedures, high logistics and delivery-related costs, and lack of integrated payment mechanisms as key barriers to cross-border e-commerce in Africa. Luckily for the continent, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is setting the ball rolling to remove trade barriers and promote intra-African trade, creating an avenue for policymakers to capitalise on the e-commerce gains made during the pandemic and bolster trade.

With the Africa-wide free trade pact fast-tracking e-commerce regulations from Phase 3 to Phase 2 due to the pandemic, African countries can collectively establish common positions on e-commerce, harmonise digital economy regulations, and leverage the benefits that have emerged during the pandemic.

Policymakers have a great opportunity to compensate for the economic slowdown caused by Covid-19's many lockdown measures by leveraging advances earned during the pandemic, particularly in the agritech and e-commerce sectors. Tapping the opportunity can spell an increase in investments, employment opportunities, as well as the acceleration of the continent's digital transformation.

THE NEW NORMAL

Amid slowing economic activity, Covid-19 has led to a surge in e-commerce and accelerated digital transformation. As lockdowns became the new normal, businesses and consumers increasingly went digital, providing and purchasing more goods and services online, raising e-commerce's share of global retail trade from 14% in 2019 to about 17% in 2020. Many solutions being used for e-commerce, teleworking and cloud computing are provided by large companies, based in China and US.

Source: UNCTAD

Since the advent of Covid lockdowns, more residents of Kigali depend on home delivery services for supplies. Pic: Cyril Ndegeya

Isaac Kwaku Fokuo is the Founder of Botho Emerging Markets Group

Targeting specialist markets can be big winner

Commercial universe: Many young entrepreneurs have ambitions of building mega businesses, the African Amazons. They don't know that they can still succeed by starting small and specialising in niche customers

OLIVER AUGUST

Entrepreneurs in Lagos, Nairobi, and Johannesburg have caught a bug. It's not exactly a pandemic. But for several years now, they have been chasing the fintech bandwagon. A new digital money start-up is popping up most weeks. And that's a welcome development, even if many of them will fail (because not every idea finds a market). The throng of founders committing themselves to big ambitions in a quest to knit together African finances is a sign of economic vitality.

But they could do better, achieve more for Africa, and fill their own pockets more successfully.

The problem is the size of their ambitions. The word on the street is that the bigger one's dreams the better. It's a spirit to be applauded in general. But within it also lies an almighty pitfall. When every entrepreneur is chasing a market of 1.5 billion customers and promises investors a chance of seizing a trillion-dollar opportunity, many good but slightly smaller chances are overlooked, and many fine entrepreneurs will fail unnecessarily.

In fintech, seemingly every start-up currently wants to do international money transfers between African countries. Undoubtedly, the need for such services is great.

Financial flows across the continent's borders are growing every year and the options for consumers are still limited. But this is unlikely to be a market with more than a few bundled service providers. Network effects are strong and many of the players getting in the race now are following a fad more than an actual opportunity open to them.

This phenomenon is far from limited to fintech. In health, media, and logistics, the same story is told by entrepreneurs about building vast and complex machines with continental scale. Undoubtedly, some such companies will be built successfully. They may become the African Amazon – and shower incredible and well-deserved wealth on founders and investors. But that is not the solution to everything. It misunderstands the lessons of the global tech and start-up boom.

There will always be a few high-profile entrepreneurs serving extremely large and varied markets. Everyone knows and rightly admires, say, Jeff Bezos, who famously set out to build the "everything store", which also became the title of the best book on Amazon's rise. But it is an exception. Most successful tech founders in Europe and America serve niches, catering to ever more specialist customers.

Launchpad Accelerator Africa startups at the iHub, Nairobi. Twelve startups from Africa were in for a three-month equity-free mentorship programme. Picture: Diana Ngila

Technology is making it relatively cheap and easy to go after ever smaller niches. Specialist players can build very successful businesses (and have!) without going for continental size with huge resources and thousands of staff.

Serving niche audiences

Tech enables small players who seek to disrupt large players by serving niche audiences better than the big guys do. Often, they win by getting very close to specific customer segments. The formula of these successful start-ups has been to build or reinforce communities and allow them to evolve to their own benefit. That's true at all sizes, of course. Mobile money providers such as M-Pesa, who are the forerunners of today's fintech, are community builders too in a sense. They have reordered how African societies work by enabling new forms of commerce. Changing the flow of goods and services has made new ways of living possible. Mass-market products are far from dead. Some will continue to thrive – not least because they enjoy economies of scale.

But mass-market products will form a shrinking part of the commercial universe in future. Our societies are atomising ever further as they become more developed. Specialisation is the trajectory of history. We humans have been specialising ever since the stone age and that trend is accelerating with digital technology. Not least since it has also enabled the precise segmentation of specialist customer groups and the cheaper delivery of products to them. Most start-ups today need to find a specialism they can serve. If most founders chase after lottery wins, we all lose.

