
CONCEPT NOTE

ADIF 2026: Best Practices and Innovative Solutions for Job Creation in Africa



Best Practices and Innovative Solutions for Job Creation in Africa

11-12 JUNE 2026
UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE CENTER | ADDIS ABABA

#ADIF2026





Background and Rationale

Africa's development ecosystem continues to face a persistent implementation gap, the distance between applied research, policy design, and actual delivery. While evidence, diagnostics, and best-practice models are abundant, they rarely translate into scalable, context-tested implementation pathways. This results in fragmented initiatives and missed opportunities for jobs, productivity, and inclusive transformation.

The Africa Development Impact Forum (ADIF), led by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), responds directly to this challenge. ADIF is positioned as ECA's flagship action platform, integrated into ECA's delivery architecture and complementary to the Conference of Ministers (COM), Africa Business Forum (ABF), and African Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD). While these platforms focus on policy dialogue, financing, or Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) review, ADIF uniquely focuses on implementation pathways, offering a structured, multi-stage process that converts evidence into action that is measurable.

(Technical details on the background mapping and ECA's new delivery architecture format and review criteria moved to Annex .1)

Vision, Mission and Objectives

ADIF is a high-level convening platform designed to support policy-makers, policy implementers and decision makers in effective policy and strategy implementation by fostering collaboration, knowledge exchange, peer-learning, and actions toward effective policy implementation to address Africa's most pressing socio-economic challenges. The Forum seeks to bridge the implementation gap between research knowledge and action with real-world impact by engaging and convening a diverse group of stakeholders from the public and private sector.

Vision

To close the gap between design and policy implementation and impact through collaboration, accountability, and action-oriented engagement.

Mission

An Africa where evidence-based policies translate into impactful implementation outcomes that lead to increased jobs, livelihoods of economic transformation and sustainable development.

► Core Objectives

- Generate action-oriented solutions for Africa aligned with Agenda 2063, the SDGs and the Pact for the Future.
- Connect policymakers, implementers, private sector actors, think tanks, youth networks, and development partners through a practical platform for implementation.
- Showcase real implementation-ready models, research and best practice, and replicate what works.
- Support countries and partners in piloting and scaling solutions with technical follow-up.

► Framework and Value Proposition

ADIF is anchored in a **four-pillar framework** derived from common drivers of policy-implementation failure that transforms the common policy-implementation failures into opportunities for impact, guiding the structure and sequencing of the Forum engagement model:

- **Weak Implementation Planning due to overly optimistic expectations** → Apply an implementation-preparation lens from the outset through evidence of stock-taking and refine ideas and solutions through the Policy Strategy Hackathon.
- **Dispersed Governance & Weak Accountability** → Strengthen prioritization and delivery pathways via the Implementation Clock and Accountability Dashboard.

- **Policy & Strategy Silos** → Promote whole-of-government, multi-stakeholder and multi-sector collaboration through simulation roundtables and thematic solution sessions.
- **Political Economy & Contextual Gaps** → Foster adaptive learning and continuity through Communities of Practice.

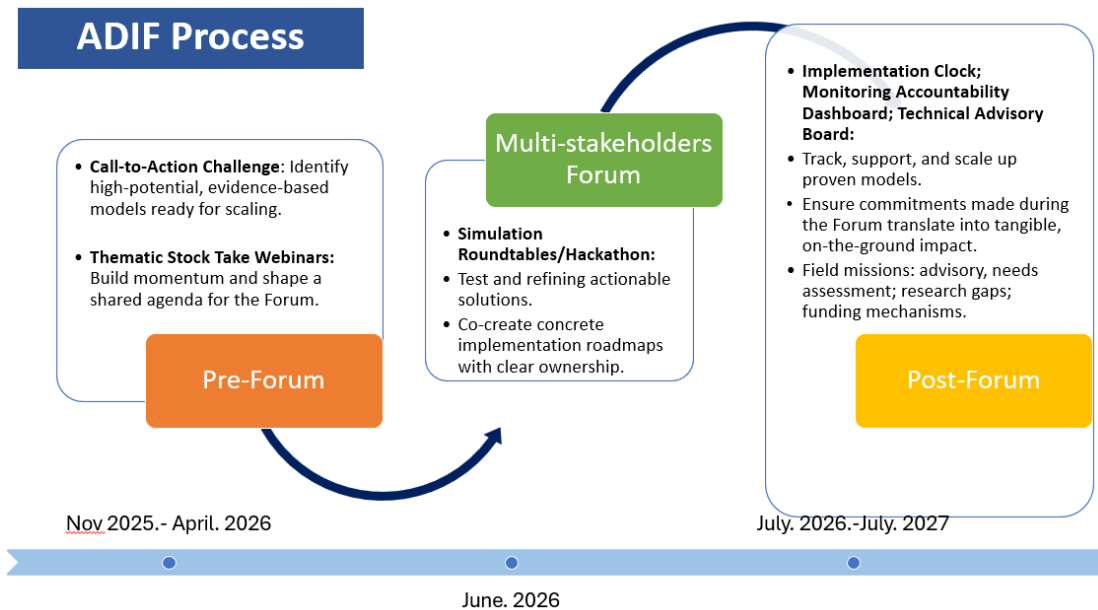
(Technical details on the Africa Development Impact Forum Framework format and review criteria moved to Annex 2)

