



12th Edition
**Africa Think
Tank Summit**

CONCEPT NOTE

From Energy Access to Economic Transformation: Practical
Policy Pathways for Power Sector Viability, Growth, and
Reform I Africa



Hosted by the Government of the Republic of Benin
Accueilli par le Gouvernement de la République du Bénin

INTRODUCTION



01

Background

The Africa Think Tank Summit (ATTS), launched in 2014, has evolved into a premier continental platform for high-level policy dialogue, knowledge sharing, and agenda-setting on Africa's development priorities. The Summit bridges the gap between research and policy by convening diverse stakeholders—including governments, regional institutions, think tanks, private sector actors, and development partners—to deliberate on Africa's most pressing development challenges and identify actionable solutions.

Since 2025, the African Union Commission, the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), and the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) have been implementing the African Think Tank Platform (ATTP) Project, qui vise à établir et à opérationnaliser une pa World Bank-funded initiative designed to strengthen cooperation, policy harmonization and evidenced-based regional policy dialogue among country-level policymakers, regional associations, and think tanks. The project focuses exclusively on encouraging collaboration in policymaking on regional integration priorities that generate significant positive externalities and/or on reduce negative externalities, in line with the African Union (AU)'s Agenda 2063, the World Bank's Africa Strategy and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These priority themes include (a) economic transformation and governance, (b) climate change, (c) regional trade, (d) food security, (e) human capital, and (f) digitalization. All the thematic areas include a strong focus on gender. The priority areas may be updated during project implementation, subject to approval by the Think Tank Platform Steering Committee (TTPSC), to respond to emerging continental policy demands.

Within this framework, the 2026 Africa Think Tank Summit builds on the momentum of previous editions, particularly the 2025 Summit, which focused on strengthening public financial management systems and bridging the gap between policy commitments and implementation. The 2026 edition deepens that agenda by focusing on the energy sector as a foundational driver of industrialization, productivity, and inclusive growth. The central policy lesson emerging from recent ATTS discussions is that sustainable development outcomes depend not only on better governance of public resources, but also on the performance of core productive sectors that generate jobs, revenues and competitiveness.

Energy is increasingly recognized as a foundational enabler of Africa's structural transformation. It underpins industrialization, supports digital economies, drives agricultural value addition, and enables job creation across sectors. However, Africa's energy systems continue to fall short in scale, reliability, affordability and financial viability while rising public debt, tighter fiscal space, and declining concessional financing are constraining governments' ability to finance large-scale infrastructure investments. Public debt reached approximately 67% of GDP in 2024, while debt service costs rose to around 10% of government revenues, crowding out critical development spending.¹

In this context, the energy sector must increasingly transition toward financial sustainability and greater reliance on private capital and innovative financing mechanisms. Against this backdrop, the 2026 Africa Think Tank Summit will focus on the theme « *From Energy Access*

¹ AUC/OECD. 2025. Africa's Development Dynamics 2025: Infrastructure, Growth and Transformation, African Union Commission, Addis Ababa/OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/c2b40285-en> (consulté le 18 mars 2026)

to Economic Transformation: Practical Policy Pathways for Power Sector Viability, Growth, and Reform. ». This theme reflects a deliberate shift in the policy discourse—from expanding electricity access as an end in itself, to positioning energy as a driver of productivity, competitiveness, and inclusive economic growth. It also recognizes that achieving this transformation requires deep, coordinated reforms across governance, financing, regulation, and regional integration.

