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Economic Commission for Africa
Eighth African Science, Technology and Innovation Forum
Addis Ababa, 26 and 27 April 2026**Draft programme of work****Sunday, 26 April 2026**8.30–9 a.m. **Registration**9–10 a.m. **Opening session****Moderator:** Representative of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)**Welcoming remarks:**

- Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation, Uganda, and outgoing Chair, Seventh African Science, Technology and Innovation Forum, Monica Musenero Masanza
- Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Lidia Brito
- Commissioner for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, African Union Commission, Gaspard Banyankimbona
- Executive Secretary, ECA, Claver Gatete
- Keynote address by the Minister of Innovation and Technology, Ethiopia, Belete Molla

10–10.30 a.m. Coffee break

10.30 a.m.–noon **High-level panel on artificial intelligence and accelerating progress towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063**

Artificial intelligence presents significant opportunities for African countries as they endeavour to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union. It is a transformative force that, if properly harnessed by African countries, could make enormous contributions to gross domestic product. In Africa, innovation in the field of artificial intelligence is increasingly being shaped by continental policy and coordinated capacity-building, including through the Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy of the African Union.



Panellists will be expected to discuss efforts to scale up investment in such artificial intelligence support infrastructure as data centres and semiconductor fabrication hubs, as well as in talent generation and research facilities to help Africa to unlock the full potential of artificial intelligence.

Moderator: Representative of ECA

Panellists:

- Two ministers for innovation, from Algeria and Ethiopia or Uganda
- Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, African Union Commission, Lerato Dorothy Mataboge
- Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences, UNESCO, Lidia Brito
- Director of Sub-Saharan Africa Government Affairs and Public Policy, Google, Charles Murito
- Director-General and Chief Executive Officer, Smart Africa, Lacina Koné
- Chief, Section for Digital Policies and Digital Transformation, UNESCO, Cédric Wachholz
- Ambassador and Technology Diplomat, African Union, Lavina Ramkissoon
- Lecturer in Computer Science, British University in Egypt, Hesham Auda, Academia
- Head of Science, Technology and Innovation, African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa's Development, Brando Okolo

General discussion

Noon–1.30 p.m.

High-level panel on renewable energy technologies: strategies, policies and pathways for driving innovation and economic development in Africa

Africa is expanding its renewable and sustainable energy capacity. Investment, however, remains incommensurate with the growing demand for electricity. The appetite for sustainable energy technologies is growing, but their supply and their related technical services largely originate from outside the continent.

It is anticipated that panellists will explore ways of building innovative capacity and technical expertise, with a view to localizing sustainable energy industries and capabilities in order to forge a closer connection between energy and economic development in Africa.

Moderator: Representative of ECA

Panellists:

- Minister of Water and Energy, Ethiopia, Habtamu Itefa Geleta
- Chairman of the Board of Directors, Rwanda Atomic Energy Board, Lassina Zerbo

- Acting Head, Namibia Green Hydrogen Programme, Joseph Mukendwa
- Expert from the private sector
- Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, African Union Commission, Lerato Dorothy Mataboge
- Pro-Chancellor, European University of Nigeria, Charles Esimone
- Renewable Energy Chair, UNESCO
- Co-founder and President, Ethiopian Women in Energy Association, Adey Getachew
- Executive Director, African Energy Commission, Rashid Ali Abdallah

General discussion

1.30–2.30 p.m. Lunch break

2.30–4 p.m. **Parallel sessions on Sustainable Development Goals 7, 9, 11 and 17**

Participants in the parallel sessions will be expected to consider the ways in which science, technology and innovation can accelerate progress towards the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 through Sustainable Development Goals 7, 9, 11 and 17, which have been selected as four of the five focus areas for the twelfth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development. The participants will highlight the technologies and innovations that already contribute or have the strong potential to contribute on a broad scale to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals from an African perspective and outline the conditions necessary for their effective deployment.

2.30–4 p.m. **Parallel session A: Goal 7 (affordable and clean energy)**

The transition towards electric mobility is steadily gaining momentum in Africa, albeit from a low base and at various rates of progress across the continent. As a result of the convergence of urbanization, climate commitments, energy diversification and regional industrialization goals, electric vehicles are becoming a strategic opportunity for sustainable development. Despite those encouraging trends, the continent has the lowest rate of electric vehicle adoption in the world. The environment for electric vehicles has not matured, and it is marked by a gradual growth in vehicle uptake, infrastructure deployment, policy development and stakeholder engagement.