▶ **What Sets the Forum Apart**

- **Action-Oriented Design:** Focused not only on dialogue but on driving tangible and measurable results through collaborative, outcome-based activities.
- **Collaborative:** Co-create solutions through cross-sector partnerships and multi-stakeholder dialogue.
- **Inclusive & Participatory Stakeholder Approach:** Leveraging diverse voices- from the public sector and the private sector, academia, youth, and development partners- to co-create solutions rooted in real-world needs.

▶ **Three-Stage Engagement Model**

The three-stage-engagement model is a uniquely and innovatively structured process that maintains engagement before and beyond the event, ensures momentum, continuity, deep stakeholder engagement and accountability. The model facilitates incremental and impactful engagement with the following stages:



Source: ADIF Team

1 Stage 1 Pre-Forum: Call to Action (CTA) Challenge and Thematic Stock-Take Series

Goal: Identify high-potential, evidence-based models and best practices ready for scaling and Build momentum, gather evidence that map challenges and opportunities and shape a shared agenda for the Forum.

- **Call-to-Action Challenge:** Open submissions of scalable ideas, evidence, models, or policy challenges. Winners join the Forum Hackathon.
- **Thematic Stock-Take Webinars:** A five-month virtual series showcasing evidence, mapping barriers, and surface implementation-ready solutions.

2 Stage 2: Forum – Hackathon, Simulation Roundtable & Thematic Solution Sessions

Goal: Co-create clear, actionable implementation pathways with clear ownership.

- **Policy & Strategy Hackathon:** Finalists refine proposals with experts for potential piloting.
- **Simulation Roundtables:** Stakeholders test delivery pathways: who does what, by when, with what resources.
- **Thematic Solution Clinics:** Dynamic, action-oriented, problem-solving sessions that bring together diverse stakeholders to unpack the practical “how” of advancing job creation solutions. Building directly on the Pre-Forum Stock-Take Webinars, they translate evidence and insights into interactive, solutions-focused dialogue and actionable next steps.

The Forum will be co-led by a coalition of stakeholders from across Africa, strengthening continental ownership and political traction.

Stage 3: Post-Forum – Implementation Clock & Communities of Practice

Goal: Ensure Forum commitments materialize into measurable, on-the-ground impact.

- 3 • **Implementation Clock:** Tracks milestones for selected solutions with quarterly check-ins.
- **Monitoring & Accountability Dashboard:** Public tracking of commitments.
- **Communities of Practice:** Year-long knowledge sharing and troubleshooting among Member States and partners.

Long-term structure:

ADIF will operate as a multi-year partnership platform, enabling continuity, institutional learning, and scaling of solutions beyond each annual edition.

(Extended descriptions of call-to-action challenge, thematic stock-take series, simulation roundtables, hackathons, implementation clock and formats moved to Annex 3.)

Sponsorship and Partnership Model

ADIF adopts a co-creation model, where sponsors are technical and strategic partners, not only funders. Sponsors play a big role in shaping, piloting, and monitoring solutions. Conceived as a multi-stakeholder platform, the partnership moves beyond funding a meeting to investing in a results-driven ecosystem that has long-term transformational impact. Here's how:

- **Accelerate Tangible Change:** Move from theory to practice by scaling implementation models that work.
- **Shape Africa's Development Trajectory:** Be at the forefront of a continental shift towards collaborative, evidence-based action.
- **Access a Powerful Network:** Connect with a curated group of African policymakers, private sector leaders, and think tanks driving change.
- **Maximize Impact & Returns of Investment (ROI):** Contribute to a living portfolio of proven policy models that can be replicated across the continent, ensuring your investment delivers multiplied returns.