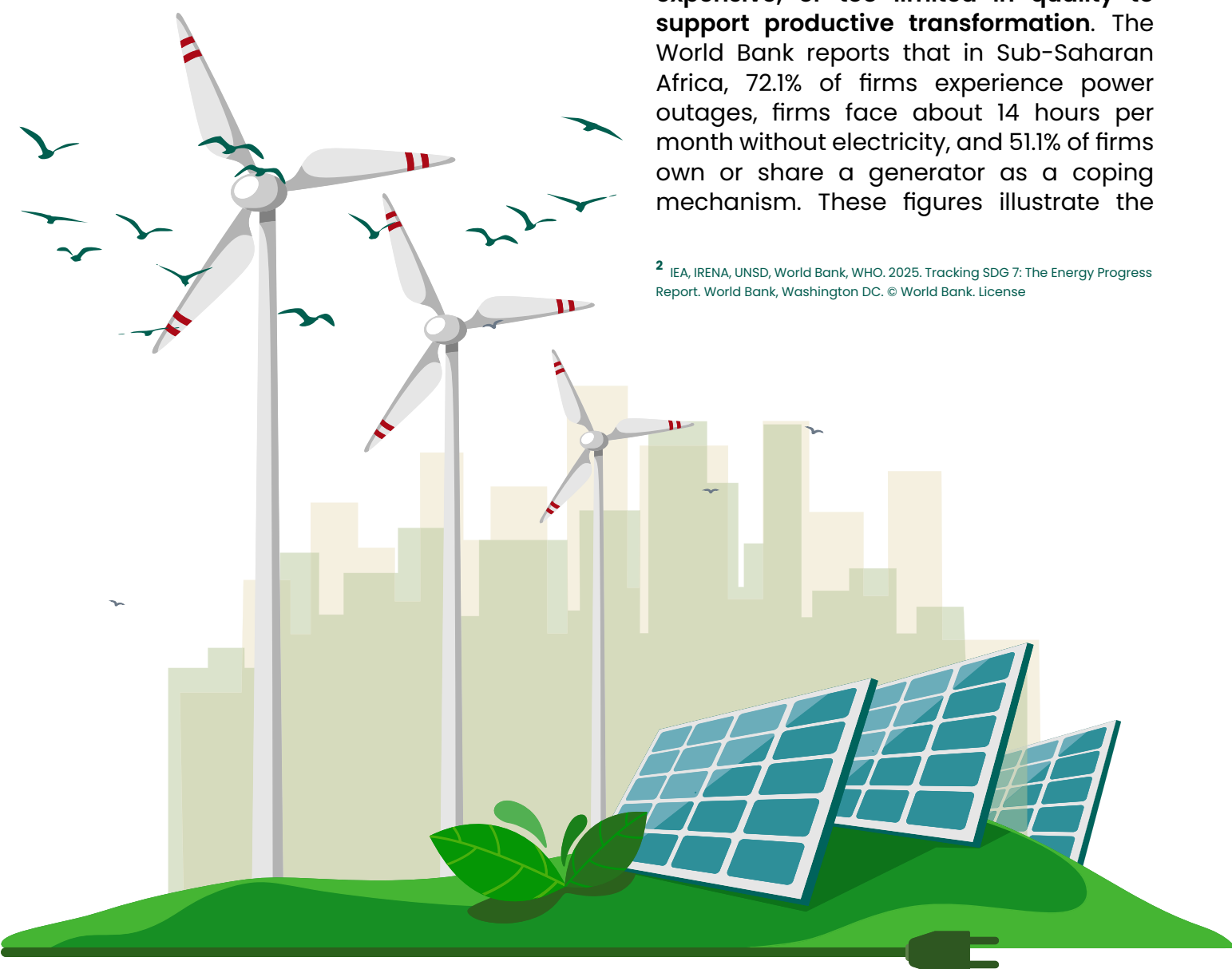
Context

Africa’s energy systems are at a pivotal moment. Progress in expanding electricity access is real, but it remains too slow to match the scale of need or the continent’s structural transformation ambitions.

The latest global energy tracking shows that about 666 million people worldwide still lack electricity access in 2023, while the International Energy Agency (IEA) estimates that around 600 million people in Africa still live without electricity. Progress has slowed: fewer than 19 million people gained access in both 2023 and 2024, compared with 23 million in 2019. This means that electrification is advancing, but not yet at the pace required to support universal access goals and broad-based development outcomes.²

The challenge is no longer only about adding connections; it is about ensuring that electricity is reliable, affordable and of sufficient quality to support productive transformation. In many countries, electricity remains too unreliable, too expensive, or too limited in quality to support productive transformation. The World Bank reports that in Sub-Saharan Africa, 72.1% of firms experience power outages, firms face about 14 hours per month without electricity, and 51.1% of firms own or share a generator as a coping mechanism. These figures illustrate the

