Regional Agenda

World Economic Forum on Africa
Shaping Inclusive Growth and Shared Futures in the Fourth Industrial Revolution

Cape Town, South Africa 4-6 September 2019
As the world enters the Fourth Industrial Revolution – driven by emerging technologies and ubiquitous data – Africa is seeking to forge a new path towards societal and economic growth.

The African economic outlook is positive: almost half of the 40 fastest-growing emerging and developing countries are based here. Since 2016, many of these countries have experienced a change in political leadership, in most cases through democratically held elections. Recognizing the need to foster regional cooperation, in March 2018 the African Union launched the African Continental Free Trade Area, which envisions a single market that could generate a combined GDP of more than $3.4 trillion and benefit over 1 billion people.

However, while substantial progress has been made on the continent’s political and economic transformation, Africa still faces significant challenges. Geopolitically, new economic alliances are redrawning traditional spheres of influence and relationships. Pockets of conflict persist, and climate-related environmental vulnerability is increasing. On the labour front, the continent is being challenged to create 18 million jobs per year until 2035 to absorb youthful workforce entrants.

In this context, more than 1,000 leaders from government, business and civil society gathered in Cape Town for the 28th World Economic Forum on Africa to address calls for a more concerted regional dialogue and explore how entrepreneurial and agile leadership can create pathways for shared prosperity and drive a sustainable future.

The programme in Cape Town aimed to tackle these issues by focusing on how to scale up the transformation of regional architecture related to institutions, infrastructure, integration, industrialization and innovation. Under the theme “Shaping Inclusive Growth and Shared Futures in the Fourth Industrial Revolution”, the programme provided collaborative platforms to think about and tackle the common challenges of our joint future. To this end, leaders from across the continent and key international stakeholders addressed four transformational imperatives facing the region: Readiness for the Fourth Industrial Revolution; digitalization and competitive industries; sustainable development and environmental stewardship; and leadership and institutional governance.

One of the top outcomes of the meeting was the launch of an action plan aimed at tackling the crisis of gender-based violence. The plan is backed by the Government of South Africa through the Minister of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities and the United Nations in South Africa.

We would like to thank the Co-Chairs for their support before and during the meeting.

The Forum is grateful to its Members and communities for their ongoing commitment to and engagement at the World Economic Forum on Africa.

We look forward to welcoming you to our next gathering.

Elsie Kanza
Head of Africa
Member of the Executive Committee
World Economic Forum
An action plan was launched to tackle the crisis of gender-based violence. The plan is backed by the Government of South Africa through the Minister of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities and the United Nations in South Africa. The plan has three core priorities:

1. Work with the technology industry to deploy a free emergency response system for women under attack in nine provinces in South Africa
2. Support for women entrepreneurs as a means of promoting economic empowerment
3. Establishment of a fund to help support South Africa’s gender-based violence strategy and action plan

The Africa Growth Platform was launched to help start-up businesses access finance, advice and better regulatory conditions. Founding partners are Alibaba Group, A.T. Kearney, Dalberg Group, Export Trading Group, US African Development Foundation and Zenith Bank.

The African Risk Resilience Platform was initiated. It will combine private-sector resources with those of governments to help countries prepare for climate- and disease-related disasters.

The World Bank and the Forum teamed up with African governments to launch an innovation challenge aimed at finding new ways of using drones across Africa. The competition, supported by the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development, is a precursor to the Africa Drone Forum, which will be held for the first time in 2020 in Rwanda.

The Forum’s Global Plastic Action Partnership signed a national partnership with the country of Ghana. The partnership aims to combine public- and private-sector resources to tackle plastic pollution and unmanaged waste. The partnership is the first signed with an African country, following an initial partnership signed with Indonesia earlier this year.
New Africa growth platform launched

A new World Economic Forum initiative, the Africa Growth Platform, will help Africa’s community of start-up enterprises grow and compete in international markets. The platform will do this by securing commitments from governments to implement policy reforms aimed at stimulating and accelerating business growth; building a community of investors comprising private investors, foundations, multilateral institutions and corporate intrapreneurs to better coordinate and pool resources that could facilitate larger subsequent rounds of funding; and creating and sustaining a community of start-up businesses to promote collaboration and share best practices.

Read more here.

Jobs crisis tops list of risks for Africa

Executives in sub-Saharan Africa rate unemployment and underemployment as top risks for doing business in the region, followed by challenges related to governance, energy prices, infrastructure and debt. That is the finding of The Sub-Saharan Africa Risks Landscape, published by the Forum. The analysis comes at a time of modest economic growth across the region, and is set against a backdrop of rapid population and labour-force growth that is outstripping job creation.

