



**FORWARD
AFRICA
LEADERS
SYMPOSIUM**

**Continental
Summit**
Rwanda 2026

15th May 2026 | Mövenpick Kigali, Rwanda | 7:30 am

**Strengthening Cross-Border Digital Infrastructure in Africa:
Aligning Policy , Innovation and Capacity for Inclusive
Development**

PROGRAMME



Context

A key policy recommendation from the 2025 Forward Africa Leaders Symposium – convened at NASDAQ in New York – was the urgency of defining digital transformation in ways that reflect Africa’s unique challenges, opportunities and development realities amid rapid global advances in AI and technology. Leaders emphasised the need for a context-specific pathway that addresses structural constraints, leverages comparative advantages, and ensures Africa’s competitiveness and inclusion.

Cross-border digital infrastructure is no longer just a technical enabler – it is a strategic public good that underpins trade facilitation, financial inclusion, regional value chains, e-governance, interoperability and digital public services. As trade, governance and service delivery become increasingly digital and AI-driven, critical digital infrastructure must be deliberately designed, governed and financed to reflect Africa’s unique systems and national capabilities to operate seamlessly across borders.

Fragmented national policies, regulatory misalignment, limited institutional coordination, capacity gaps and siloed investments impede interoperability, scale and trust across borders.

The 2026 Symposium will forge consensus around digital infrastructure as the foundation of digital transformation and AI readiness – elevating discourse from a technical discussion to a leadership, investment and inclusive execution imperative.

Strategic Objectives

01

Continental Consensus on Digital Infrastructure

Advance a continental consensus on infrastructure and governance frameworks for shaping digital and AI-enabled infrastructure grounded in African priorities, data, and values.

02

Scale Capital and Partnershipst

Scale capital and partnerships to enhance national and regional digital capabilities and energy systems required to support resilient, coordinated and AI-ready digital economies across Africa.

03

Peer Learning and AI Governance

Facilitate peer learning and exchange of good practices on AI governance, data sharing and AI-enabled e-governance across African countries through country-to-country exchange.

04

Digital Literacy as Strategic Infrastructure

Position digital literacy as strategic infrastructure essential for delivering inclusive digital transformation across the continent.

Six Discussion Pillars

Each pillar is directly derived from the summit theme and its four imperatives: Policy Alignment, Capital Mobilisation, Capacity Building, and Governance Architecture. Session design prioritises structured dialogue over presentation; each session is expected to generate an attributable output for the Continental Communiqué.

01

Cross-Border Digital Infrastructure

Governance, interoperability and shared infrastructure frameworks for seamless connectivity across African borders.

02

AI and Advanced Technologies for Governance and Productivity

Responsible AI deployment for public service delivery, e-governance, productivity and economic development.

03

Digital and Financial Literacy as Critical Infrastructure

Positioning digital and financial literacy as foundational public infrastructure for inclusive digital transformation.

04

Sustainable Energy Systems for AI Readiness

Energy infrastructure and sustainable power systems as prerequisites for Africa's AI-ready digital economies.

05

Scaling Innovation for Women and Youth-Led Enterprises

Unlocking capital, markets and ecosystems to accelerate women and youth-led innovation across the continent — The Golden Hour.

01

HealthTech and Digital Health Systems

Digital health infrastructure, telemedicine and data systems that expand access to quality healthcare across Africa.