The session will serve as an opportunity to share the experience of individual countries and the private sector on the ways in which electric vehicles are driving the acceleration of the energy transition in the transport sector and to consider mechanisms for further accelerating transitions in Africa.

Moderator: Representative of ECA

Panellists:

- Consultant on energy, infrastructure and the future of electric vehicles, Soufian Hachad
- Minister of Transport and Logistics, Ethiopia, Alemu Sime Feyisa
- Cabinet Secretary for Roads and Transport, Kenya, Davis Chirchir
- Director of Cities for Africa and Country Representative for Ethiopia, World Resources Institute, Aklilu Fikresilassie
- Head of Secretariat, African Materials Research Society, Samuel Chigome
- President, African Materials Research Society, Balla Diop Ngom
- Director-General for Road Transport and Safety, South Sudan, Lado T. Tombe
- Head of the Sustainable Mobility Unit, United Nations Environment Programme, Rob de Jong
- Director of Energy and Infrastructure, African Union Commission, Kamugisha Kazaura

General discussion

2.30–4 p.m.

Parallel session B: Goal 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure)

Although Africa has made notable progress in digital and physical connectivity, significant structural barriers remain a challenge in industrialization and innovation. For instance, high-tech manufacturing accounted for only 16.4 per cent of value added in sub-Saharan Africa in 2022. However, the continent's expanding innovation hubs and special economic zones are increasingly attracting high-tech firms in the aerospace, automotive and green sectors, potentially driving research and development and technological acquisition.

The session will be focused on conceptualizing multi-stakeholder mechanisms that could be operated through partnerships among public, private and academic institutions, with a view to aligning research with industrial needs. Such mechanisms could be supported by frameworks that incentivize private sector participation and could leverage the experiences of members of ECA and academic institutions in order to bridge the research and development gap and add manufacturing value.

Moderator: Representative of the African Union, the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries or the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, and a representative of South Africa or ECA.

Panellists:

- Representative of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, as the custodian agency of Goal 9 of the Sustainable Development Goals

- Deputy Director, Institute of Science and Technology Foresight and Statistics, Chinese Academy of Science and Technology for Development, Yuan Like
- Representative of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics
- Chief Executive Officer and Founder, Kubik, Kidus Asfaw
- Representative of the Department of Economic Development, Tourism, Trade Industry, Minerals, African Union Commission
- Head of Programme, Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries, Federica Irene Falomi
- Representative of the academic community
- Innovation Specialist, UNDP Regional Service Centre for Africa, Deborah Naatujuna

General discussion

2.30–4 p.m.

Parallel session C: Goal 11 (sustainable cities and communities)

The focus of the session will be on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Africa is the fastest-urbanizing continent in the world, with significant growth in health, education, transport and digital technology infrastructure, making African cities safer and more competitive and liveable. Nevertheless, significant portions of urban populations in sub-Saharan Africa live in informal settlements with inadequate housing and poor basic services.

The session will include an examination of progress towards the attainment of Goal 11 in Africa, with a primary focus on the challenge of balancing rapid urbanization with constrained structural capacity. It is anticipated that, through an analysis of successful African mechanisms and practices, participants will offer insights into managing explosive urban growth using such strategic pillars as inclusivity, smart mobility and climate resilience. In addition, the session will provide an opportunity for the promotion of urban strategies in which the informal economy is integrated as a major catalyst of sustainable and resilient urban development.

Moderator: Representative of ECA

Panellists:

- Chief Executive Officer, Digital Economy Development Department, Ministry of Innovation and Technology, Ethiopia, Seyoum Mengesha
- Senior Advisor, ITU Regional Office for Africa, Chirstine Sund
- Founder and Chief Solutions Officer, SM Digital South Africa, Sandile Mbatha
- Senior Digital Specialist, World Bank, George Kibala Baur

- Project Manager, Mastercard Foundation, Abel Solomon
- Project Manager for Urban Mobility, World Resources Institute, Iman Abubaker
- Representative of the Office of the Mayor of Addis Ababa
- Urban Innovation and Technology Specialist, United Nations Innovation Technology Accelerator for Cities, Sophie Naue
- Manager of Geospatial Analytics, Artificial Intelligence and Data, ArteFact, Sharad Shingade
- Senior Advocacy Manager, Global System for Mobile Communications Association, Leila Guici
- Representative of UNDP

General discussion

2.30–4 p.m.