As the number two risk facing Africa, governance comes into focus at a time when Africa appears to be consolidating recent progress towards stability. The region has experienced 27 leadership changes since 2015, highlighting a continent-wide push for greater accountability and democracy. The report also notes that the region experienced 15 elections in 2018 and will see another 20 in 2019. The analysis draws on data from the Forum’s Global Risks Perception Survey 2018-2019 that polled 916 experts and decision-makers around the world. It also uses responses from the Forum’s Executive Opinion Survey 2018, which polled 12,548 business leaders across the globe, including those in 34 sub-Saharan countries.

Read the full risk analysis here.

Africa e-commerce agenda launched

The World Economic Forum, in partnership with the International Trade Centre, released the Africa E-Commerce Agenda, an eight-step action plan to realize the benefits of e-commerce for the continent. E-commerce has the potential to create as many as 3 million new jobs in Africa by 2025, according to some researchers, yet e-commerce start-ups face many obstacles, including low levels of consumer digital trust, poor infrastructure and low regional integration.

Building on consultations with business leaders and experts, the Africa E-Commerce Agenda is a call to action for Africa’s political leaders, the international trade community and the development community. The agenda recognizes that, for e-commerce businesses to prosper, an ecosystem of digital technology and supporting companies must flourish, with a mix of local and global action needed to leverage cross-border opportunities.

View the full African E-Commerce Agenda here.

Call for action on violence against women

Spiralling levels of violence against women in Africa require immediate action from governments and businesses, including tangible measures to create safe spaces. Namhla Mniki-Mangaliso, Director of African Monitor, urged tech companies to take a lead in delivering solutions. “It would take a click of a finger for a tech company to say we are going to deploy a software that can assist us with an emergency response system for poor women in South Africa free of charge.” The potential for technology to help in the fightback highlights the need for businesses to think creatively, given that cyberbullying can also contribute to discrimination.

The business community should also step up to the plate by backing a gender-based fund to address the deep-rooted problems behind physical and sexual assaults. The failure to protect women is not just a moral issue; it also comes with a high economic cost. “Who drives African communities? It’s our women. Our women can drive Africa’s development, if given the chance, if protected, if their rights are respected,” said Hafsat Abiola-Costello, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Women in Africa Initiative. “Africa missed the first industrial revolution, we missed the second, we missed the third. If we don’t address this issue, we will miss the fourth.”

Read the press release here.
Participants during the session: Enabling Pan-African Financial Flows

André Hoffmann, Mark Suzman, Frannie Léautier, Hans-Paul Bürkner, and Edward Ndopu in the session Investing in the SDGs.

Participants in the session: Approaches to Disability Inclusion

Børge Brende, President, World Economic Forum.

Participants listen during the session: Investing in the SDGs.

Participants in the session: The Next Consumer Market.

Loïs Auta, Popo Molefe, Sabine Ulrike Dall'Omo, Ghida Fakhry, Vijay Iyer in the session: Regional Strategy: Infrastructure.

Participants in the session: Approaches to Disability Inclusion.

Danny Faure in the session: Africa’s Climate Change Challenge.
Time for Africa to reveal its genius

Innovation offers Africa its best chance to be globally competitive and, indeed, to be a world leader in new areas of economic activity. Technology has given the continent tools to address long-standing challenges and to fuel more inclusive growth.

New ways of doing business beckon, with partnerships crafted between entrepreneurs, multinational corporations and governments, leveraging innovative technology and turbo-boosting socio-economic activity to realize Africa’s potential and better the lives of its people.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is here and Africa – unburdened by much legacy of earlier industrial revolutions – is well placed to seize opportunities in a digital and robotics environment. Smart use of tech and new governance and business methodologies can help countries towards their Sustainable Development Goals – and, further, as they strive to make this “Africa’s century”, as proclaimed by South Africa’s President Cyril Ramaphosa.

Africa can do it. Its entrepreneurial spirit is there in millions of small businesses that thrive in the face of adversity. And its innovative spirit is ever-ready to be unleashed, as was shown by the mobile phone money transfer breakthrough in Kenya – a business case that still leads the world.

Drones and data analytics are two more enterprises holding potential for Africa to stride to the fore. Importantly, these and other areas of innovation have great possibilities for cross-border application, thus stimulating regional and pan-African cooperation – the holy grail for the continent’s progress.

Africa’s massive agricultural potential – which would allow it to feed the world – is fertile ground for innovation and job-creating economic growth. Exhaustive research has shown the current global food production system to be unsustainable. Pilot projects in Africa, with aggregated production from smallholder farmers and innovations in the value chain, hold promise of a “green revolution”.

Critically, women farmers and farmworkers can be factored into any scaling up of Africa’s agricultural system as they provide most of the labour and much of the entrepreneurship. Enhancement of women’s role, via provision of knowledge and technology, will surely boost yield and, importantly, raise their status and help eradicate feudalism, abuse and exploitation.