Role of Knowledge Partners (Think Tanks)

Selected Think Tanks will serve as a strategic evidence partner, supporting:

- thematic design
- analytical contributions to the Stock-Take Series
- facilitation of implementation learning
- advisory support across the ADIF cycle

Pre-Forum Engagement:

- Shaping the Call-to-Action Challenge, helping identify priority themes, and shortlisting innovative solutions for the Forum.
- Supporting and co-hosting Thematic Stock-Take Webinars that showcase knowledge and practical innovations aligned with their areas of expertise.
- Providing technical input, mentorship, or resources to selected innovators or institutions participating in the Call-to-Action process.

During the Forum:

- Serving as facilitators, panelists, or judges in the Policy & Strategy Hackathon and Simulation Roundtables and Thematic Solution Clinics, where solutions are refined into actionable initiatives.
- Showcasing their own institution initiatives, insights, and innovations through partner-branded sessions or exhibits, reinforcing the spirit of collaboration and learning.

Post-Forum Engagement:

- Joining the ECA-led Technical Advisory Committee and Community of Practice to monitor and advise on the progress of selected pilot initiatives emerging from the Forum.
- Providing ongoing technical or financial support to scale feasible policy solutions and community-driven interventions.

2026 Forum: The First Step Toward Lasting Change

Theme: Best Practices and Innovative Solutions for Job Creation in Africa

Date: 11th and 12th June 2026

Africa must create 15 million jobs annually to meet rising youth demand. Despite pockets of economic dynamism, job creation remains limited due to low productivity sectors, weak structural transformation, and skills mismatches.

Yet opportunities exist in agriculture, manufacturing, services, digital economy, critical minerals value chains, green jobs, creative industries, and Micro-Small-and-Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) growth. Many successful models exist but are not replicated or scaled due to implementation challenges.

(The detailed sectoral literature review, statistics, and references are moved to Annex 4.)

2026 objectives

- Lead interactive sessions on job creation aligned with the Pact for the Future.
- Share applied research and best practices to address decent job creation challenges.
- Formulate actionable and scalable solutions.
- Strengthen public–private collaboration for employment and economic transformation.

Stakeholders

ADIF is designed as a cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder forum. Target participants include:

- **Target Stakeholder:** Policymakers and Decision Makers: Heads of state, ministers and directors of finance, labor, youth, and economic planning;

- **Think Tanks and Academicians:** African Think Tanks, Global Think Tanks, Policy Institutes, Universities and development researchers;
- **African Youth Networks:** Student unions, innovation hubs, youth leaders, and social enterprises;
- **Private Sector Leaders:** MSMEs, large corporations, chambers of commerce, and investors;
- **Regional, Multilateral & Development Partners:** International Labor Organization (ILO), World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), AUC; African Development Bank (AfDB); United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP); United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA),
- **Philanthropic & Impact Funders:** Mastercard Foundation, Tony Elumelu Foundation, Mo Ibrahim Fellowship, Open Society Foundations, Visa Foundation, Bloomberg Philanthropies; Hewlett Foundation, Gates Foundation;
- **Global Knowledge Institutions:** Brookings Institution, Harvard University, Oxford University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), etc.
- **African Regional Economic Communities (RECs):** Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Union du Maghreb Arab (UMA), Community of Sahel–Saharan States (CEN-SAD), East African Community (EAC), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD);
- **United Nations & Africa Union Youth Envoys**

Expected Outcomes

ADIF aims to deliver the following:

- Enhanced multi-stakeholder coordination to design, implement, and monitor evidence-based, innovative, and coherent job creation policies aligned with Agenda 2063 and the SDGs.
- Established partnerships and mobilized investments for scalable, multi-stakeholder initiatives - including public-private collaborations - supporting youth employment in MSMEs and high-growth sectors.
- Co-created implementation-ready models and research to be shared for adoption by pilot member-states

Dates and venue

11th and 12th June 2026. ECA Headquarters, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Contacts

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Annex

Annex 1: Mapping of Existing African Fora/ Conferences and ECA's new delivery architecture

Over the past few decades, Africa has witnessed significant growth in homegrown research and evidence generation, driven by an expanding network of research institutions, think tanks, and leading experts. In the socio-economic sphere, this includes renowned institutions such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), the Africa Think Tank Summit by the Africa Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), the African Center for Economic Transformation (ACET), and the African Policy Research Institute (APRI), among others.