Parallel session D: Goal 17 (partnerships for the Goals)

During the session, the uneven progress towards the attainment of Goal 17 in Africa will be reviewed and proposals will be made for a shift from global dependency towards a self-sustaining innovation environment. The shift will be achieved by operationalizing collaborative governance among Governments, industry and academic institutions, with a view to bridging the research and development deficit and utilizing science diplomacy for transboundary resource management, following the example of the Southern African Development Community. The discussion will be focused on the alignment of national science, technology and innovation policies with the protocols to the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area on digital trade and intellectual property rights, as part of efforts to create a unified framework for accelerating technology transfer, ensuring universal water security and driving sustainable industrialization across the continent. Participants will be expected to assess and highlight notable achievements and outcomes, identifying future opportunities for strengthening existing partnerships.

Moderator: Representative of the African Union, the African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa's Development, UNESCO or ECA

Panellists:

- Group Executive, Advanced Chemistry and Life Sciences, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, Rachel Chikwamba
- Director, African Open Science Platform, Tshiamo Motshegwa
- Counsellor for Science and Technology, Mission of China to the African Union, He Kaihui

- Deputy Director-General for International Cooperation and Resources, Department of Science, Technology and Innovation, South Africa, Daan du Toit
- Director of Science, Technology and Innovation Policy, African Academy of Sciences, Nkem Khumbah
- Programme Manager, International Research and Training Center for Science and Technology Strategy, Chinese Academy of Science and Technology for Development, Tian Nianping
- Senior Researcher and Geomatic Scientist, and Director of the Open Science Initiative, Research Institute for Development, Jean-Christophe Desconnets

General discussion

4–4.30 p.m. Coffee break

Special sessions

4.30–6 p.m. **Special session A: Goal 6 (clean water and sanitation)**

There is a critical gap in water security in Africa, despite the continent's vast natural water reserves. To close the gap, efforts to innovate and enhance technical capacity must be intensified.

During the session, panellists will share best practices and address the systemic challenges faced by African countries, including relating to the establishment of financial mechanisms for innovation and the integration of robust policy and management systems that are necessary for achieving universal access to clean water and sanitation.

Moderator: Director, Division of Water Sciences and Secretary of the Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme, UNESCO, Abou Amani

Panellists:

- Expert from the private sector
- Representative of the Director, Pan African University Institute for Water and Energy Sciences (including Climate Change) African Union, Abdellatif Zerga
- Research Associate, Chemistry Department, Nelson Mandela University, and Chief Executive Officer, SabiNano, Sabelo Mhlanga
- Director-General, Regional Centre for Integrated River Basin Management, National Water Resources Institute, Kaduna, Nigeria, Abduljalal Danbaba
- Young person
- Representative of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 6 water capacity development initiative President, African Ministerial Council on Water, Cheikh Tidiane Dieye

- Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment, African Union Commission, Moses Vilakati
- Director and Programme Manager, Southern African Network of Water Centres of Excellence, Nico Elema
- Head of Partnerships and Business Development, Water Research Commission, South Africa, Mamohloding Tlhagale
- Director, ROC Water Technologies, Johannes Maree
- Head of Secretariat, African Materials Research Society, Samuel Chigome

General discussion

Monday, 27 April 2026

9–10.30 a.m. **Consolidated feedback and main takeaways from the parallel sessions on Goals 7, 9, 11 and 17 and the special session on Goal 6**

Moderator: to be determined

General discussion

10.30–11a.m. Coffee break

11 a.m.–noon **Special Session B: Partnership in action: African Union-European Union high-level policy dialogue on science, technology and innovation**

The African Union-European Union high-level policy dialogue on science, technology and innovation provides a strategic framework for cooperation in the area of long-term research and innovation between Africa and Europe. Its purpose is to serve as a guide for shared priorities in four main areas: public health, the green transition, innovation and technology, and capacities for science. Under partnerships aligned with the policy dialogue and the African Union-European Union innovation agenda, progress has been made on collaborative health research, food and nutrition security, climate and sustainable energy, and capacity-building initiatives. The Africa Initiatives led by Horizon Europe continue to expand support for joint research and innovation activities in accordance with those priorities.