Rosy visions of a forward-moving, innovative Africa are dependent on many factors – notably financial investment, enabling laws and strong focus on education. Fortuitously, the spread of political democracy is providing a foundation for these things to happen, with 50 national elections in the 54 countries scheduled for 2019 alone – not to mention a sharp decline in internecine wars.

Stable political and regulatory environments have always been crucial to attracting foreign direct investment into a country, so the outlook is brighter for money flows into major infrastructure projects – such as energy generation to power all the envisaged new tech, as well as pan-African transport links for trade that will flow from an invigorated continent.

Governments will have to be clever in crafting legislation covering the new paradigms as the fast-changing nature of technology, for instance, demands nimbleness of response. Existing legislation hampering growth stimuli must be swept away. South Africa, for example, is overhauling all laws blocking entrepreneurs and small businesses from growing and creating jobs.

Data is described as “Africa’s new oil” – a vast, untapped resource worth a lot of money. With, as yet, no geopolitical dominance of data storage, protection and analytics, it is said that Africa might grasp a market opportunity. It could do so, if enough investment is made into technology unencumbered by legacy systems and into data science education.

Leadership roles aside, Africa must engage with data. Smart use of statistics and algorithms is key to unlocking developmental challenges, while taking ownership of one’s own data and preventing appropriation by foreign agents is vital.

Alex Liu, Managing Partner and Chairman at A.T. Kearney, emphasized urgency in developing data capacity. “Actually, what we need is paranoia,” he said, adding that countries not properly managing this influential new sphere will be left behind – probably forever. A danger of “digital colonization” looms.

The opportunities for cross-border, regional cooperation are obvious. Governments and companies tend to think about data archaically: stored privately and used exclusively. But opening up storehouses of information
to new minds opens the possibility of revolutionary solutions to vexing issues. Trials with data analysis by young African groups have yielded remarkable results, Director of Africa Monitor Namhla Mniki-Mangaliso revealed.

Any futurist talk brings speculation of billions of jobs being lost as robots take over human tasks. This is at least partly a myth, as new jobs will be created. A new reality will be life-long learning for workers – reskilling as technology rapidly evolves. “Digital readiness” will be crucial, placing major responsibility on educators – governments and private colleges – to provide targeted, high-quality learning.

Africa’s century? Africa the innovator? Quite possibly – as long as the continent’s obvious talents are carefully nurtured.

Welcome to the ‘drone Olympics’

Africa leads the world in using drones to improve people’s lives.

Pizza delivery by drone might be for the developed world, but delivery of life-saving blood is the application in places like Rwanda, Ghana and Tanzania.

Using drones to deposit live, sterile insects such as mosquitoes and tsetse flies to breeding grounds – to slash insect populations and reduce disease – is also a big success in Africa. Mapping is another burgeoning application, as is UNICEF’s “food corridor” system in Malawi and Sierra Leone. The agricultural uses are plentiful.

The World Economic Forum, the World Bank and the Rwandan government have partnered to stage the Africa Drone Forum. In February 2020, at Kigali and Lake Kivu, the world’s leading drone operators and various country air traffic regulators will gather for a unique event. Flyers will compete, executing a variety of drone tasks and solving problems – closely watched by regulators, keen to learn.

It’s a fascinating initiative that could fly around the world.
Benji Meltzer in the session Building Strategies for Artificial Intelligence

Iyinoluwa Aboyeji in the session From Start-Ups to Scale-Ups

Mark Elliott in the session From Start-Ups to Scale-Ups

Amina Mohamed in the session Employing Africa’s Talent

Beng Mez器 in the session Building Strategies for Artificial Intelligence

Edwin Machana, Toyoyshi Stuart Oda, Mauricio Adade, and Mariana Vasconcelos in the session Sustainable Food Systems

Sarah Anyang Agbor in the session Reskilling for the Fourth Industrial Revolution

Sarah Anyang Agbor in the session Reskilling for the Fourth Industrial Revolution

Ursula Owusu-Ekuful in the session The Next Cybersecurity Frontiers

Chika Uwazie in the session Africa’s Innovators of the Year

Iyinoluwa Aboyeji in the session From Start-Ups to Scale-Ups
Partnersing for a prosperous Africa

Africa is on the cusp of a new era with its continental trade deal providing fresh incentive for its countries to work more closely together and grow their economies. But the continent is still far from attaining its SDGs as it battles to get basic services to its people, create jobs for a rapidly growing population and reduce inequality.

Leaders on the continent also have to pull together on other challenges, such as ramping up infrastructure, as well as halting climate change and the alarming loss of biodiversity across Africa and the world, which is threatening our planet and people.

The groundbreaking Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) has sparked new energy and optimism. It will create the world’s largest free trade area once it’s up and running. The African Union envisions a single market expected to generate a combined GDP of more than $3.4 trillion and vastly boost its intra-Africa trade.