Alongside this progress, there has been a notable rise in African-led policy and business forums, which provide vital platforms for knowledge exchange, dialogue, and collaboration among diverse stakeholders. Figure 2 below presents a mapping assessment of existing African-led policy and business forums for knowledge exchange, ideas sharing and networking on socio-economic challenges and opportunities in Africa. This mapping assessment enables us to spot the gaps and provide a proposition for how the Africa Development Impact Forum (ADIF) can add value.

Figure 2: Lessons from Current African Economic Forums and Platforms



Source: ADIF Team

The mapping divides the various platforms and forums held into four sub-objectives, including:

- a. Platforms that convene high delegation and Head of States to discuss key economic and political issues. These include the African Union (AU) Summit and ECA Conference of Ministers, both held annually.
- b. Platforms that disseminate current research and evidence on economic and social development issues. These include the African Economic Conference, ACET Africa Transformation Forum, Africa Macroeconomy Day (AMD) held annually, and the AERC Biannual Plenary.
- c. Platforms that raise awareness on pending issues through Civil society engagement and bringing to forefront of government and policymakers/change makers. These include the AU Specialized Technical Committee on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment, the AfDB Civil Society Forum, AU African Economic Platform and the African Social Forum (ASF).

d. Platforms that engage with the private sector actors and promote knowledge exchange between the private sector, the public sector and financiers. These include the Africa Business Forum, Africa Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Forum, The CEO Roundtable, AU Private Sector Forum, and AfDB Annual Meetings.

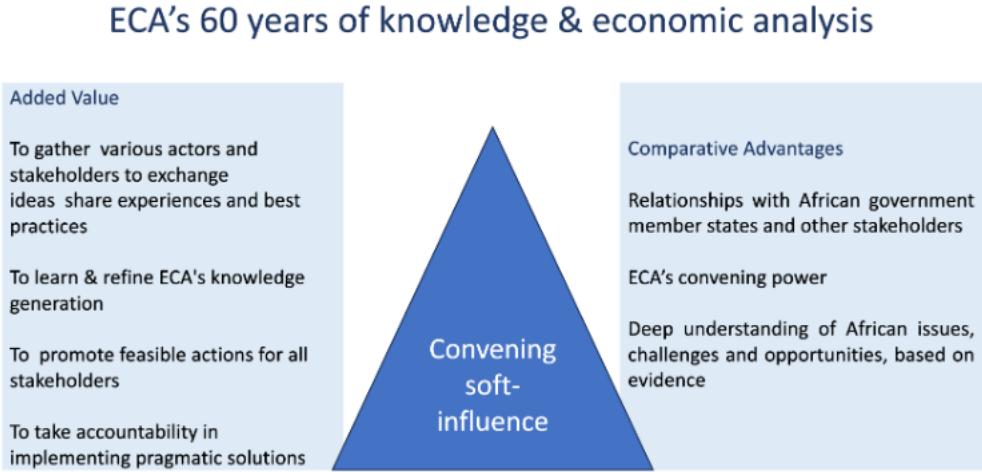
Despite the growth of African-driven research, policy platforms and policy instruments, implementation of policies and strategies in Africa remains inadequate. There is a disconnect between innovative ideas and solutions based on applied research and evidence, and the implementation and the outcomes of policies. Many of the best ideas, evidence, and best practices remain contextually untested on the continent, and some policy recommendations provided to policymakers have been recycled. Cutting-edge research lacks platforms where the respective impact and implementation challenges can be evaluated.

ADIF is designed to fill the gap between applied research and policy implementation in Africa. It uses the multi-stakeholder stakeholder approach to evaluate failures and success of policy implementations and ensure that applied research reflects real life best practices, policy solutions, and development models. ECA is in the best place to organize and run ADIF because the institution possesses 60 years of ground research on Africa's socioeconomic issues and carries the influential power to convene multiple stakeholders to engage, share and co-create solutions.

Why is ECA establishing the new regional forum?

