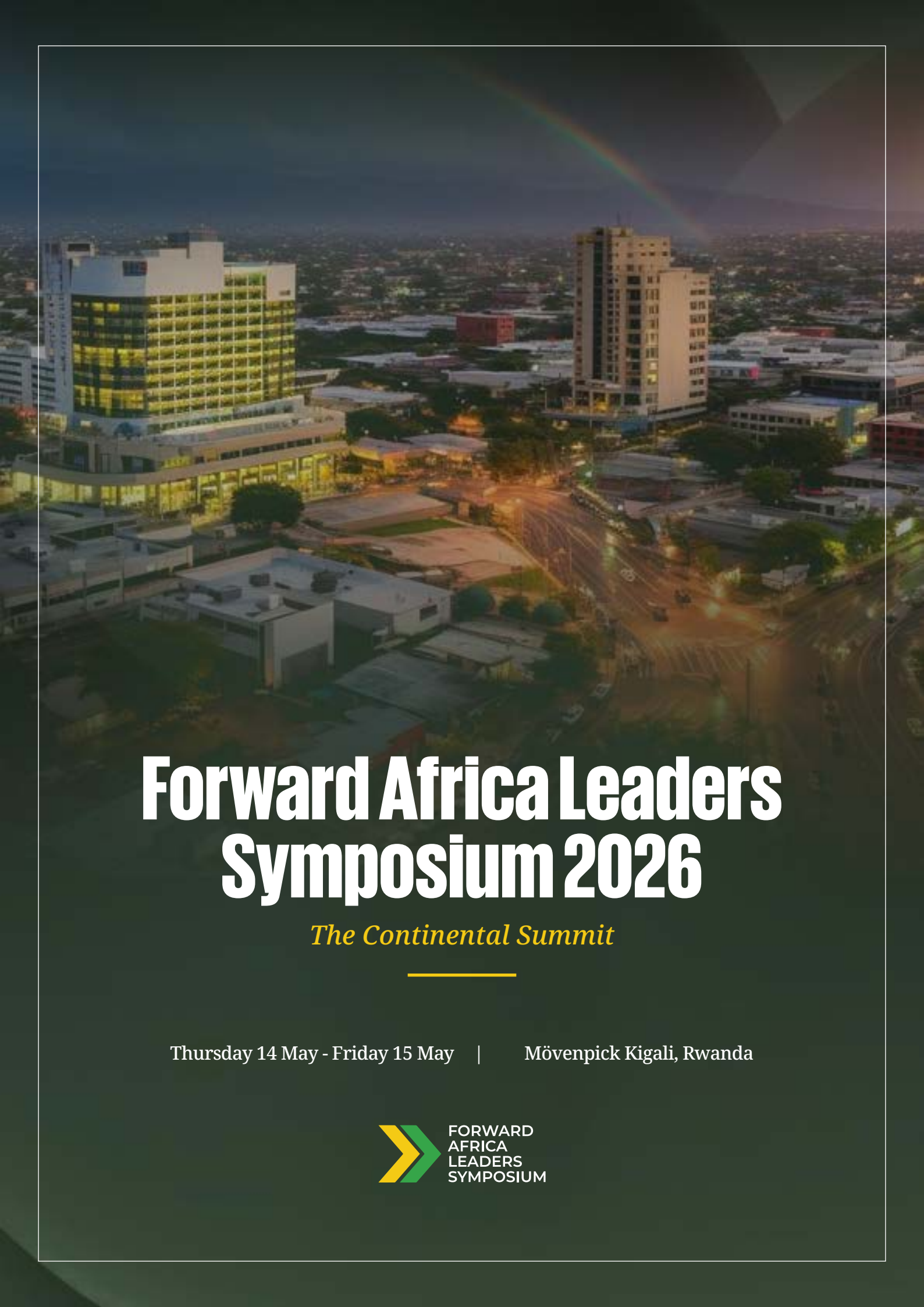




Forward Africa Leaders Symposium 2026

The Continental Summit

Thursday 14 May - Friday 15 May | Mövenpick Kigali, Rwanda





Innovating The Future Today



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Africa's Leaders
Reimagine Infrastructure,
Governance and AI

The Forward Africa Leaders Symposium

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Partners & Sponsors

- Strategic Partners
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The Infrastructure Decade

Africa stands at the threshold of a defining decade.