During the session, participants will assess results, highlight notable achievements and identify future opportunities for strengthening cooperation between the African Union and the European Union in science, technology and innovation to support the attainment of Goal 17.

Moderator: Head, Science, Technology and Space Division, African Union Commission, Mahaman Bachir Saley

Minister Counsellor for Science, Technology and Innovation, Delegation of the European Union to the African Union, Laurent Bochereau

Panellists:

- Director, Science, Technology and Implementation, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Algeria, Mokhtar Sellami
- Deputy Director General, Armauer Hansen Research Institute, Alemseged Abdissa
- Regional Director, Eastern and Southern Africa, French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development, Sylvie Lewicki
- Vice-President of International Cooperation, Spanish National Research Council, Isabel Díaz

General discussion

Noon–1 p.m.

Special session C: Partnership in action: building continental platforms for innovation

ECA plays a crucial role in supporting its members in harnessing science, technology and innovation to drive digital transformation and advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. It also helps its members to foster innovation, including through the Origin Research and Innovation Labs, in which academic patents are commercialized, and the Alliance for Entrepreneurial Universities in Africa, which was established to reform higher education, with a view to cultivating entrepreneurs and supporting the creation of 1 million startups. Participants in the session will share experiences and best practices regarding initiatives to build continental innovation platforms.

Moderator: Representative of ECA

Panellists:

- Secretary, Lead and Focal Point, Origin Research and Innovation Labs Physical Hub of East Africa, Paul Ndirangu Kioni
- Executive Director and Research Director, Soar Research Foundation, and Chair, African Biomedical Engineering Consortium, Daniel Atwine
- Chief Executive Officer, Universities Fund Kenya, and Chair, Alliance for Entrepreneurial Universities in Africa, Geoffrey Monari
- Programme Coordinator, Long-Term Joint European Union-African Union Research and Innovation Partnership on Renewable Energy, and Project Manager, LGI Sustainable Innovation, Léonard Lévêque
- Co-founder, Alliance for Research, Innovation and Education for Africa, Yonas Gizaw

General discussion

1–2 p.m.

Lunch break

2–3 p.m.

Special session D: Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2034

The Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2034 is based on six strategic priorities: accelerating sustainable and inclusive industrialization; building human capital, infrastructure and skills; building African capabilities in frontier and emerging technologies; strengthening science diplomacy and partnerships; private sector engagement; and addressing youth and gender inequalities.

During the session, participants will identify bold and innovative actions needed to achieve continental and global development goals.

Moderator: Representative of the African Union, UNESCO or ECA

Panellists:

- Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation, Uganda, and outgoing Chair, Seventh African Science, Technology and Innovation Forum, Monica Musenero Masanza
- Minister of Innovation and Technology, Ethiopia, Bayissa Bedada
- Lecturer, Graduate School of Technology Management, University of Pretoria, John Mugabe
- Chairperson, Science Granting Councils Initiative Alliance, and Director, Research, Statistics and Information Management, Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology, Ghana, Cephas Adjei Mensah
- Head of Science, Technology and Innovation, African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa's Development, Brando Okolo
- Director of African Multilateral Cooperation, Department of Science, Technology and Innovation, South Africa, Mandry Ntshani
- Head of the Science Unit, UNESCO Regional Office for Southern Africa, Martiale Zebaze Kana
- Professor of Physics, University of Johannesburg, Simon Henry Connell
- Team Lead, Elevate Trust, Sandra Shoko

General discussion

3–4 p.m.

Special session E: Frontier technology for sustainable development

Moderator: Representative of ECA, the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries, the African Materials Research Society or UNESCO

Panellists:

- Representative of ECA
- Representative of Google
- Representative of the Global System for Mobile Communications Association
- Data Policy Advisor, German Agency for International Cooperation, David Karuda
- Director of Advocacy and Capacity Development, AfricaNenda Foundation, Jacqueline Jumah
- President, South African Nanotechnology Initiative, Tshwane University of Technology, Katlego Makgopa
- Head of Secretariat, African Materials Research Society, Samuel Chigome
- Representative of Giga

General discussion

4–4.30 p.m. Coffee break

4.30–5 p.m. **Closing session**

Closing remarks:

- Director, UNESCO Liaison Office in Addis Ababa, and UNESCO Representative to Ethiopia, Rita Bissoonauth
 - Representative of ECA
 - Representative of the African Union Commission
 - Minister of Innovation and Technology, Ethiopia, Belete Molla
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