07:00 AM

Arrival, Registration and Networking Breakfast

08:30 AM - 10:15 AM

Arrival, Registration and Networking Breakfast

08:30 AM

Spoken word



Saranda Oliva Umutoni

Poet, Actress and content creator

08:45 AM

Welcome Remarks



Hannah Awuku

Executive Director, FALS

08:50 AM

Host Partner Address



Alex Ntale

CEO, Rwanda ICT Chamber

09:00 AM

Keynote



Mr. Alex A. Dadey

Executive Chairman, KGL Group-
Co-Chair, FALS Governing Council

09:15 AM

Keynote



Hon. Pinky Sharon Kekana

Deputy Minister of Public Service and
Administration, Republic of South Africa

09:30 AM

Keynote



Hon. Paula Ingabire

Minister of ICT and Innovation,
Republic of Rwanda

09:45 AM

Keynote



H.E. Veronique Herminie

First Lady of the Republic
Seychelles – Virtual

10:00 AM

Opening Keynote



H.E. Amb. Marie-Antoinette Rose Quatre

Chief Executive Officer, African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)

10:15 AM

A Presentation on the E-governance Framework



Jibril Ibrahim

E-Governance Lead Expert, APRM

10:15 AM LEADERS DIALOGUE I

Reimagining the Future of Cross-Border Financial Architecture

Africa's cross-border financial architecture is operating below its economic potential. Despite facilitating over \$800 billion in annual intra-African trade, payment systems across the continent remain fragmented, costly, and slow undermined by divergent regulatory regimes, limited currency convertibility, and layered compliance requirements. Transaction costs averaging 8–12% continue to erode trade competitiveness, far exceeding the global benchmark of 3%.

Yet, the continent has already demonstrated what is possible. Mobile money platforms such as M-Pesa, MTN Mobile Money, and Wave have proven that infrastructure-light, trust-based systems can scale rapidly across markets, reaching hundreds of millions of users within a decade. The challenge now is not innovation at the edge, but integration at the core.

This session interrogates the policy and institutional architecture required to transition from fragmented national systems to a fully interoperable continental financial ecosystem. It will examine how coordination mechanisms can be strengthened above national regulators, the role of continental infrastructure such as Pan-African Payment and Settlement System, and how the African Continental Free Trade Area payments framework can unlock seamless trade settlement. It will also explore how emerging technologies—particularly AI-enabled compliance and digital identity—can absorb friction and accelerate trust at scale.

At its core, this is a question of execution. Africa does not lack the building blocks for a sovereign, efficient cross-border financial system. The defining issue is whether policy leaders, regulators, and market actors can align, coordinate, and move at the speed required to capture the opportunity.

Discussion Focus

Spotlight on Institutional Progress and System-Level Achievements

- Milestones in scaling continental infrastructure such as Pan-African Payment and Settlement System
- Progress under the African Continental Free Trade Area payments and trade facilitation

tion agenda

- Case studies from leading mobile money platforms demonstrating scalable financial inclusion

Insights into the Evolving Cross-Border Payments Landscape

- Current state of intra-African payment flows, cost structures, and systemic inefficiencies
- Emerging trends shaping the next phase of financial infrastructure, including digital payments and platform-based ecosystems
- Collaboration Models Across Public and Private Sector Actors
- How central banks, regulators, fintechs, telecom operators, and commercial banks can coordinate more effectively
- Lessons from existing partnerships driving scale and trust in mobile money and digital finance ecosystems

Pathways Toward Regulatory Harmonization

- Practical approaches to aligning policies across ECOWAS, EAC, SADC, and COMESA corridors
- The role of supranational frameworks and coordination mechanisms in reducing fragmentation

Reflections and Commitments from Participating Leaders (Comments from the room)

- Perspectives from policymakers, regulators, and industry leaders on barriers to execution
- Strategic priorities and commitments required to accelerate interoperability and reduce transaction costs
- Collective view on what must change urgently to move from fragmented systems to a unified financial architecture



MODERATOR

Samuel Amanor

Founder and CEO,
BlueSpace Financial Cloud



SPEAKER

Ms. Nompilo Morafa

Chief Sustainability
Officer, MTN Group



SPEAKER

Gillian Darko

VP of Strategy, Yellow
Card



SPEAKER

Tunde Ogundipe

CEO, E-Doc Online



SPEAKER

Joselyne Mutsei

Head of Payments, Eco-
bank Rwanda



SPEAKER

Mark Mico

Head of Digital Finan-
cial Services



SPEAKER

**Blaise Pascal
Gasabira**

CEO RSwitch Limited

The Sovereign Stack –Data, Identity, Trust and the Financial Architecture of Africa's Digital Economy