The next chapter of the continent's transformation will not be written solely through economic growth, policy declarations, or technological adoption. It will be determined by the systems Africa chooses to build and the leadership consensus that shapes them.

Cross-border digital infrastructure has emerged as the foundation of modern state capability. It now underpins trade, governance, financial inclusion, public services, energy coordination, healthcare delivery, and the continent's readiness for artificial intelligence.

Yet infrastructure alone is not enough.

The defining question is whether Africa can align policy, governance, innovation, and capital quickly enough to build interoperable systems capable of operating at continental scale.

This magazine captures the vision, ambition, and strategic direction emerging from the Symposium. It documents the leaders shaping Africa's next era. And it reflects a continent moving deliberately toward a more integrated, intelligent, and self-defined digital future.



THE CONTINENTAL GOVERNANCE *IMPERATIVE*

THE CONTINENTAL GOVERNANCE IMPERATIVE

A Message From The Co-Host

The question before us is not whether we should govern technology, but how we must do so if we want technology to serve humanity and help us strengthen governance rather than subvert it.

The world's major powers have never been so publicly vocal about the need to cooperate but are privately at odds on how to manage these technologies. Each global power seeks to protect its strategic advantage, markets, and share of influence, creating a global system in which the rules of the game for digital governance remain fragmented, inconsistent, and incomplete. The result has been a system in which the most powerful transformative force of our time, that is, AI, roams the planet with little coordinated oversight or shared ethical grounding.

Africa can and must take control of its own future. This can only be achieved if we focus on good governance, accessible education, vital digital infrastructure, encourage innovation and strengthen our domestic institutional foundations.

Africa can use its demographic dividend to power a new era of inclusive digital growth that lifts millions out of poverty. The nations that will thrive in the age of artificial intelligence are not only those with technology, but also those that empower their people to govern, build, and embrace technological innovation that will lead.

That is why the APRM has made E-Governance a priority issue for the continent. Through the establishment of frameworks, peer learning platforms, and comprehensive technical and institutional capacity-building programmes, we strive to enable our Participating States to champion development in the era of artificial intelligence.

Africa must think beyond digital inclusion to digital ownership of the technology we depend on. This includes ownership of our data, ownership of the digital infrastructure that powers our economies, ownership of our innovation ecosystems, and ownership of the policies and governance systems that will power the next wave of economic growth. Because in the era of artificial intelligence, prosperity will go to nations that control technology, innovate, and build strong institutions to govern it.



H.E. Amb. Marie-Antoinette

Rose Quatre
CEO, APRM Continental Secretariat



APRM

African Peer Review
Mechanism

The APRM is a mutually agreed instrument voluntarily acceded to by AU member States as an African self-monitoring mechanism. The APRM is often described as “Africa’s unique and innovative approach to governance” with the objective of improving governance dynamics at the local, national and continental levels.

The APRM was adopted by African Heads of State and Government as a systematic peer learning and self-assessment mechanism originating from the NEPAD foundational document, the “Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance” adopted in Durban, South Africa in July 2002.

Our Vision

The vision of the APRM is the full actualisation of transformative leadership and practice for the Africa we all want.

Our Mission

The mission of the APRM is to promote the African Union’s ideals and shared values of democratic governance and inclusive development by encouraging all Member States of the Union to collaborate and voluntarily participate in the home grown, credible, rigorous, independent and self driven peer review process and the implementation of its recommendations.

Our Principles

Every review exercise carried out under the authority of the Mechanism must be technically competent, credible and free of political manipulation. These stipulations together constitute the core guiding principles of the Mechanism.