More than ever, part of their role is to build (virtual) communities, replacing tribe or class as a social frame, categorising social groups, also known as customers, by ever narrower personal and professional interests. An entrepreneur today needs to find a community that doesn't yet have flagship products. She or he is looking to build something that fits a segment of the market better than what's there now. An "everything machine" will not do that.

Entrepreneurs working in fintech and beyond need to ask themselves some hard questions. Do they really want to bet their future on scoring the biggest home run anyone can think of by building a product for all of Africa and beyond? Or might they start by capturing smaller communities such as Zambian accountants and Ethiopian sports fans… and then slowly aggregate customer groups over time until one day they may be in a position to build an omnibus?

Everything-changing idea

The grand ambitions of many founders are breathtakingly beautiful and extremely courageous. And a tiny number of them may well come up with a vast, everything-changing idea. But they must know they are embarking on a journey to build the hardest possible product. For venture investors who spread their bets widely it may make sense to back hundreds of maximalist ideas, expecting to find one or two massive winners. But for the ecosystem as a whole, that's not an attractive proposition. Betting on the creation of all-African omnibus products leaves too many gaps.

This is not to suggest that entrepreneurs should lower their ambitions. The hardest part of starting a venture is common to all of them – it is to get from nothing to something, to identify a problem worth solving and then develop a product that fits the market, reaching an initial set of customers and bringing in the first revenue. The first million is the hardest. Most ventures fail there. Anyone who embraces that challenge shows remarkable ambition. Their entrepreneurship is to be applauded.

But ambition alone is not enough. Clear-eyed focus on where the best opportunities lie is needed too. And that isn't always in the stratosphere. A credible path to achieving $10 million in revenue in a limited number of years – rather than a slide deck promising $10 billion in the distant future – is the mark of a shrewd founder. And it doesn't preclude them from shooting for the stars eventually.

Oliver August is the Chief Technology and Innovation Officer at Nation Media Group

THE FUTURE
Our societies are atomising ever further as they become more developed. Specialisation is the trajectory of history. We humans have been specialising ever since the stone age and that trend is accelerating with digital technology. Not least since it has also enabled the precise segmentation of specialist customer groups and the cheaper delivery of products to them. Most start-ups today need to find a specialism they can serve

START-UPS ACCELERATING AFRICAN GROWTH

Fifteen startups have been selected for the sixth class of the Google for Startups Accelerator Africa, which aims to support African tech startups through their crucial growth phases. The Google for Startups Accelerator is a three-month online programme that includes three intensive virtual training bootcamps, mentorship, and Google product support. Six of the selected companies are from Nigeria, namely consumer intelligence, engagement and loyalty software-as-a-service for authentication Chekkit, first responder Emergency Response Africa, homecare platform GeroCare, mental health service Nguvu Health, digital-first pharmacy OneHealth, and health financing platform Vittas International. two are from Kenya: Angaza Elimu and micro-investment platform Ndovu.

Source: https://disrupt-africa.com

Water management and technology can stave off worst effects of climate change

Feeding Africa: Agricultural transformation will reduce vulnerability to degradation

TILAHUM AMEDE

Planting soy beans in Balfour, South Africa. Regenerative agriculture is a simple idea: Cover crops are used during the off season to keep moisture and nutrients in the soil. Picture: AFP

Climate change, which is expressed in terms of drought, floods, and changing rainfall patterns and increased variability, is expected to hit sub-Saharan Africa most. Africa experienced a 30 per cent increase in the frequency and duration of drought events since the year 2000. In 2019, the climate crisis affected more than 33 million people across east and southern African countries in food insecurity as a result of floods, landslides, drought, and cyclones.

Africa is vulnerable because the economies of its states are largely based on weather-sensitive crop-livestock systems, and also due to the low adaptation capacity of communities to threats of climate change. The adaptation is strongly linked to access and use of improved technologies and practices to develop resilient systems. The experience of AGRA (Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa), which has been spearheading agricultural transformation in Africa, shows that improving productivity, profitability, and adaptation to climate change could be concomitantly achieved by investments in a number of areas.

About 70 per cent of the land in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) falls within arid or semi-arid farming systems, but only about 5 per cent has access to irrigation using water from rivers, streams, ground water, or rainwater harvesting. Only about 7 per cent of the arable land is irrigated in SSA against 40 per cent in Asia. Rainwater management could be practised anywhere in the continent by capturing, storing, and efficiently utilising rainwater from roofs and runoff.

Small-scale irrigation

Besides, small-scale irrigation from surface and groundwater can reduce farmers' vulnerability to annual rainfall variability and associated climate risks.

The private sector needs to support expansion of small-scale irrigation in SSA by improving market opportunities, energy for water lifting, and access to irrigation water, including from shallow wells and groundwater.