“We now have leaders of 54 countries putting their neck on the line for this agreement. It’s a game changer. There’s much more political energy today than there has ever been on integration,” said Arancha González Laya, Executive Director of the International Trade Centre.

Boosting online trade also presents great opportunities, as the digital revolution transforms economies and societies.

“In Africa, we need to move from being consumers to producers and innovators,” said Mukhisa Kituyi, Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

African countries have been urged to participate in World Trade Organization negotiations on a new global e-commerce agreement, as well as devise national rules and regulations on e-commerce.

While working on trade and investment, leaders from across the spectrum in Africa have acknowledged they have to speed up progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and attract investment in innovative ways in a bid to raise the $1 trillion a year needed to achieve the goals.

Infrastructure will also have to be built and improved to meet the needs of Africa’s people and move the continent forward. According to World Bank estimates, a shortage of funding for water, electricity, telecommunications, roads and more is impeding the continent’s productivity by around 40%. This will need smart partnerships, political will and ingenuity to overcome.

Transparency, trust and fair and reasonable terms between both governments and investors will be key. Countries that build up a track record of stable projects with good returns will benefit in the long run.

Infrastructure projects – from schools to airports – also need to be designed with...
people with disabilities in mind. These stakeholders should be part of the decision-making in the design and development stages to ensure that facilities are inclusive and accessible.

"For far too long, people with disabilities have been excluded, discriminated against and underrepresented in infrastructural development," said Lois Auta, Founder and Executive Director of Cedar Seed Foundation.

People from the African diaspora have also been encouraged to invest more in their home countries, with potential opportunities for the $46 billion in African remittances in new and existing businesses and pension funds.

Together with developing a sustainable built environment, we need to conserve the natural world. The fragile condition of the planet and the alarming loss of biodiversity calls for strong protection and sustainability targets. There is growing awareness that this is not simply a moral issue, but one that has cascading impacts, from public health to the economy.

Whether it’s protecting scarce water resources, building roads or implementing its long-awaited trade deal, it is clear that cooperation will be pivotal to grow and develop Africa.

**A rallying call to protect nature and biodiversity**

Momentum has been building for governments to commit to a set of sustainability targets aimed at protecting nature and biodiversity across the world. The need is seen as more urgent than ever in the wake of an unprecedented and dangerous loss of biodiversity, as habitats are degraded and natural resources are exploited.

Now, world leaders have been urged to sign a New Deal for Nature and People in 2020.

"We need to include strong protection and sustainability targets for nature. We have a very clear direction and clear global targets on climate. By 2020, we want the equivalent of the Paris Agreement, but for nature," said Marco Lambertini, Director-General of WWF International.

Africa has much to gain, too. The continent has the most abundant natural resources in the world and protecting its arable land, fresh water, forests and wildlife is crucial. The nature economy is also a golden opportunity, with benefits extending to agriculture, health and tourism. Protecting the natural environment has had far-reaching benefits in countries like Rwanda, where tourism now contributes 10% of the country’s GDP.
Saif Malik in the session The Nature Economy

Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams in the session From Start-Ups to Scale-Ups

Trevor Manuel in the session Enabling Pan-African Financial Flows

Olajumoke Adekeye in the session Diaspora Economics

Rosebell Kagumire in the session Free Movement of People

Barkha Mossae in the session An Action Plan for the Blue Economy

Christopher Mitchell in the session Next-Generation Entrepreneurs

Mamokgethi Phakeng in the session Bridging the Education Divide

John Asafu-Adjaye in the session Priorities for Africa

Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams in the session From Start-Ups to Scale-Ups

Olajumoke Adekeye in the session Diaspora Economics
Growth: Digitalization and competitive industries

Africa’s digital Renaissance

As sub-Saharan Africa’s average growth rate continues along a positive trajectory, the focus is on how to make this increased economic activity inclusive and broad-based.

New models of development that offer African nations a chance to build more resilient economies are emerging, underpinned by technology and innovation. These are helping to bring more Africans into the mainstream economy and giving them the tools to succeed.

Smart partnerships between multinational companies and entrepreneurs have led to the development and scaling of solutions to enduring challenges in Africa, unlocking economic potential in new sectors.

One of these is mobile money, which is addressing the need for financial inclusion on a continent where millions of people are marginalized from the formal banking sector. About half of the 870 million mobile money accounts in the world are now held in sub-Saharan Africa, with telecommunications companies pushing into the space held by traditional banks to offer innovative products and services on the back of the mobile phone revolution.

Smart partnerships are addressing gaps in soft infrastructure, which have made it challenging for small businesses to access finance. The lack of a central credit bureau in Kenya led to a unique collaboration between Mastercard and Unilever to provide an innovative solution to this problem. Technology tracks and captures the buying behaviour of small businesses purchasing from Unilever and uses the information as a proxy for a credit score. This has enabled entrepreneurs to access small loans from the banks to enable them to scale up their businesses.