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) is uniquely positioned to organize and lead the Africa Development Impact Forum (ADIF). With over 60 years of in-depth research and engagement on Africa's socio-economic development, ECA combines substantive expertise with the institutional power to convene a diverse range of stakeholders to engage, share insights, and co-create actionable solutions.

Figure 3: ECA's Comparative Advantage and Added Value



Source: ADIF Team

Through its Think Tank function, ECA is strengthening its role as the go-to institution for policy advice, evidence-based analysis, and implementation support. Over the years, ECA has built extensive knowledge on Africa’s structural transformation and developed strong working relationships with African governments, regional bodies, private sector actors, and development partners.

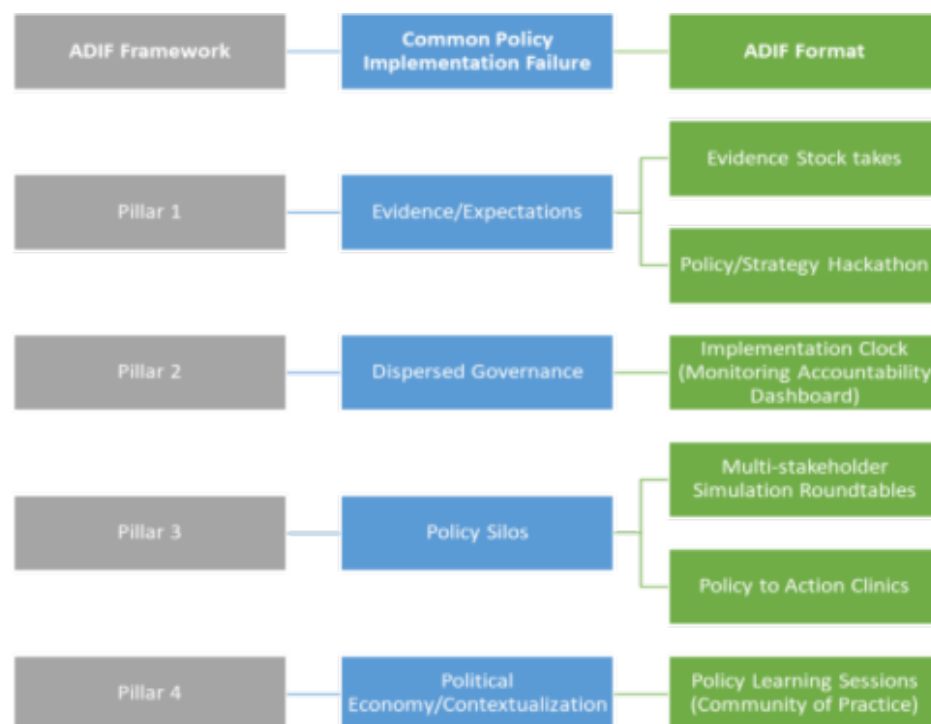
This comparative advantage—grounded in ECA's convening power, soft influence, and deep contextual understanding of Africa’s challenges and opportunities—positions the Commission as a natural host for ADIF.

ECA's added value lies in its ability to bring together diverse actors across Africa’s development ecosystem to exchange ideas, share experiences, and foster accountability in implementing practical and evidence-based solutions. Through ADIF, ECA will not only consolidate its knowledge generation and advisory function but also enable stakeholders to move from dialogue to action, promoting feasible, coordinated, and high-impact initiatives across the continent.

Annex 2: Africa Development Impact Forum Framework

Peckham et al. AI (2019)¹ provide a review of the policy implementation failures literature and show that most policy implementation failures are due to four factors: (1) weak implementation planning due to overly optimistic expectations; (2) dispersed governance due to weak accountability; (3) policy and strategy silos, or lack of collaboration and (4) political economy disruptions. Building from the policy implementation failure literature, the Africa Development Impact Forum presents the four-pillar framework that transforms the common policy-implementation failures into opportunities for impact, guiding the structure and sequencing of the Forum engagement model.