Despite high demand for drought-resistant cultivars, farmers have limited access to high-yielding crop varieties. Availing the right crop to the right agroecology will ensure good crop yields and reduce the risk of crop failure due to drought and other climate-related calamities. High-yielding traditional African crops like sorghum and millet rarely reach farmers' fields due to weak last-mile delivery systems.

Improved extension, including using village-based advisers, would help farmers get access to the appropriate varieties along with good agronomic advice.

About 65 per cent of agricultural crop land and 31 per cent of permanent grazing land in Africa is degraded. Only 17 kilogrammes of fertiliser is applied per hectare of arable land in Africa against 250 kilogrammes per hectare in Europe, hence aggravating soil fertility decline through nutrient mining.

Research shows that farming without fertiliser can cause up to 30 per cent and 60 per cent loss of soil organic matter after 12 years and 46 years, with crop yield declining from one tonne/ha to 300 kg/ha. While applying critical nutrients like phosphorus is important, adopting regenerative practices like composting and returning of crop residues to the soil will reduce fertiliser needs. Our farmers need to adopt a combination of organic and blended mineral fertilisers, not only to improve productivity but also to improve the grain quality of crops through micronutrient enrichment. Since most soils in high-rainfall areas are acidic, it is also important to note that soils affected by soil acidity will not give good crop response to fertiliser application unless the soils are corrected by liming.

Mono-cropping is prone to climatic and market risks. Diverse types of fruit trees, vegetables, cash crops like coffee and cacao are grown in home gardens and produce forage for fattening small ruminants. These gardens are enriched by household refuse, manure, night soils, and other nutrient sources and produce up to 40 per cent of household food on about 15 per cent of the farmland.

They provide a wide range and steady supply of fresh produce throughout the year, potentially with considerable income and should be promoted throughout SSA. Research shows that home gardens in a small-scale setting could produce crops, trees, fodder, medicinal herbs, planting materials, and other products, with an income of about $3 per square metre per season.

In the era of climate change, lack of mechanisation exposes farmers to drought and invasion of pests and diseases. For instance, in drought-prone locations of Africa, a delay in planting of maize by a day could extend the maturity period of the crop by a month, exposing it to an end-of-season drought. The hoe-based plough cannot break the hard pan of the soil, preventing rainwater from infiltrating deeper to the root zone. Lack of mechanisation delays harvesting and proper storage, causing huge post-harvest losses, sometimes up to 30 to 50 per cent.

Lack of mechanisation

Most importantly, access to mechanisation is exacerbated by an underdeveloped ecosystem (equipment vendors, after sales services, loan and lease products, mechanics workshops, mechanisation as a service model) and the investment in the ecosystem is beyond the reach of individual farmers.

Farmers' livelihoods largely depend on integrated crop and livestock systems. This is not only a risk management strategy (livestock serving as a savings account) but also critical for improved crop productivity due to the need for draught power, manure, efficient recycling of water and nutrients for improved soil fertility, economic risk mitigation and livelihood diversification.

Dairy, fattening, and poultry are becoming attractive investments around urban settings and would play an important role in the agricultural transformation of Africa. Moreover, most African drylands are livestock-based, and hence climate change adaptation and livelihood improvement cannot be achieved without improved management of the pastoral and agropastoral systems.

Aquaculture plays an important role in food security and profitability for Asian farmers, and should be integrated into the increasing rice fields of SSA. Unfortunately, integration of aquaculture has had a poor success rate.

Agricultural productivity

Diverse land uses interact across landscapes to impact on the natural resource base that sustains agriculture and ecosystems. One of the major factors affecting agricultural productivity in SSA has been land degradation due to poor management and soil erosion. Land restoration by adopting soil and water conservation practices accompanied by innovations that bring short-term benefits in terms of fodder, fuelwood, water, and other resources would increase the tree cover, minimise erosion and improve watershed functions.

In the context of climate change, there is need for integrated watershed management that may include technological, social, policy and institutional interventions for land restoration while increasing productivity of water, nutrients, and labour for food security and environmental services. This also demands wider collaboration among key stakeholders at local and higher levels.

ABOUT AGRA

AGRA is an alliance led by Africans with roots in farming communities across the continent. We understand that African farmers need uniquely African solutions designed to meet their specific environmental and agricultural needs so they can sustainably boost production and gain access to rapidly growing agriculture markets. We are catalysing an inclusive agricultural transformation in Africa by increasing incomes and improving food security for 30 million farming households in 11 focus countries by 2021. The alliance has built the systems and tools for Africa's agriculture; high quality seeds, better soil health, access to markets and credit, and coupled by stronger farmer organisations and agriculture policies.