Our Purpose

The primary purpose of the APRM is to foster the adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration through sharing of experiences and reinforcement of successful and best practice, including identifying deficiencies and assessing the needs for capacity building.

Our Mandate

The mandate of the APRM is to ensure that policies and practices of participating Member States conform to the agreed political, economic and corporate governance values, codes and standards contained in the African Union Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance. As a voluntary self-monitoring instrument, APRM fosters the adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated regional and continental economic integration through sharing of experiences and best practices, including identifying deficiencies and assessing the needs for capacity building.



A low-angle, upward-looking photograph of several modern skyscrapers against a twilight sky. The buildings are dark, with some windows glowing with warm interior lights. The sky is a deep blue with some light clouds. The overall mood is professional and modern.

WELCOME FROM THE **EXECUTIVE** ***DIRECTOR***

Welcome From The Executive Director

The future of Africa will increasingly be determined by the strength of the systems we build together.

For too long, conversations around Africa's digital transformation have been framed narrowly around connectivity and adoption. But digital transformation is ultimately a leadership question. It is about institutional capacity –Governance –Trust. –Energy – Human capability. Infrastructure. And the ability of nations to collaborate across borders.

The 2026 Forward Africa Leaders Symposium convenes at a time when Africa has both unprecedented opportunity and increasing urgency.

Artificial intelligence, digital finance, sovereign data systems, digital public infrastructure, and advanced technologies are rapidly redefining global competitiveness. Africa must not simply participate in this transition. Africa must shape it.

Kigali therefore becomes more than a host city. It becomes a continental meeting point for leaders prepared to align vision with execution.

This year's Symposium has been intentionally designed around structured dialogue and outcome-oriented engagement. Every session is built to generate practical recommendations capable of informing continental frameworks, investment priorities, institutional coordination, and measurable implementation.

The conversations hosted here are not symbolic.

They are designed to influence the architecture of Africa's next development decade.

On behalf of the Forward Africa Leaders Symposium, I welcome you to Kigali and thank every leader, partner, speaker, institution, and delegate contributing to this shared continental agenda.

Africa's future is not waiting to be imagined. It is being built.



Hannah Awuku

Executive Director
Forward Africa Leaders Symposium

Message From The Governing Council Co-Chair

On behalf of the KGL Group of Companies and the Governing Council of this Symposium, I extend warm greetings as we prepare for the Forward Africa Leaders Symposium 2026 in Kigali—a pivotal moment for collective leadership and strategic alignment across the continent.

Hosting this inaugural continental edition on African soil is both timely and significant. It underscores the growing recognition that Africa must transition from merely participating in global digital conversations to actively shaping its own trajectory—grounded in our realities, informed by our priorities, and driven by a shared vision for inclusive growth.

At KGL Group of Companies, we perceive digital transformation not as a distant ambition but as a practical enabler of economic resilience and opportunity. Across various sectors—including technology innovation, fintech, logistics, trade, and commerce—we have witnessed how the right combination of infrastructure, policy alignment, and institutional capacity can unlock measurable value for both businesses and communities.

However, innovation must translate into lasting societal impact—creating real value for people, strengthening livelihoods, and expanding access to opportunity. The true measure of progress lies not only in our achievements but in how they improve lives and foster inclusive development within our communities.

This responsibility places us within a broader, generational mission—the belief that digital transformation, when anchored in clear policy direction, regulatory alignment, and institutional capacity, is fundamental to Africa's long-term growth and competitiveness.

The opportunity is clear: to build resilient digital ecosystems that facilitate seamless cross-border interactions while prioritizing innovation. Addressing these challenges necessitates more than dialogue; it calls for deliberate collaboration, stronger partnerships, and a steadfast commitment to translating ideas into actionable outcomes.

In this context, the Forward Africa Leaders Symposium assumes particular relevance. By serving as a neutral and forward-looking platform for engagement between public and private sector leaders, it offers an opportunity to build consensus, align priorities, and advance practical solutions to some of Africa's most pressing developmental challenges.