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Shamina Singh, President of the Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth, Mastercard, USA, said: “We want to make sure that digitalization happens with Africans, not to Africans.”

Digitizing identity records is another innovation that will help to unlock trillions of dollars of additional economic value while simultaneously addressing political and social inclusion. The African Union Commission has launched a Digital Identity Platform for Africa and the Economic Commission for Africa is working with the private sector to help African countries set up national systems.

Countries are introducing their own national initiatives in this regard not only to capture the details of their citizens, but also to drive the delivery of e-services. In Rwanda, 97 government services can now be accessed online, making the economy more efficient and productive.

Energy deficits are being addressed by increasing spending and innovation in renewable energy to offer electricity to consumers living far from national grids. The rollout of technology is being complemented by innovative payment plans to make solar power and other new technology affordable to low-income users.

Public-private partnerships are creating synergies to solve problems in key sectors. Health is one of them.

Participants during the session The Power of Digital Identities.
Companies are aligning investment to national priorities and providing technology solutions for more effective health delivery on a continent where more than 50% of people do not have access to basic health services.

There is a push for governments to change their attitudes to the health sector to leverage its benefits more holistically. Budgetary allocations reflect an under-appreciation of the value of the sector as an enhancer of economic growth, with officials tending to view funding it as a cost, rather than an investment. As Ellen Agler, Chief Executive Officer of The END Fund, said: "The health economy is a growth economy; it is a job creator."

Another challenge is the connectivity gap – only 25% of Africans have access to the internet. Cost and access are significant constraints to building critical mass in ICT as an underpinning for digital economies. The relatively low penetration of smart phones and widespread use of feature phones, for example, excludes millions of people from the internet. Handsets are still expensive and mostly imported.

The possibility of making products locally offers a significant growth opportunity for Africa in the manufacturing sector. It offers the added benefit of integrating African local content to make products more relevant to consumers. This will bring down costs and bringing more Africans into the value chain of growth sectors but it requires the creation of an ecosystem that enables African producers to be competitive.

It is critical that these new areas of growth are supported by appropriate policy and regulation that protects consumers without becoming an obstacle to progress. Governments also need to proactively manage the impacts of the rapid rollout of technology to ensure it does not exacerbate economic marginalization of people without relevant skills, access and digital literacy.

As Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, said, "The picture has shadows as well as light," adding that new partnerships and new frameworks for cooperation are necessary to address challenges emerging from this new world.

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Medicines by Africans for Africans

Manufacturing pharmaceutical products in Africa is key to making the continent more resilient, improving growth prospects while simultaneously addressing its large disease burden. Although its pharmaceutical market is expected to be a $40 billion industry by 2020, less than 2% of the medicine consumed in Africa is manufactured on the continent, highlighting the size of the opportunity. The prevention and control of diseases is a key component of Agenda 2063 – the vision for Africa's development and clear frameworks do exist for the development of its pharmaceutical manufacturing capabilities.

Local production of medicines and vaccines is already taking place in parts of Africa and these success stories can be replicated more widely. For example, public-private partnerships have led to the development of malaria vaccines by Africans on the continent. Multinational companies have an important role to play in investing in research and development and technology transfers.

Critically, local production of vaccines and other medical products will help to reduce costs. But this needs to be underpinned by sympathetic regulation and improvements to the operating environment to attract capital into the manufacturing sector. There also needs to be consideration of manufacturing hubs to take advantage of economies of scale, rather than fragmented national initiatives.
Hage G. Geingob, President of Namibia, in the session Achieving Universal Health Coverage.

Bineta Diop in the session The Power of Digital Identities.

Emmerson Mnangagwa, President of Zimbabwe, in the session Delivering the Promise of Megaprojects.

Amina Mohammed in the session Achieving Universal Health Coverage.

Yetnebersh Nigussie in the session Approaches to Disability Inclusion.

Margaret Franco in the session The Power of Digital Identities.

Kojo Boakye in the session Building Digital Highways.

Jantina De Vries in the session What if DNA Were Profitable?

Patrick Nakhumwa in the session A Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement.
Delivering Africa’s century with jobs, not guns

Economic growth is picking up and more Africans are going to the polls, but challenges remain to build up the continent’s infrastructure, tackle corruption, improve governance and silence the guns.

An increasingly polarized world and escalating trade tensions that threaten global growth make an uncomfortable backdrop for Africa as it strives to forge a shared future for the continent. Yet, despite daunting challenges at home and abroad, the world’s most youthful region can claim clear progress towards carving out a more stable and sustainable future in both the geopolitical and economic arenas.

Encouragingly, the number and intensity of armed African conflicts has fallen in recent years. Notable reconciliations include 2018’s Ethiopia-Eritrea peace deal, which ended one of the world’s last inter-state disputes, and the restoration of relations between Somalia and Djibouti, as well as a pact to ease tensions between Uganda and Rwanda and a peace agreement in Sudan.