Source: https://agra.org

A woman waters crops in Amudat, Uganda. Climate change has affected the area's agro-pastoralist people. Picture: AFP

Dr Tilahum Amede is Head of Resilience, Climate and Soil Fertility at the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa; tamede@agra.org

We are a unique brand; let's not sell ourselves short

Power of stories: We must look beyond the negative narratives and tell our own stories of resilience and success

FATIMA ALIMOHAMED

Africa, the continent that others thought would be wiped out like flies by the coronavirus because we are supposedly the poorest, yet here we are, still standing, trading, and living life, as resilient as we have always been.

Why, you may ask, have I started with this opening? I do so because this is the story that has been told of Africa by the world since time immemorial. The picture painted by the outside world perhaps changed from a child with a bowl in hand and flies buzzing around to a "better" one of a bigger family eating burgers and smiling. The picture may have changed but the story that continues to be told is the same, with subconscious subtleness. It is up to Africa to build a bridge with every child of the African soil, and with the rest of the world, in order to change the narrative.

Have you ever heard anyone else refer to their continent as the motherland? I haven't in all my 49 years round the sun except for us in Africa. Africans refer to Africa as the motherland because every human being on the planet is a descendant of Africa. After all, history and science have proven that Africa is the cradle of mankind! This right here is perfect branding for the continent. It has become more evident now with African nations targeting Africans in the diaspora to return home and invest here. And this has worked out quite well, as noted in the success of the Ghana Year of Return programme, which was initiated two years ago to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the first recorded enslaved Africans in the State of Virginia in the United States.

The time has come for Africa to tell its own stories, stories that birth transformation. Stories of young Afrillenials who are taking the world by storm with African-born startup ventures in the fintech, cleantech, and healthcare spaces, from Nigeria to Kenya, Rwanda to Ethiopia, with $2.4 billion deployed in 2020 alone, according to a Briter Bridges report. This is a leap from $638 million in 2016. Stories that explain why everyone is queueing to play a part and be present in Africa with the dawn of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the excitement of reaching 1.35 billion human beings with a collective GDP of $5.3 trillion in the next four years, and the youngest and fastest urbanising population on the planet must be owned!

While the external story tellers branding Africa are focused on what is not happening instead of what is going on, Africans are continuing to present proof of clarity in momentum and action through diligence, resilience, and skill, resolute to change the narrative about their continent. The pandemic got Africa to fast-track to the future, righting the errors of the past, connecting with one another on the continent, creating solutions, and building generational wealth. We do not have to look far afield; just look at Konza City in Kenya and the mind-blowing possibilities that this initiative has been able to showcase.

Home of food

Africa, the home of food, cocoa, gas, diamonds, cotton, gold, cobalt, arable land, sun, and the resource of people should not be poor. A continent whose borders were never created by its own people cannot be confined and dictated to by the creators of of those boundaries. This is why the AfCFTA was born. We cannot blame any outsider should it fail as its success is in our hands. And this can only happen through collaboration, collective vision, hunger for better, things and supporting one another, both those living on the continent and outside.

Many African leaders are beginning to speak with passion about taking charge of our own future. Words and actions, though, are two different things. Some are actioning their words while others continue to be oblivious as they lack clarity on what the future holds. As my brother, Pastor Olakunle Soriyan from Nigeria, says, "The future is sure because the future is today. You don't greet it with fear, you greet it with action. Anything different from this is like taking poison and hoping someone else will die!" Leadership is going to be key in telling the story of Africa and branding the continent as well as its products and services. Representation matters a lot and what our leaders say and do matters.

I once read an African analogy that said the coalition of trees in the forest always supported the axe because it had a wooden handle, in essence qualifying it to be one of them. The trees never realised that the axe was a tool designed to destroy them even though it shared their background. We will find that this is a powerful analogy if we delve into its meaning. We must create a coalition that offers solutions and is focused on the future. Our resilience to the pandemic shows that our stories are not about how far we have come but how well we have risen. National and individual brands will play a pivotal role in creating stories that share the connections we have with one another and our values; how being one another's keeper has continued to be the common thread that unites us, not how we are supposedly divided.

When we market or brand ourselves, we must keep in mind the history, culture, and pride the 1.35 billion Africans bring to the table. Consumerism on the continent is undeniable, breeding an unsatiable need for homegrown offerings. Brands that intend to touch any one of us must ask what legacy they are building. My journey in marketing and branding has taught me that great brands turn adversity, weaknesses, and pain into a positive force. And they can only do this by keeping their ear open to the voices of the consumers and defining both the human and brand truth. Such examples are Dettol and Listerine. Dettol takes advantage of the pain one feels to drive performance. Listerine uses the taste you hate twice a day. In the same way, we must find great ways to flip the narrative of our pains and challenges by finding the truth that keeps us hustling, smiling, and being the "hotbed" of international businesses and investments.