Figure 1: Africa Development Impact Forum Framework



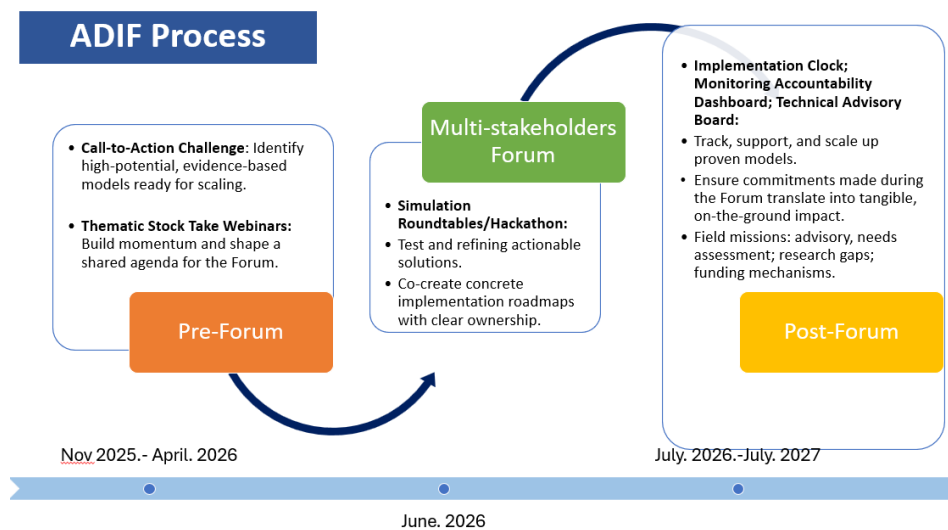
Source: ADIF Team

The Africa Development Impact Forum Framework is a four-pillar framework that transforms the common policy implementation of failures into a unique and innovative three stage engagement model. The model looks at the four challenges to offer solutions in the format of engagement models to guide the Forum and participants in utilizing evidence and best practices to co-create impactful solutions to policy and strategy implementation.

- **Pillar 1:** Weak implementation planning due to overly optimistic expectations -> Apply an implementation preparation lens at the beginning of the process with "Evidence Stock-take" discussions and "Policy/strategy Hackathons".
- **Pillar 2:** Dispersed governance due to weak accountability -> strengthen prioritization, clarify roles monitoring and delivery pathways by introducing the "Implementation Clock" and "Monitoring and Accountability Dashboard".
- **Pillar 3:** Policy and strategy silos -> to remove situations where policies and strategies are not inclusive or representative, create execution coalitions such as "Multi-stakeholder Simulation Roundtables" and "Policy to Action Clinics".
- **Pillar 4:** Political Economy and Contextualization -> to reduce political cycle disruptions or lack of policy and strategy contextualization, create "Communities of Practice" for Policy Learning Sessions to embed continuous learning, review and adaptation systems to sustain momentum.

Annex 3: Three Stage Engagement Model

The three-stage-engagement model is a uniquely and innovatively structured process that maintains engagement before and beyond the event, ensures momentum, continuity, deep stakeholder engagement and accountability. The model facilitates incremental and impactful engagement with the following stages:



Pre-Forum: Call to Action (CTA) Challenge and Thematic Stock-Take Series

Goal: Identify high-potential, evidence-based models and best practices ready for scaling and Build momentum, gather evidence that map challenges and opportunities and shape a shared agenda for the Forum.

The Call-to-Action Challenge is the first part of the pre-Forum engagement, and it is an open call to individuals, institutions, and networks to submit innovative ideas, policy models, research insights, or development challenges. The goal is to crowdsource Africa's most innovative ideas and proven solutions, and identify high-potential, evidence-based models and best practices ready for scaling.

Upon clear guidelines, top respondents get the opportunity to win a prize for innovative submissions and are invited to join the “Policy and Strategy Hackathon” to debate action-oriented solutions and ideas. ECA’s role at this engagement stage is to achieve urgency towards action from participants and ensure widespread dissemination of the Forum- with the aim of achieving well-represented and inclusive participation of all stakeholders.

Thematic Stock-Take Webinars Series is pre-Forum Ecosystem for evidence showcasing, knowledge exchange and agenda shaping, spaced into a six-month regular virtual dialogue on insights, experiences and innovative ideas from different stakeholders across sectors and regions. The livestreamed conversations will map what is working, diagnose persistent barriers, and identify implementation-ready solutions. The Stock take Series will ensure that by the time stakeholders meet in person, the agenda is shaped by diverse voices and grounded in real-world realities.

In Forum: Policy Hackathon, Simulation Roundtables and Policy to Action Clinics

Goal: Co-create clear, actionable implementation pathways with clear ownership.