As Co-Chair of the Governing Council, I am committed to supporting this gathering, which emphasizes clarity of purpose, strength of partnerships, and tangible outcomes. We commend all stakeholders for their collective commitment to advancing Africa's digital transformation agenda and remain confident in the meaningful progress that will emerge as we collectively shape a more connected, innovative, and inclusive future for our continent.



Alex Apau Dadey

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



ABAN

african business angel network

ABOUT THE **FORWARD AFRICA LEADERS SYMPOSIUM**



ABOUT THE FORWARD AFRICA LEADERS SYMPOSIUM

The Forward Africa Leaders Symposium (FALS) is a high-level leadership platform dedicated to aligning leaders' perspectives to shape Africa's digital, economic, and governance future.

Positioned as both a Continental Summit in Africa and Global Conversations platform internationally, FALS convenes public and private sector leaders, policymakers, investors, development institutions, innovators, and civil society actors to forge consensus around Africa's most critical transformation priorities.

The Symposium is intentionally designed to:



Shape Policy
Discourse



Strengthen
Continental
Coordination



Advance
Strategic
Partnerships



Amplify African
Leadership
perspectives



Generate Actionable
Frameworks for
Implementation

At its core, FALS serves as a platform where leadership, governance, innovation, and investment intersect.

THE KIGALI CONTINENTAL SUMMIT - 2026

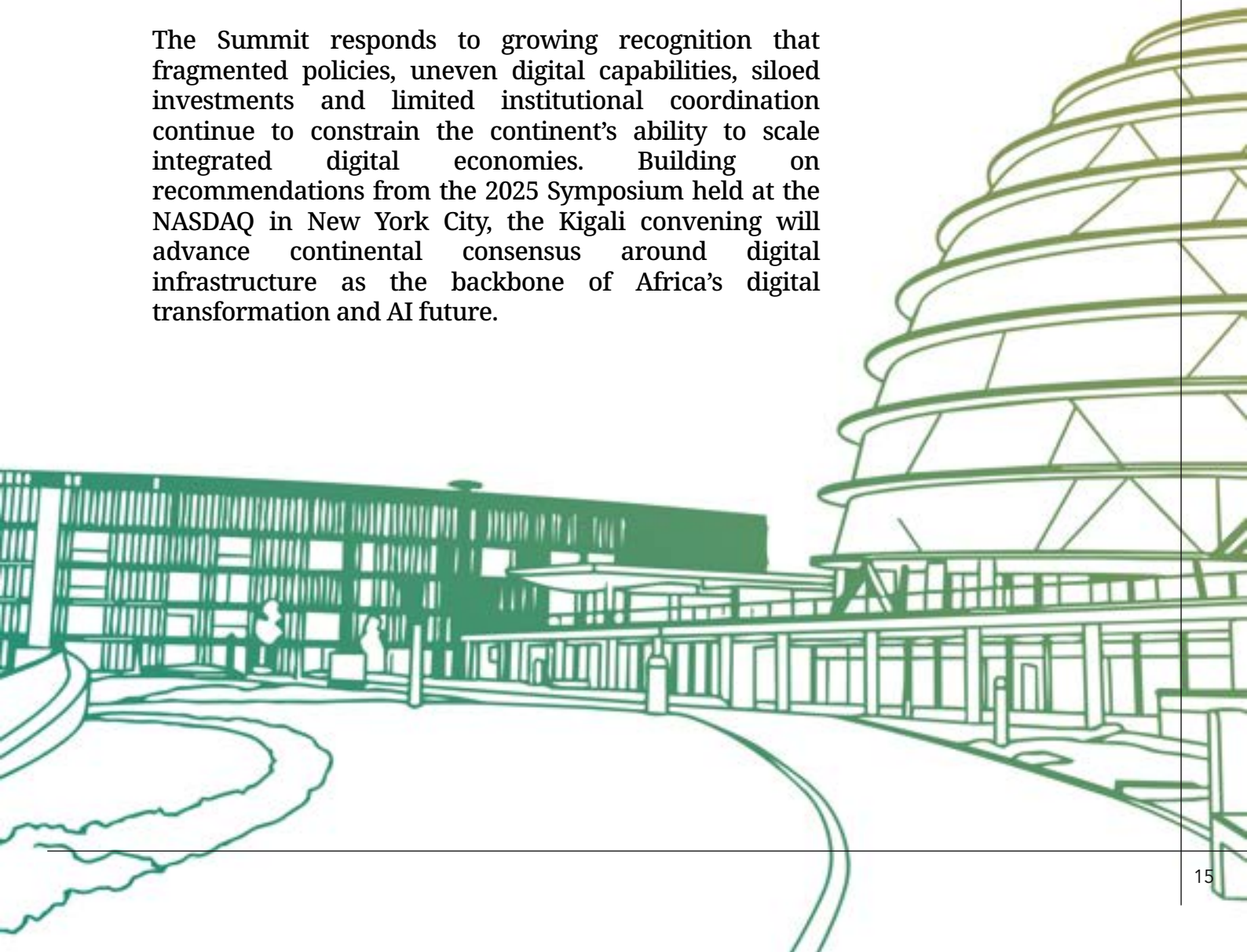
THE KIGALI CONTINENTAL SUMMIT 2026

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