Considering that majority of our people are transacting between the middle tier and the bottom of the pyramid, it means with the effects of the pandemic on incomes, cost of production, and the need to transcend borders with the AfCFTA in view, we will need to create brands that play in this space of quality and convenience at affordable pricing. The dumping of brands into the continent because it is perceived that Africans don't care about quality must cease. Likewise, we must stop short-changing ourselves by selling and marketing sub-standard and poor quality brands at home, but ensuring classy packaging and branding of the same products when exporting them to the First World.

Finally, no one can and will build our continent for us; nation building is our collective responsibility, so we can tell the story we want. AfriCAN and AfriWILL. The time has never been better than now. Covid has only shown us what localisation truly means, and it is up to us to build the Africa we want!

Migratory wildebeest cross the Mara River in Kenya's Masai Mara National Reserve. This is one of the major natural phenomena for which East Africa is known. Picture: AFP

Mara Phone, a smartphone by the Pan-African conglomerate Mara Group, opened its first factory in Rwanda in 2019. The company hopes to pioneer a brand of African-made smartphones. Picture: Courtesy

> **The pandemic got Africa to fast-track to the future, righting the errors of the past, connecting with one another**

Fatima Alimohamed is the CEO of African Brand Warrior. E-mail: fatima@africanbrandwarrior.com

Construction works at the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam near Guba in Ethiopia in December 2019. The dam, a 145m-high, 1.8km-long concrete colossus, is set to become the largest hydropower plant in Africa. Picture: AFP

A fund dedicated to infrastructure will put continent on growth track

Tackling infrastructure challenge: Regional economic communities must play their role of facilitating integration between member states

RAILA ODINGA

Africa's infrastructure gap remains wide and continues to stifle the continent's socioeconomic growth. Its road network deficit is estimated at a minimum of 60,000 kilometres by 2040 while the rail network gap is estimated at 30,000 kilometres.

The continent urgently needs some 17 new airports and seven sea ports.

Of great significance is the energy infrastructure. Africa's current total installed capacity is a mere 145GW against the production target of 700GW by the year 2040. The figures are not any better within the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (Igad) region.

Renewable and sustainable

The Igad infrastructure master plan indicates numerous missing links in roads, rail, ICT, water transport, and power transmission lines. It also has numerous unexploited and underdeveloped energy sources, many of which are green, renewable and sustainable.

The plan has highlighted the short-term priority projects – 61 in transport, nine in energy, 14 in ICT, and five trans-boundary waterways. These projects need to be implemented by 2024, three years from today, at a cost of $34 billion.

While it is commendable that the master plan was completed in 2020, it is important to note that the recommendation to develop an Igad regional infrastructure plan dates back to 2010. This, therefore, speaks volumes about the continent's pace of action on infrastructure, the most important enabler of trade among our nations.

We need to take note that the countries of South Asia and Southeast Asia take on average one to two years to develop their regional infrastructure master plans.

We all agree that Africa needs to trade more with itself.

We also agree that liberalisation policies alone will not be sufficient to drive intra-Africa trade. To realise our potential in intra-Africa and regional trade, we must invest in appropriate transport, energy, and ICT infrastructure as a matter of priority.

Regional priority projects, therefore, need to be incorporated in national development plans and also get prioritised in regional economic communities' infrastructure master plans.

Each country must play its role for meaningful regional integration and trade to be realised.

The Lamu Port, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Transport Corridor (Lapsset) is a good example of a regional project whose implementation has been paralysed by lack of national ownership and failure by regional economic communities to prioritise it.

Critical corridor

I am, however, encouraged by the current plans to develop a regional coordination trans-boundary mechanism that will go a long way in helping the implementation of this critical corridor.

Continental free trade will only be realised if the RECs are effective in their role of facilitating regional economic integration between members. The RECs must appreciate their critical role as the basis for wider African integration.

Infrastructure projects that cut across national boundaries and are regional can all be developed simultaneously, with each country committing to do its part while the RECS provide supporting and coordinating roles.

> **Infrastructure projects that cut across national boundaries and are regional can be developed simultaneously**

61
The short-term priority projects in transport that have been highlighted in Igad's master plan

34
Cost in billions of dollars to construct projects by 2024 to improve regional infrastructure

With that spirit, the Kisumu-Malaba-Kampala Standard Gauge Railway line can be done in a fairly short time if Kenya and Uganda each commit to developing their respective segments.

Likewise, the Ethiopia-Sudan Power Transmission Interconnector can be accomplished fairly quickly, with each of the countries doing their part.

The Nairobi-Mogadishu Fibre-Optic link likewise can be developed simultaneously on the Somalia and Kenya sides.

The Lapsset crude oil pipeline is yet another example of a project that could be accomplished in a relatively short time if the three footprint countries act collectively and implement concurrently.