Still, pockets of conflict do persist. In particular, non-state actors, like the Islamist groups Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab, and networks of organized criminals are menacing the continent. Civil unrest is also on the rise, sparked by frustration among populations at the lack of progress to tackle gaping inequality.

It seems unlikely that the African Union’s goal of ending armed conflicts by 2020 will be achieved but expectations are rising for the region’s new peace and security architecture. “The guns are still blazing but not as many as we had in the past, so we are working feverishly to silence those guns,” said South African President Cyril Ramaphosa.

At the same time, democracy is consolidating across Africa. Almost half of African countries have seen a change of political leadership since 2016, in most cases through elections. It is a notable change from the past, although violence still mars polling in too many countries, casting a shadow over the ballot box in a region where political strongmen have long traded stability for plurality.

Africa’s perennial challenge of corruption has not gone away. Despite pledges to make 2018 the year of anti-corruption, sub-Saharan Africa continues to languish at the most corrupt end of Transparency International’s global corruption index. From petty bribes to grand larceny involving pillaging of state assets, corruption is undermining economic growth and the spread of prosperity. Changing this will take more than warm words. The key battle lies in persuading the 60%-80% of people with malleable attitudes to switch behaviour. Research suggests that 10%-20% of people are innately corruptible, while 10%-20% are “angels” – but most live in a grey area with attitudes to receiving or paying bribes determined by the prevailing culture.

Tackling corruption will take leadership across society – not just from governments, but also from companies, which must commit for the long haul and not view Africa as a place to make a quick buck.

Above all, long-term stability depends on finding sustainable economic growth that can offer jobs and hope to Africa’s 200 million 15-24 year-olds. They...
represent the continent’s much-vaunted “demographic dividend” but, without work, they could become a dangerously discontented “demographic timebomb”.

“Having a youthful continent is a huge opportunity but a huge threat as well. It’s a threat if we do not get that population to start really working,” said Albert Zeufack, Chief Economist for Africa at the World Bank.

Unsurprisingly, the economic picture today is one of highs and lows, since it is impossible to generalize about a vast continent of 54 countries. At one end of the spectrum, sub-Saharan Africa is home to five of the world’s 10 fastest-growing economies – Ghana, Ethiopia, Senegal, Côte d’Ivoire and Rwanda. At the other end is Zimbabwe, which its President Emmerson Mnangagwa bluntly admits has “a collapsed economy”.

The overall outlook across the continent, however, is positive – even if Africa’s growth recovery remains fragile, with sluggish performances by the two largest economies, South Africa and Nigeria, creating drag.

Perhaps just as important as tracking GDP, optimism is now rising that Africa can shift up a gear by reducing barriers to trade, in order to unleash greater levels of intra-African trade and offer businesses economies of scale.

The newly agreed African Continental Free Trade Agreement is an important step down this road but it needs to be backed up by improved payment systems, regulatory agreements and – crucially – hard infrastructure in the form of better roads, ports, railways, air links and networks of fibre-optic cables.

For investors, as well as Africa’s impatient populations, the next few years will be critical in determining whether South African President Ramaphosa is right to claim that this will be “Africa’s century” and the continent can really achieve a step-change in economic growth.

In the meantime, Africa must keep its head above water in a sea of mounting public and private debt. The situation is aggravated in some cases by the burden of badly run state-owned enterprises that are a significant drain on state coffers.

Beyond the economy, Africa must also confront its old enemies of climate and disease-related disasters – threats that are worsened by global warming and urbanization, since dense living can facilitate the spread of infections from Ebola to malaria. Cross-border systems of resilience to such hazards are now being strengthened in parallel with Africa’s push towards closer economic collaboration – which is just as well, as mosquitoes do not need passports.

Certainly, the failure to protect African women from spiralling levels of violence is an urgent threat to equal opportunities that must be overcome. “Our women can drive Africa’s development, if given the chance, if protected, if their rights are respected,” said Hafsat Abiola-Costello, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Women in Africa Initiative.

New approaches are needed that go beyond quotas and targets, which too often fail to address the structural basis of gender inequality. A younger generation of African leaders is waking up to the issue. “I learnt that if you include women in leadership in your team, the level of intelligence increases,” said Mandulo Ambrose Dlamini, Prime Minister of Eswatini, formerly known as Swaziland. Ethiopian President Sahlework Zewde – her country’s first female head of state – is convinced women can also play a pivotal role in conflict resolution. “We have seen, in cases where they have been at the table, things have moved better,” she said.

Africa faces a gender equality gulf, with women accounting for just 5% of CEDs and one-fifth of government cabinet posts. It is a huge missed opportunity. Women have long been the motors of local commerce and it is now imperative to translate this into skilled job openings for girls and young women entering the workforce. Too often, women lack access to science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) education and face cultural biases against pursuing professional careers. Some fear that patriarchy and misogyny are so deeply embedded that the continent is hard-wired to hold women back.