At a defining moment for Africa’s digital transformation journey, the Symposium positions digital infrastructure not simply as a technical issue, but as a strategic foundation for economic sovereignty, AI readiness, regional integration and inclusive development.

As trade, governance, financial systems and public services become increasingly digital and AI-driven, Africa faces a critical imperative: to build interoperable, resilient and inclusive infrastructure systems that reflect African realities, priorities and capabilities.

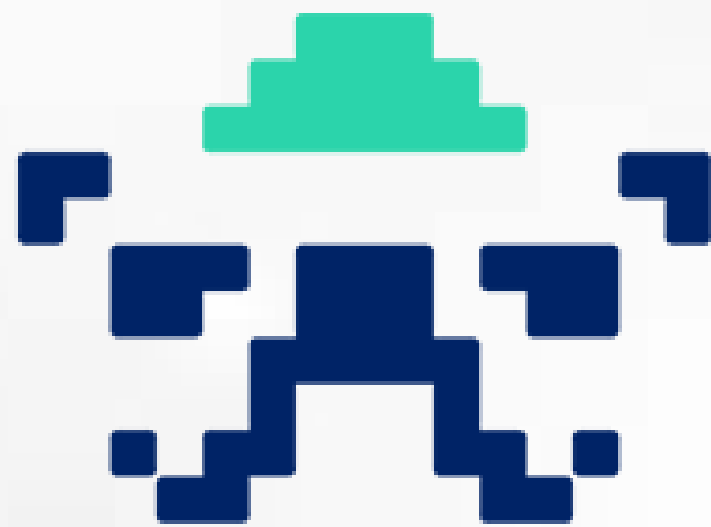
The Summit responds to growing recognition that fragmented policies, uneven digital capabilities, siloed investments and limited institutional coordination continue to constrain the continent’s ability to scale integrated digital economies. Building on recommendations from the 2025 Symposium held at the NASDAQ in New York City, the Kigali convening will advance continental consensus around digital infrastructure as the backbone of Africa’s digital transformation and AI future.



Forward Voices

Leaders shaping Africa's digital, economic and governance future.





sumsub

THE GOLDEN HOUR

Women, Power and the Next Generation Digital Africa

The Golden Hour is the Summit's signature leadership dinner and conversation series.

Structured as an invitation-only Jefferson-style dinner, the evening convenes senior ministers, financiers, founders, technology executives, development leaders, and institutional decision-makers in an intimate conversational setting.

Designed around keynote interventions and curated table discussions, the experience examines the future of women's leadership across Africa's digital economy.

More than a ceremonial gathering, The Golden Hour is designed as a strategic leadership forum where commitments, perspectives, and institutional ambitions are publicly articulated and documented.