Many times, we are so confined to our national boundaries that we miss the potential we have by working closely as a region.

The eight Igad countries together have a population close to 300 million people sitting on an ocean shoreline of 11,600 kilometres that has significant potential for blue economy.

We are sitting on underexploited minerals with evidence of sizeable amounts of platinum, silver, gold, soda ash, limestone, phosphate, copper and zinc across the Igad region.

Future generations

Together, we have tremendous potential in oil and gas, geothermal energy, and hydro and solar power generation. These natural resources need to be exploited, harnessed, and developed urgently for the benefit of present and future generations.

The close to 200 million youth in the Igad countries are getting restless, as is the case in the rest of the continent. They can no longer afford to wait for skills and meaningful jobs. This is why we must act with a sense of urgency.

Delivery of infrastructure on a regional scale remains a sure bet to spur trade and manufacturing that creates jobs. Let us think on a regional and continental scale. We have 16 landlocked countries on the continent. Only regional integration will link them to the external world and open them up for trade and investment.

We must find ways to maximise the synergies among our states and the sub-regional bodies to speed up regional connectivity. This is especially important in the area of financing of regional infrastructure projects. It is not possible to finance transnational infrastructure projects solely from national budgets.

It is for this reason that I have, in the past two years, been advocating the establishment of an Africa fund for infrastructure to support important and necessary project preparation and development of a pipeline of bankable infrastructure projects.

An aerial view of the newly built Kazungula bridge over the Zambezi River in Kazungula, Botswana. A new road and rail bridge linking Botswana and Zambia was inaugurated on May 10, 2021. Pic: AFP

Raila Odinga, former Kenyan Prime Minister, is the AU High Representative for Infrastructure Development. The remarks were made at the Igad Regional Infrastructure Master Plan Partners' Roundtable, November, 23-25, 2021.

Youth and creative sector banking on integration

Talent: Visual and performing arts, craft, cultural festivals, photography, music, dance, film, fashion, video games, digital animation, publishing – Africa's creative sector is diverse

RAPHAEL OBONYO

Africa's free trade area is expected to be a boon for the creative sector and generate jobs for the youth. The trade pact, which seeks to create a single market for goods and services, and promote cross-border movement of capital and people, should boost intra-African trade — currently at only 18 per cent—and regional integration.

Key players in the creative industry were optimistic when they met in Kigali, Rwanda, in 2019, even before the trade area launched.

"We wanted to deconstruct the AfCFTA," said Josh Nyapimbi, the executive director of Nhimbe Trust, a pan-African creative civil society organisation based in Zimbabwe, adding that the creative and cultural industries can "leverage the agreement to advance our economies."

Similarly, Wamkele Mene, the secretary-general of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), has emphasised the need for youth involvement in cross-border trade through the creative industry and technology. He says that the active participation of young people will boost job creation and catalyse economic development.

Africa's creative sector is diverse, including visual and performing arts, crafts, cultural festivals, paintings, sculptures, photography, publishing, music, dance, film, radio, design, fashion, video games, digital animation, architecture, and advertising, according to the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

The organisation notes that the sector is helping fuel Africa's economic growth.

"The creative economy and its industries are strategic sectors that, if nurtured, can boost competitiveness, productivity, sustainable growth, employment and exports potential," says Pamela Coke-Hamilton, UNCTAD's Executive Director.

Tanzanian Bongo Flava recording artiste and dancer Naseeb Abdul Juma, popularly known by his stage name as Diamond Platnumz, performs at Thika Stadium in Kenya, in 2018. Photo: File

A report by the International Trade Centre states that the AfCFTA agreement can create more jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities for young Africans, recommending that ways be established for the youth to benefit from a single market.

Africa is the youngest continent, with a median age of 19.8 years while 65 per cent of its population is under 25 years of age. A third of all youth globally are expected to live in Africa by 2050. Yet between 7 million and 10 million young Africans look for jobs every day.

Ahunna Eziakonwa, the director of the UN Development Programme's Regional Bureau for Africa, told Africa Renewal earlier this year that the AfCFTA "is Africa's best development accelerator yet".

Strategic partnership

In March 2021, Eziakonwa and Mene signed a strategic partnership on behalf of the UNDP and the AfCFTA Secretariat to promote trade in Africa. Both bodies again released a report in November emphasising that free trade in Africa could spur about 10 new value chains, many of which will support the creative sector.

These include mobile financial services, and cultural, entertainment and tourism.

Creativity is the new money, and it is time for Africa to reap its benefits, says Carlos Lopes, economist and former executive secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa.

Lopes notes: "While there is clearly no shortage of talent in the continent, Africa has been relatively poor in profiting from [its talents]… Africa's presence in global markets for creative goods and services has been stagnated by its limited supply capacity, lack of intellectual property knowledge, obsolete policies and regulations, as well as underinvestment in the industry, particularly infrastructure."