CONTEXT SETTING KEYNOTE

Ebenezer Twum Asante

Senior Vice President,
MTN Group

Africa's digital economy is scaling faster than the systems required to secure and sustain it. While digital trade is projected to reach \$180 billion, the foundational infrastructure—data governance, digital identity, and trust frameworks—remains fragmented across jurisdictions. Fewer than 20 African countries have comprehensive data protection regimes, and cross-border digital identity is still unresolved. The result is a structural paradox: individuals and businesses can move across borders physically, but cannot seamlessly authenticate, transact, or assert data rights within digital systems.

This trust deficit is not a policy gap alone—it is architectural. Without a functioning sovereign stack—anchored in interoperable identity systems, harmonised data governance, and trusted exchange frameworks—Africa's ambitions in financial inclusion, e-governance, and AI-driven services will remain constrained within national silos.

This session examines the institutional and technical architecture required to build that sovereign stack at continental scale. It will explore governance models for shared digital identity, the role of compliance and verification infrastructure in enabling trust, and how coordination across regulators, technology providers, and financial institutions can unlock secure, cross-border digital participation. The discussion will also consider how emerging infrastructure layers can align with continental frameworks such as the African Continental Free Trade Area to enable a trusted, interoperable digital economy.

At its core, this is a leadership question: how Africa defines sovereignty in a digital age—and whether it can build systems of trust that move as seamlessly as its people, capital, and ideas.

Discussion Focus

Spotlight on Institutional Progress and Innovation

- Advances in digital identity verification and compliance infrastructure led by ecosystem players such as Sumsud and Yellow Card
- Contributions from legal and academic institutions, including University of the Witwatersrand, in shaping cyber law and data governance frameworks
- Emerging fintech and digital asset infrastructure enabling new trust models across African markets

Insights into Africa's Emerging Digital Trust Architecture

- Current gaps in data protection, identity systems, and cross-border authentication
- The structural impact of fragmented digital infrastructure on financial services, trade, and public service delivery

- Trends shaping digital trust, including decentralized identity, compliance technologies, and AI-enabled verification

Collaboration Models Across Ecosystem Actors

- How governments, regulators, fintechs, identity providers, and compliance platforms can co-build interoperable systems
- The role of public–private partnerships in scaling identity verification, KYC infrastructure, and secure data exchange
- Cross-border coordination between legal, financial, and technology institutions

Pathways Toward Harmonised Data Governance and Identity Systems

- Approaches to aligning national data protection frameworks without compromising sovereignty
- Models for interoperable digital identity across borders, including federated and regional identity systems
- Legal and regulatory conditions required for trusted cross-border data flows

Reflections and Commitments from Participating Leaders

- Perspectives on the trade-offs between data sovereignty, innovation, and interoperability
- Priority actions required to operationalize a continental digital trust framework
- Leadership commitments toward building a unified sovereign stack that enables secure, scalable digital participation across Africa



MODERATOR

Martin Kwame Awaga

President Ghana Fintech and Payment Association and Board Member, Africa Fintech Network



SPEAKER

Tom Schoon

Head of Strategic Partnerships, Africa, Sumsub



SPEAKER

Nomalanga Mashinini

Senior Lecturer in Cyber Law, School of Law, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa



SPEAKER

Christian Ruehmer

CEO and Co-founder, Q-Lana Inc



SPEAKER

Sa'adatu Mamuda Salley

Chief Compliance Officer, National Credit Guarantee Company (NCGC), Nigeria



SPEAKER

Jimmy Rutabingwa

D/CEO, Urwego Bank



SPEAKER

Fadilah Tchoumba

CEO, ABAN

Building Digital States and Operationalising Digital Governance in Africa



CONTEXT SETTING KEYNOTE

Dr. Vasu Gounden

Executive Director,
ACCORD, South Africa

Africa's digital transformation rests on a foundational challenge that policy momentum alone cannot resolve critical infrastructure –power grids, fibre backbone networks, data centres, and cross-border connectivity corridors remains uneven, underinvested, and insufficiently governed. Without a stable infrastructure base, digital states cannot be built. Without governance frameworks capable of managing that infrastructure at scale, they cannot endure.

