



**MEDAWEEK BARCELONA**  
Mediterranean Week of Economic Leaders

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**New Africa Business Development Forum<sup>18</sup>**

**Africa: Harvesting New Horizons**

**18 November 2021 – 10:00-11:30 (CET)**

**Online**

Co-organised in partnership with:

**IEMed.**  
European Institute of the Mediterranean

## Introduction

The launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) follows years of negotiations and preparations and, more recently, months of delays due to the global coronavirus pandemic. Despite these obstacles, the AfCFTA became a reality on 1 January 2021, with the aim to become a driver for economic integration and development across the continent. The agreement, which was signed by 54 African countries, seeks to double intra-African trade by 2035 and **envisions to create one of the world's biggest free-trade areas, opening up a market of more than 1.2 billion people, with a combined GDP of more than \$3 trillion**. Yet some concerns have been also raised by African economies based on the fear that the agreement may serve a few countries and corporations in Africa at the expense of small economies and MSMEs and the limited production and productivity capacities of the smaller states.

The AfCFTA can also significantly contribute to sustainable development across Africa. It can be an enabler to facilitate the development of sustainable energy, transport and digital systems benefitting from modern and reliable regional value chains. Improving efficient and safe connectivity between African regions and with the EU through the Mediterranean while promoting value-added production and enhancement of industrial competitiveness through digital means are key to advance continental sustainability. Likewise, developing logistic and transport infrastructures that are climate-neutral, as well as deploying sustainable energy production systems will significantly help the continent to grow from a sustainable and human point of view and achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement.

In this context, public and private investments are essential to stimulate business entrepreneurship and sustainable economic growth and diversification that also help consolidate the AfCFTA. Boosting private sector and investment capital towards Africa's business opportunities that will come with trade liberalization and the consolidation of integrated regional value chains remains essential to speeding up sustainable economic growth and the creation of decent jobs in the region in a post-COVID-19 era. There is a positive course for Africans and African businesses to chart by 2050. Yet many opportunities will rely on the cooperation with developed countries, the firsts of which are the efforts to share COVID-19 vaccines and the mobilisation of green finance and development assistance. The EU and the Mediterranean region are in a position to capitalise on these opportunities for greater integration with Africa.

With a special focus on the socio-economic situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, this new edition of the New Africa Business Development Forum aims at providing a platform for business and economic cooperation between policymakers, industry leaders, academia, future investors, and relevant stakeholders. Through debate with the prime movers of infrastructure sector across various spheres, this year's edition seeks to explore new potential areas in trade cooperation, assess the prospects and challenges of developing more integrated regional value chains across the continent and with Europe through the Mediterranean, and discuss the opportunities for financial assistance and access to green and sustainable finance for key infrastructure players.



## New Africa Business Development Forum



### FORUM SESSION - AFRICA'S WAY INTO THE FUTURE: TOWARDS A RESILIENT ECONOMIC RECOVERY



#### A. African Continental Free Trade Area: What difference will it make?

- What difference will the AFCFTA make in the post COVID-19 era for people and businesses?
- To what extent COVID-19 pandemic has affected the initial implementation of the AFCFTA at the national and regional level?
- What opportunities the AFCFTA will bring to small enterprises and SMES, and in particular, to youth and women's empowerment and their access to the labor market?
- How could small economies fully benefit from the agreement?



#### B. Improving regional value chains

- How can regional supply chains be improved to be more sustainable in the long-term?
- How could the development of an integrated regional industrial base be promoted?
- To what extent targeting regional synergies in value-added production and enhancement of industrial competitiveness could help boost connectivity and competitiveness?
- What prospects and challenges to develop sustainable business and industrial environments?
- Which sectors are key to untap Africa's business and industrial modernization? How can the AFCFTA advance transformative industrialization and enhance value-added cooperation through regional value chains?



#### C. Green investments and financial cooperation in Africa

- What structural challenges are nowadays hindering investors' confidence in Africa?
- Which policy reforms and integrated actions could be developed to improve investors' climate and business environment in the region?
- How the development of FinTech could help boost Africa's economic potential and sustainable growth?
- What role for EU financial aid and cooperation to boost green and sustainable development in Africa? To what extent domestic investors could benefit from these financial mechanisms?
- How could banking institutions help advancing digital financial revolution in Africa? And mobilising green finance towards key sectors such as transport, energy use or industry?

#### Chair:

- **Gerard Figueras**, Secretary for Foreign Action, Government of Catalonia

#### Speakers:

- **Birgitte Markussen**, Ambassador-Designate/ Head of the European Union Delegation to the African Union
- **Mouna Kadiri\***, Head of Africa Development Club, Attijariwafa Bank
- **Moubarack Lo**, Senior Visiting Fellow, Policy Center for the New South
- **Amine Boutalbi**, PDG, Centre arabo-africain d'investissement et de développement (CAAID)
- **Yves Delafon**, Co-founder and board member of the "Banque pour le Commerce et l'Industrie Group", Regional Director Africa at FONDASOL, President of Africalink
- **Philip Bob Jusu**, Socio-Economic Officer, Permanent Mission of the African Union to the European Union



**Join us at the New Africa Business Development Forum and get to know the new trends,  
find inspiration, and most importantly: do great business!**