Addressing this situation requires three solutions, according to Eziakonwa – knowing the opportunity, investing in enabling policy frameworks, and removing obstacles to mobility.

Africa must first recognise the economic value of the creative and cultural industry, she argues. Achieving the goal of one African market requires a targeted incentive scheme that supports learning, talent development, and promotion in Africa, in addition to relaxing visa regimes to enable Africans, including those in the creative sector, to travel unhindered across borders, she adds.

Nigeria's film industry, for instance, contributes 1.42 per cent (or $7.2 billion) to the country's GDP, employing 300,000 people directly and one million others indirectly.

South Africa's creative industry accounts for 3.6 per cent of the country's employment.

Regulatory framework

As the AfCFTA one-year anniversary approaches, top industry players are hopeful that the trade pact will tackle several hurdles.

Jacob Maaga is a Kenya-based performing artiste and financial expert who has been working to promote trade in Africa. He says that "an enabling regulatory framework accompanied by legal protection is essential for youths to reap the benefits of AfCFTA."

In South Africa, award-winning entrepreneur Hannah Lavery says she hopes that the AfCFTA will open communication between businesses across Africa "so that we can start sourcing, manufacturing, and selling across borders."

These issues and more were discussed last month at the Intra-African Trade Fair in Durban, South Africa, where the Creative Africa Nexus (CANEX) Summit was launched, supported by the African Import-Export Bank.

CANEX aims to support Africa's creative and cultural industries, and Afreximbank has set up a $500 million facility as seed capital for the initiative.

According to Afreximbank's president, Prof Benedict Oramah, supporting the creative sector is a good bet.

"At Afreximbank, we fully understand the power of the creative industry to catalsyse intra-African trade, create millions of jobs for the continent's young population, and promote the emergence of national and regional value chains," says Oramah. "We also know the power of creatives to catalyse industrial development because this is a bankable industry."

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KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY

The creative economy covers the knowledge-based economic activities upon which the 'creative industries' – advertising, architecture, arts and craft, design, fashion, film, video, photography, music, performing arts, publishing, research and development, software, computer games, electronic publishing, and TV/radio – are based. Today, it is intimately bound with the interplay between human creativity and ideas and intellectual property, knowledge and technology. The creative economy, in some ways, defies definition almost by definition. But its significant 3% contribution to global GDP makes it a powerful emerging economic sector that is being strengthened by a surge in digitalisation and services. Its contribution is likely to grow, say those monitoring the creative economy, if certain key trends can be addressed.

Source: UNCTAD

7.2

Amount in million dollars Nigeria's film industry contributes to the country's GDP

"Africa must first recognise the economic value of the creative and cultural industry"

Programme

KUSI PROGRAMME

MCS
- **Prince-Moses**
- **Anita Erskine**

THURSDAY, 9TH DECEMBER 2021

5:00pm: Welcome Cocktail Hosted by Platform Capital (Movenpick Hotel, Accra, Ghana)

FRIDAY, 10TH DECEMBER 2021

8:30am: Registration and Networking

9:00am: Opening Ceremony
- **Entertainment**
- **Welcome Video by Ghana Tourism Authority**
- **Opening Remarks**
- Dr Wilfred Kiboro, Chairman, Nation Media Group PLC
- Dr Ibrahim Mohammed Awal, Minister for Tourism, Arts and Culture, Ghana
- H.E. Nana Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana

9:45am Presidential Perspectives: Taking Forward the Lessons Learnt from Leading During the Pandemic - Dr Akintoye Akindele, Chairman & CEO, Platform Capital

The pandemic presented the greatest number of challenges than any previous crisis – in lives, livelihoods, health, economy, security, education, family, religion, geopolitically – and governments found themselves calling up resources at unprecedented levels. In the end, Africa survived much better than the worst case scenarios had predicted. It was not by accident. What was the secret sauce? What did fighting the pandemic teach us about ourselves and new policy directions?
- **Insights:**
- H.E. Nana Ghana, President of the Republic of Ghana
- H.E. Museveni, President of Republic of Uganda
- H.E. Kagame, President of the Republic of Ghana
- H.E. Wamkele Mene, Secretary General, AfCFTA

11:15am Photo Session with Presidents/Tea Break

11:35am New Opportunities for Accelerating Pan-African Trade, Julians Amboko

The pandemic-induced disruption to global supply chains, have egged businesses and countries to bring production and materials sourcing closer home. It also saw a sharp rise in adoption of cryptocurrency and digital financial transactions – and made one of the best cases for not only more open African borders, but also transnational payment systems, unified currencies, among others. Where in all this are the pointers to the building of regional economies and pan-African trade?
- **Panel;**
- Alan Kyerematen, Ghana Minister of Trade and Industry
- Ms Rebeca Grynspan, UNCTAD)
- Dr Antonia Joy Kategekwa
- EAC SG Dr Peter Mathuki