Compounding this are structural barriers that persist across the continent – fragmented regulatory environments, weak institutional coordination, and a chronic gap between digital ambition and measurable delivery. Closing that gap requires a governance architecture that integrates critical infrastructure stewardship with accountable, functional digital systems.

This session draws on the African Peer Review Mechanism as its institutional anchor, examining how Member States can move from digital declarations to verifiable outcomes.

Spotlight on Institutional Progress and Governance Innovation

- Case studies of countries advancing digital governance through measurable frameworks and delivery systems
- Innovations in integrating digital systems within health and energy sectors
- Tools enabling real-time monitoring of infrastructure performance and public service delivery

Insights into the State of Digital Governance and Infrastructure Readiness

- Current gaps between national digital strategies and implementation outcomes
- Structural constraints across power, connectivity, data infrastructure, and institutional capacity
- The implications of weak governance on service delivery, trust, and digital inclusion

State Capacity in Health Infrastructure as a Digital Public Good

- The role of digital systems in strengthening health service delivery, surveillance, and access
- Governance challenges in integrating health data systems across institutions and borders
- Lessons from scaling digital health platforms within constrained infrastructure environments

State Capacity in Sustainable Energy for Digital Systems

- The centrality of reliable and renewable energy in powering digital infrastructure (data centres, connectivity, platforms)
- Policy and investment models linking energy systems to digital transformation agendas
- The role of sustainable energy in ensuring resilience, cost efficiency, and long-term scalability of digital states

Collaboration Models for Building Functional Digital States

- How governments, regulators, infrastructure providers, and development partners can coordinate more effectively
- The role of regional bodies and peer institutions in strengthening governance alignment
- Mechanisms for integrating infrastructure (energy, health, connectivity) with digital public service delivery

Pathways Toward Measurable and Accountable Digital Governance

- Approaches to embedding monitoring, evaluation, and performance tracking into digital strategies
- The role of peer review systems—anchored in the African Peer Review Mechanism—in driving accountability and transparency
- Frameworks for linking infrastructure investment to governance outcomes

Reflections and Commitments from Participating Leaders

- Perspectives on the political and institutional barriers to operationalising digital governance
- Priority actions required to close the gap between ambition and execution
- Leadership commitments toward building accountable, resilient, and interoperable digital states across the continent



MODERATOR

Blessed Sogah

Broadcast Journalist,
Multimedia Group



SPEAKER

**Amina Sambo
Magaji, PhD**

Director, Information
Technology Department,
NITDA, Nigeria



SPEAKER

McBride Nkhalamba

Director of Governance
and Specialised Reporting,
APRM



SPEAKER

**Fatmata Lovetta
Sesay**

Broadcast Journalist,
Multimedia Group



SPEAKER

Pauline Anaman

Coordinator, Green
Transition Practice, AB
& David Africa



SPEAKER

Anthony Mveyange

Director of Programme,
Synergy, APHRC



SPEAKER

Amb. Salah S. Hammah

Head of the African Governance
Architecture (AGA)
- APSA Secretariat, AUC

1:15 PM

Presentation of Key Outcomes



Pauline Anaman

Coordinator, Green Transition
Practice, AB & David Africa

1:25 PM

Closing Keynote



Fadilah Tchoumba

CEO ABAN

1:30 PM

End of Summit