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Beyond the economy, Africa must also confront its old enemies of climate and disease-related disasters – threats that are worsened by global warming and urbanization, since dense living can facilitate the spread of infections from Ebola to malaria. Cross-border systems of resilience to such hazards are now being strengthened in parallel with Africa’s push towards closer economic collaboration – which is just as well, as mosquitoes do not need passports.

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New approaches are needed that go beyond quotas and targets, which too often fail to address the structural basis of gender inequality. A younger generation of African leaders is waking up to the issue. “I learnt that if you include women in leadership in your team, the level of intelligence increases,” said Mandulo Ambrose Dlamini, Prime Minister of Eswatini, formerly known as Swaziland. Ethiopian President Sahlework Zewde – her country’s first female head of state – is convinced women can also play a pivotal role in conflict resolution. “We have seen, in cases where they have been at the table, things have moved better,” she said.

Africa’s future is female

Africa faces a gender equality gulf, with women accounting for just 5% of CEDs and one-fifth of government cabinet posts. It is a huge missed opportunity. Women have long been the motors of local commerce and it is now imperative to translate this into skilled job openings for girls and young women entering the workforce. Too often, women lack access to science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) education and face cultural biases against pursuing professional careers. Some fear that patriarchy and misogyny are so deeply embedded that the continent is hard-wired to hold women back.

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Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi, President of Botswana, in the session Delivering the Promise of Africa’s Youth

John Nkengasong in the session Fighting Ebola

Doreen Kessler in the session Shaping Inclusive Growth and Shared Futures in the Fourth Industrial Revolution

Mandulo Ambrose Dlamini, Prime Minister of Eswatini in the session Africa: Rising Continent in a Fractured World

Amani Abou-Zeid in the session Delivering the Promise of Mega-Projects

Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of Uganda in the session Working towards Peace

Thando Hopa in the session Africa’s New Icons

Andiswa Mlisa in the session Africa’s New Icons

Sylvia Mkalanzo in the session Data Africa’s New Oil?

Peter Tabichi in the session Africa’s New Icons
Abisoye Ajayi-Akinfolarin in the session Africa's New Icons

Natalie Payida Jabangwe in the session Banking the Unbanked

Bibi Bakare-Yusuf in the session Africa's New Icons

Paula Ingabire in the session The Power of Digital Identities

Smail Chergui in the session Working towards Peace

David Moinina Sengeh in the session The Next Consumer Market

Carl-Hermann Gustav Schlettwein in the session The Future of State-Owned Enterprises

Sylvia Makario, Murat Sönmez, Edith Kimani, Frans Cronje, and Alex Liu in the session Is Data Africa's New Oil?

Arancha Gonzalez Laya, Alex Liu, Jeremy Farrar, Sipho M'Pryam, Ellen Agler, and André Hoffmann in the Closing Plenary
Co-Chairs

“I like to think of this CFTA as the most delicious African dish that can be produced. The ingredients have been assembled, the cooks are in the kitchen. The guests are impatiently waiting for this dish to be served.”

Arancha González Laya, Executive Director, International Trade Centre (ITC), Geneva

“From a business perspective, I view Africa as a large-scale start-up.”

Alex Liu, Managing Partner and Chairman, A.T. Kearney, USA

“The health economy is a growth economy; it is a job creator.”

Ellen Agler, Chief Executive Officer, The END Fund, USA

“There can be no development of any country without a healthy citizenship. And a citizenship that trusts the government, the institutions, the science. To do that, they have to be part of the system. They have to have a health system that is inclusive, that’s welcoming to them, that will treat them with respect.”

Jeremy Farrar, Director, Wellcome Trust, United Kingdoms

“I know that we believe individually that our countries are big and can do these things in their own right. The moment is one where we need to have an African leadership that is pan-Africanist.”

Sipho M Pityana, Chairman, AngloGold Ashanti, South Africa

“The beauty of having a young African population is that they are all very capable and willing to embrace technology because they are millennials.”

Jim Ovia, Chairman, Zenith Bank, Nigeria

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Africa Growth Platform aims to transform prospects of Africa’s entrepreneurs

A new World Economic Forum initiative, the Africa Growth Platform, was launched at the meeting with the goal of helping Africa’s community of start-up enterprises grow and compete in international markets.

The Africa Growth Platform will do this in three ways: by securing commitments from governments to implement policy reforms aimed at stimulating and accelerating business growth; by building a community of investors to enable better coordination and pooling of resources that could facilitate larger subsequent rounds of funding; by creating and sustaining a community of start-up businesses, promoting collaboration and sharing best practices.