1:00pm: Lunch Break

2:00pm: Beyond the Return: African Diaspora and New Possibilities - Dentaa Amoateng, MBE, president of GUBA Enterprise

African has given a lot to the world, and shaped it in far-reaching ways that are only beginning to fully understood and celebrated. This has spawned roots in tourism, cultural movements, and fired the imagination about bold African futures. What are the new opportunities on the continent for cultural exchanges, trade, scholarship and creation for this cosmopolitan Africanness?
- **Panel**
- Jake Obeng-Bediako- Presidential Coordinator- Youth Engagement& Strategy - Government of Ghana-
- Dr Wangui wa Goro, critic, academic, social critic, researcher, translator and writer
- Akwasi Agyeman, CEO, Ghana Tourism Authority
- Katra Sambili
- Stephanie Busari

3:40pm: Vaccination; the Killer App that will Get Africa out of Crisis - Smriti Vidyarthi

All the best laid plans to get Africa out of the crisis brought on by the pandemic - whether boosting pan-African trade, rebuilding education, or creating supply chains closer to home - will depend on Covid vaccination. The theme will examine what needs to be done and how to deal with vaccine inequity, which has left most of Africa with still less than 10% of its population vaccinated.
- Panel
- John Mark, Director of Operations, Rocket Reach, Africa
- Dr. Sylvia Vito- Astra
- Prof. Frimpong Boateng, Head of Vaccinations Institute
- Mimi Delese Darko, CEO, Food and Drugs Authority
- Charles Abugre - Member of Prog Advisory Committee- Christian Aid

5:00pm: Day One Wrap Up

SATURDAY, 11TH DECEMBER 2021

9:00am: Technology, Innovation and Creating the Next African Wins - Anita Erskine

From the development of ventilators, production of PPE, mobile payments, range of innovations in various industries and acquisitions in the tech and fintech sectors, Africa has gone through a creative boom in these uncertain times
- Panel
- Iyinoluwa Samuel Aboyeji, co-founder of Andela, MD of Flutterwave
- Herman Chinery-Hesse, SOFTtribe
- Bright Simons-Social innovator,
- Maureen Mbaka – Deputy Minister of ICT & Youth Affairs
- H.E. Anne Waiguru EGH, OGW – Governor, Kirinyaga County

10:30am: Tea Break

11:00am: Open Borders, Connecting Africa and the Infrastructure Challenge -Prince-Moses

The continent's infrastructure limitations have been revealed over the last two year, as was the urgency to close its infrastructure financing gap of $68-108 billion a year. What are the likely alternative approaches, and where can the continent find new funding for its wide range of infrastructure needs?
- **Panel**
- Kasuku Silvester, MBS, CMILT, MKIP, Executive Director/CEO, ACTIRI
- Clare Akamanzi, CEO, Rwanda Development Board- Virtually
- Kwame Pianim, Economist and Investment Consultant
- Foster Awintiti Akugri, Head of Youth Banking & Stanbic Business Incubator

12:30pm: Lunch Break

1:30pm: Climate Change, Feeding a People & Ending Hunger, Smriti Vidyarthi

More than 250 million are hungry in Africa, yet one-third of all food is either lost or wasted. More than 70% of Africans cannot afford a healthy diet. However, Africa has huge agricultural potential. For example, achievable maize yield in East African highlands is about 11 tonnes per ha, while it currently produce less than 2.5 tonnes per ha. What kind of revolution needs to happen in agriculture, investment in food technology, markets, and distribution so that no African goes to bed hungry?
- **Panel**
- Hamza Hashim, Founder, Organic Juice Company
- Parvin Ngala- Oxfam - Regional Director(VIRTUALLY)
- Catherine Krobo-Edusei- Eden Tree
- Yaw Nyako, Ghana Commodities Exchange
- Prishani Satyapal - Founder & CEO- Sustainability Truthing

3:10pm Story Telling, Creative Industries & the Promise of Africa, Joseph Warungu

The amazing collaborations between African filmmakers, musicians, producers, designers and a new generation of African writers, has continued to flourish. African cultural exhibitions are getting bigger; more African films are getting on global streaming platforms and African art is finally beginning to command the high value it richly deserves. What kind of African stories are being told? What is the meaning of all this, and who is banking the cheques?
- Panel
- Mutuma Mathiu, Editorial Director
- Hakeem Belo Osagie, owner, Chocolate City Music Group
- Petina Gappah, Lawyer and Writer
- Dilman Dila, Author
- Mantse Aryeequaye, Co-Director at Accra [Dot] Alt, director- Confirmed
- Matthew Rugamba, Founder and Creative Director, House of Tayo

5:00pm: Closing Ceremony