² IEA, IRENA, UNSD, World Bank, WHO. 2025. Tracking SDG 7: The Energy Progress Report. World Bank, Washington DC. © World Bank. License



extent to which unreliable electricity is constraining competitiveness, investment, and job creation. Moreover, these coping mechanisms³ significantly increase production costs and undermine competitiveness, particularly for manufacturing and agro-processing sectors. Africa's power systems remain structurally underdeveloped relative to its economic potential. In addition, the continent accounts for nearly 18% of the global population but less than 4% of global electricity consumption, underscoring a deep energy poverty gap. Per capita electricity consumption in Sub-Saharan Africa (excluding South Africa) averages around 180 kWh per year, compared to over 6,000 kWh in developed economies. This disparity underscores the scale of investment and reform required to enable productive transformation.⁴

This reliability gap is closely linked to the weak financial condition of many utilities across the continent. World Bank analysis finds that only about a quarter of African utilities recover both operating and debt-service costs, and many still fail to recover costs even when subsidies are considered. Another World Bank brief notes that in low- and middle-income economies, only about 40% of utilities recover the cost of supplying service, limiting their ability to maintain networks, improve quality, and expand access sustainably⁵. The financing gap is equally severe: according to the IEA, less than USD 2.5 billion was committed for new electricity access connections in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2023, and private finance accounted for less than 30% of those flows. Although 80% of the population without access lives in rural areas, finance remains skewed toward urban and easier-to-serve markets⁶.

Clean cooking remains a parallel crisis with direct implications for health, gender equality, time use, environmental sustainability and climate resilience.

The 2025 Tracking SDG7 report estimates that 2.1 billion people globally still lack access to clean cooking, with 47% of them living in Africa. This makes clean cooking a central pillar of any credible energy transition agenda for the continent⁷. Reliance on traditional biomass fuels contributes to deforestation, climate vulnerability, and an estimated 600,000 premature deaths annually in Africa due to household air pollution, disproportionately affecting women and children. The IEA's 2025 Africa Clean Cooking Update estimates that universal clean cooking access across Africa by 2040 would require USD 37 billion in cumulative investment and could support a much faster pace of inclusion.

At the same time, reform momentum is growing through several major initiatives aimed at accelerating Africa's energy transformation. Under Mission 300, led by the World Bank Group and the African Development Bank, African governments and partners have committed to connecting 300 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2030 through country-led National Energy Compacts. The 2025 Dar es Salaam Energy Summit helped shift the conversation toward country compact-based reform models that combine access expansion, utility efficiency, private investment, and regional integration. Governments endorsed the Dar es Salaam Energy Declaration, and Mission 300 partners pledged more than USD 50 billion in support of increasing access across Africa⁸.

³ Solis S., and Heli, B.O. 2025. Defying Outages: The Struggles and Strategies of Businesses Facing Unreliable Electricity (English). Global Indicators Briefs Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/099859206252515733> (consulté le 18 mars 2026)

⁴ AfDB. 2017. Light Up and Power Africa – A New Deal on Energy for Africa. <https://www.afdb.org/en/the-high-5/light-up-and-power-africa-%E2%80%93-a-new-deal-on-energy-for-africa> (consulté le 18 mars 2026).

⁵ World Bank. 2023. Utility Performance and Behavior in Africa Today (UPBEAT) – Update Briefing (English). Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/099092923144024459> (consulté le 18 mars 2026)