The Forum is a curated participatory and dynamic “no-talk-shop” process where interdisciplinary teams- policymakers, entrepreneurs, and experts pressure-test and refine ideas, solutions and strategies in real-time. These include “Policy & Strategy Hackathon”; “Thematic Solution Clinics” and “Simulation Roundtables”.

The Policy & Strategy Hackathon will be the opportunity for respondents from the selected Call-to-Action Challenge submissions to debate their proposals for a prize and opportunity to be absorbed into a real-life policy and strategy.

The Simulation Roundtables invite representatives of different stakeholders to debate on governance and prioritization on a specific best practice case study, including looking at questions on who does what, by when and with what resources. This session is to help simulate how to practically implement the policy/strategy proposed during the Hackathon in real life scenarios.

The Thematic Solution Clinics are live, participatory problem-solving environments, using a combination of facilitated dialogue, rapid-response analysis, and multi-stakeholder engagement (policymakers, technical experts, private sector actors, youth innovators, financiers and development partners) to interrogate the practical "how" of advancing job creation solutions within each thematic area. They are a natural continuation of the Pre-Forum Thematic Stock-Take Webinar Series, translating the analytical insights, diagnostic findings, and emerging priorities identified during the webinars into structured, interactive, and solutions-oriented dialogues.

The Forum also includes: Thematic Sessions, to discuss relevant topical issues, including contextual issues and the political economy; TED Talks, and a Knowledge Fair, all leading to the design of effective, practical, and result-oriented policies and solutions for job creation on the continent.

ECA's role at this engagement stage is to create the right ecosystem and formats to convene stakeholders through dialogue and activities- with expected outcomes to be policy and strategy solutions, recommendations, ideas and agreed action plans to take forward to the implementation clock.

Post-Forum: Implementation Clock, Monitoring Accountability Dashboard and Communities of Practice

Goal: Ensure Forum commitments materialize into measurable, on-the-ground impact.

The Implementation Clock is a structured transparency mechanism that uses a physical clock process to publish milestones online. This is operationalized with quarterly check-ins to support pilot testing of selected solutions/policies/strategies, mid-term tracking, scaling opportunities and course correction, regional peer-learning exchanges and annual ADIF Impact Review. The implementation clock is supported through a Technical Advisory Board and tracks the implementation and scaling of selected policies and solutions through the Monitoring Accountability Dashboard.

The Communities of Practice is also an additional mechanism virtually held for a yearlong period to facilitate sharing of lessons from implementation. Sponsors and Partners will be invited to participate in the Technical Advisory Board and Communities of Practice to support pilot projects, scaling, monitoring and championing visibility.

ECA's role at this engagement stage is to structure the governance of the Technical Advisory Board, set up the launch of the Implementation Clock, the Monitoring Accountability Dashboard, the Community of Practice and coordinate stakeholders and partnerships to reach desired goals and outcomes.

The forum focuses on a specific thematic issue each year, covering macroeconomic and socio-economic development issues confronting Africa and exploring solutions to accelerate inclusive growth and sustainable development on the continent. Thematic issues in future years will be formed to link with themes in subsequent years to maintain continuity of dialogue and monitoring of actions and implementation. For example, two thematic areas that could be of sequence are African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and Africa's Industrialization.

Annex 4: 2026 Africa Development Impact Forum

The forum focuses on a specific thematic issue each year, covering macroeconomic and socio-economic development issues confronting Africa and exploring solutions to accelerate inclusive growth and sustainable development on the continent. Thematic issues in future years will be formed to link with themes in subsequent years to maintain continuity of dialogue and monitoring of actions and implementation. For example, two thematic areas that could be of sequence are AfCFTA and Africa's Industrialization.

The 2026 Africa Development Impact Forum will be the inaugural edition, with a theme centered on "Best Practices and Innovative Solutions for Job Creation in Africa". This theme responds to one of the continent's most pressing development priorities. The ultimate objective of ADIF 2026 is to catalyze systemic change that generates meaningful jobs and economic opportunities across Africa. Africa needs to create over 15 million jobs annually to meet the youth's employment demand. ADIF directly addresses this challenge by:

- Showcasing scalable models for job creation from across sectors and regions;
- Encouraging evidence-based policy design informed by applied research on jobs;
- Building consensus around replicable and fundable solutions and best practices.

The full literature review of the context behind ADIF 2026 theme can be found in events outcome documents.