“*The Africa Growth Platform brings together all the actors; governments, investors and the businesses themselves necessary to create an environment where they can fulfil their potential in terms of growth and employment,*” said Elsie Kanza, Head of Africa at the World Economic Forum.

The founding members of the Africa Growth Platform are: Alibaba Group; A. T. Kearney; Dalberg Group; Export Trading Group; U.S. African Development Foundation; and Zenith Bank.

Entrepreneurs play a vital role in tackling the major challenges pertaining to job creation, 4IR, climate change, food security, globalization, xenophobia and women’s empowerment. #AfricaGrowth #Af19

Economic empowerment is one of the most important forms of self-defense for women. Let’s discuss ways governments, businesses and investors can support female entrepreneurship and #AfricaGrowth #Af19

Economic growth is not boosted by necessity-driven entrepreneurs, but through opportunity-driven entrepreneurs who respond to market needs. #AfricaGrowth #Af19 [https://www.iol.co.za/business-report/opinion/opinion-africas-entrepreneurs-pivotal-to-bright-future-13127586](https://www.iol.co.za/business-report/opinion/opinion-africas-entrepreneurs-pivotal-to-bright-future-13127586)

Main insights from the #AfricaGrowth entrepreneur’s survey

**Top three requests from government:**
- Reduction of red tape
- Investment in stable infrastructure (water, electricity, gas, etc.)
- More transparent taxation

**Top three requests from investors and funders:**
- More transparent funding options
- Less stringent investment criteria
- Faster decision making process

**Top three requests from corporates:**
- More dedicated SME funding programmes
- Easier procurement process
- Faster payment of invoices

**Top two requests from educational institutions:**
- Business skills training
- Training for staff members

**Top two requests from the broader ecosystem:**
- More networking events
- Easier access to support programmes


Join the #AfricaGrowth conversation about the importance of entrepreneurship in Africa, and how governments and big businesses can meaningfully support African entrepreneurs #Af19

“*The digital revolution is an opportunity to build an entrepreneurial state, where government’s own appetite for risk and innovation inspires large-scale entrepreneurship and unlocks economic potential.*” - Cyril Ramaphosa [https://www.moneyweb.co.za/moneyweb-opinion/columnists/building-an-entrepreneurial-state/](https://www.moneyweb.co.za/moneyweb-opinion/columnists/building-an-entrepreneurial-state/)

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The World Economic Forum selected 29 African start-ups that are shaping the Fourth Industrial Revolution in 2019. This initiative aims to further integrate the continent’s most promising start-up entrepreneurs into a national and regional dialogue on pressing challenges. At the meeting in Cape Town, these entrepreneurs benefited from a tailored programme where they discussed and debated how to effectively scale up their business, and to contribute to driving the economy of Africa.

Among the selected start-ups are an app that empowers individuals with access to credit and simple payment solutions for personal financial management (Carbon Tech, Mauritius); a product to perform at-home DNA analysis and genetic testing (3x4 Genetics, South Africa); an app providing a last-mile delivery service option coupled with a ride-hailing service (MAX, Nigeria); and a platform for smart commerce in urban Africa (Koko Networks, Kenya).

The start-ups, selected from almost 200 applicants, represent 10 countries and sectors ranging from finance, education and energy to health and agriculture.

They are:
- 3X4 Genetics
- Aerobotics
- Carbon Tech
- Chipper Technologies Kenya
- Co Open Innovation Studios
- Data Integrated
- Disrupt Pharma Tech Africa (Medsaf)
- Elements
- Evergreen
- Exportunity
- Farmerline
- Flutterwave
- GovChat.org
- Inclusivity Solutions
- Iyeza Health
- KCKO Networks
- Kytabu
- Lidyia Holdings
- MAX Last-Mile Deliveries Services
- Moringa School
- Nomanini
- OkHi
- Paystack Payments
- Quixax Technologies
- RxAll
- SafeBoda Holding
- S-Cash Payment
- Teachmepad (VOB Research)
- Yalu Financial Services

Click here to learn more about the 29 start-ups.
Sylvia Makario, Murat Sönmez, Edith Kimani, Frans Cronje, and Alex Liu in the session Is Data Africa’s New Oil?

Børge Brende, President, World Economic Forum in the plenary session Closing Remarks

Sahlework Zewde, President of Ethiopia in the plenary session Closing Remarks

Mandla Mlangeni and the Tane Recreation ensemble performing at the Closing Plenary

Participants in the Closing Plenary
Acknowledgements

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- Sumitomo
- Telkom
- Toshiba
- Zenith Bank

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The event page of the World Economic Forum on Africa provides more information from the meeting, including photographs, press releases, social media and webcasts of selected sessions.

This report is also available to download in PDF or HTML format:
http://wef.ch/af19report
The World Economic Forum, committed to improving the state of the world, is the International Organization for Public-Private Cooperation.

The Forum engages the foremost political, business and other leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas.