

Accelerating AfCFTA: Uniting Africa for Progress and Prosperity

On May 24th, 2023, distinguished practitioners, academics, and enthusiastic participants gathered both in person and online to commemorate Africa Day through a hybrid intergenerational discussion. The focus of the event was to explore how the [African Continental Free Trade Area \(AfCFTA\)](#) could be accelerated in the context of Pan Africanism, acting as a solid foundation for Africa's progress while addressing current challenges. This momentous occasion took place within the vibrant city of Johannesburg, where the partners hosted a diverse range of attendees from various networks and organizations.

The purpose of the gathering was to incorporate the voices of the youth into the AfCFTA initiative, ensuring that the aspirations and perspectives of Africa's next generation were considered.

Key participants representing the [Wits Business School community](#), [APN network](#), [SAYOF network](#), [The Centre on African Philanthropy and Social Investment \(CAPSI\)](#), [MINDS](#) scholars and alumni, [AU](#) network, [African Youth Network Movement](#) members, broader [Wits University](#) community, and students from selected universities across Africa affiliated with MINDS joined physically and virtually. This inclusive approach fostered a dynamic exchange of ideas and insights from individuals with expertise in Pan Africanism and African trade.

The event commenced with captivating performances by talented artists, setting the stage for an engaging and thought-provoking discussion led by the AfCFTA. The central topic of this discussion revolved around the essence of the AfCFTA platform, and the essential steps needed to establish a unified One-Africa Market. Additionally, the participants were provided with valuable background information on the regional progress towards a Pan African One Africa Market, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the ongoing efforts.

The subsequent panel discussions showcased the active involvement of philanthropists working towards the advancement of Africa.

Panel 1; featured esteemed individuals who have made significant contributions to the continent's development. Silva Otoko, AU Secretary Chief of Staff, represented AfCFTA, Dr. Memory Dube, Head of Regional Integration at the African Development Bank shared invaluable advancement in the creation of the Youth Entrepreneurship Investment Banks in Africa for both financial and non-financial services, as well as the Youth Adapt incubation programs that are labs for entrepreneurial incubation set up by the ADB. Dr. Ify Ogo, Regional Coordinator at the AfCFTA Secretariat (UNDP), shared their insights on the topic. Ms. Leila Ben Ali, a representative from the migration sector, and Dr. Nkosana Moyo from MINDS also brought their valuable perspective on the leaders that Africa needs that are all-encompassing and competent to work the much-needed infrastructure of communication and transport, through cross-border partnerships across the continent.



Panel 2; focused on exploring the impact of the AfCFTA on businesses, infrastructure, and social enterprises, with a particular emphasis on the ICT sector. Young voices took centre stage during this segment, sharing their experiences and knowledge of what works and what doesn't in terms of infrastructure. The panel featured inspiring Ignite Talks by Nandi Mkhwananzi, the founder of Nanloy organic farming and an entrepreneur, and Edith Njange, an African start-up founder from Kenya. These young entrepreneurs provided firsthand accounts of the transformative power of the AfCFTA on their respective ventures.

In addition to the panel discussions, an engaging debate was held among Youth Parliamentarians from SAYOF and the Wits University Student Representative Council, skilfully moderated by Tarisai from APN. The debate involved passionate youth representatives from Tanzania, South Africa, and Namibia, as well as youth representatives from SAYOF and the Acting President and Deputy President from Wits SRC. This spirited exchange of ideas allowed the youth to voice their perspectives on how the AfCFTA could shape Africa's future.

The outcomes of this significant event will play a vital role in incorporating the voices of the youth into the AfCFTA initiative. By actively engaging young minds and considering their perspectives, Africa can build a more inclusive and prosperous future. The discussions, insights, and recommendations from the event will contribute to the ongoing efforts to accelerate the AfCFTA, unlocking its full potential and transforming Africa into a continent united by shared goals and aspirations.

As the event drew to a close, participants left inspired and motivated, having witnessed the power of collaboration and the potential of the AfCFTA to drive Africa's progress. The hybrid intergenerational discussion on Africa Day served as a testament to the collective determination and unwavering belief in a united and prosperous Africa. By harnessing the energy and expertise of diverse stakeholders, Africa is poised to make significant strides towards realizing the vision of a thriving One-Africa Market, fuelled by the principles of Pan Africanism, and driven by the passion of its people.