THE LEADERS DIALOGUE

A structured plenary for Africa's most consequential leaders.

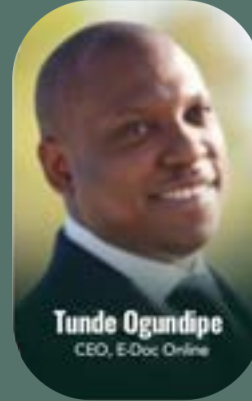
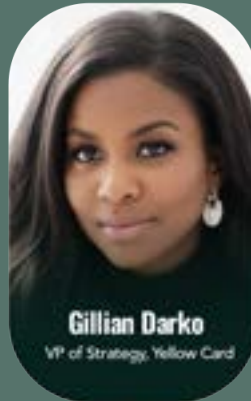
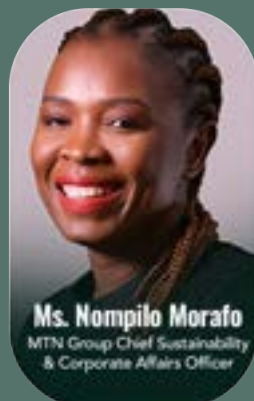
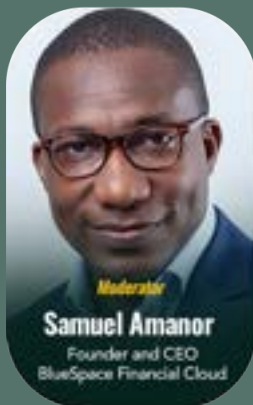
Africa does not lack vision. It does not lack ambition. What it demands — with increasing urgency, is a space where those who carry the weight of consequence sit together, speak plainly, and commit to what must be done. The Leader's Dialogue is that space.

This is not a forum for observation. It is a forum for direction. The Leaders Dialogue brings together ministers, chief executives, institutional principals, and multilateral leaders to align vision and ambition.



Speakers

Leaders Dialogue I



Overview

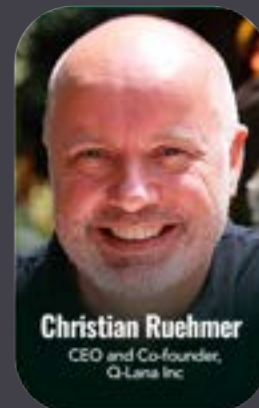
Africa's cross-border financial architecture is operating below its economic potential. Despite facilitating over \$800 billion in annual intra-African trade, payment systems across the continent remain fragmented, costly, and slow undermined by divergent regulatory regimes, limited currency convertibility, 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.

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





Overview

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.**

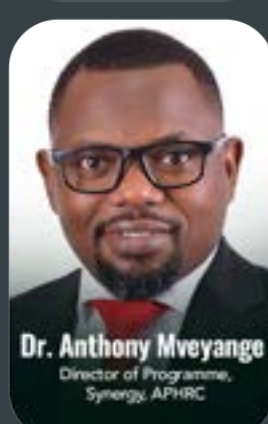
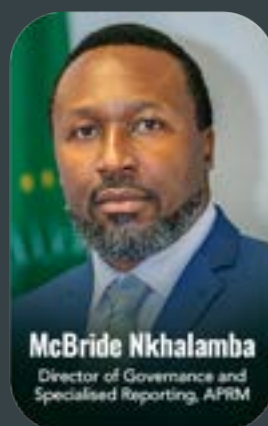


Building Digital States and Operationalising Digital Governance in Africa

*(Measuring Governance and Strengthening
Peer Review in the Digital Age)*

Speakers

Leaders Dialogue II



Overview

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.

Organisers



Strategic Partners





Strengthening Industries Driving Innovation



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Welcome to the

FORWARD AFRICA LEADERS SYMPOSIUM 2026

The Continental Dialogues

Welcome to

KIGALI — THE LAND OF A THOUSAND HILLS