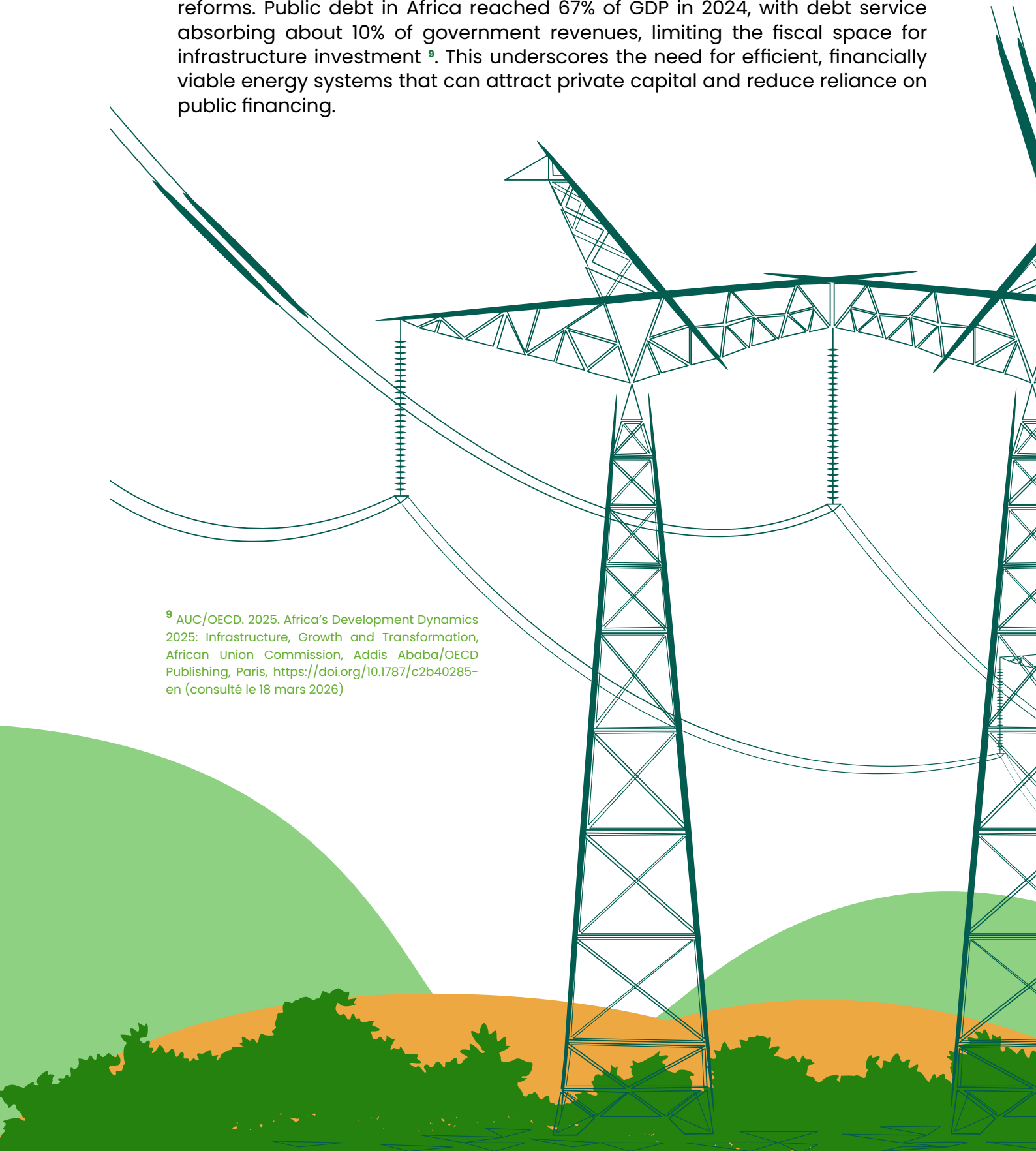
⁶ IEA. 2025. Financing Electricity Access in Africa, IEA, Paris <https://www.iea.org/reports/financing-electricity-access-in-africa>, Licence: CC BY 4.0

⁷ Sustainable Energy for All. 2025. Tracking SDG7: The Energy Progress Report 2025.

⁸ https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/energizing-africa/overview?utm_source=chatgpt.com (consulté le 18 mars 2026)

In this context, Africa's energy challenge is no longer solely about closing access gaps; it is about transforming energy systems into engines of economic growth, industrialization, resilience, and regional competitiveness. Africa's broader development context, marked by tight fiscal space, rising debt levels, and constrained public investment capacity, adds urgency to energy sector reforms. Public debt in Africa reached 67% of GDP in 2024, with debt service absorbing about 10% of government revenues, limiting the fiscal space for infrastructure investment ⁹. This underscores the need for efficient, financially viable energy systems that can attract private capital and reduce reliance on public financing.

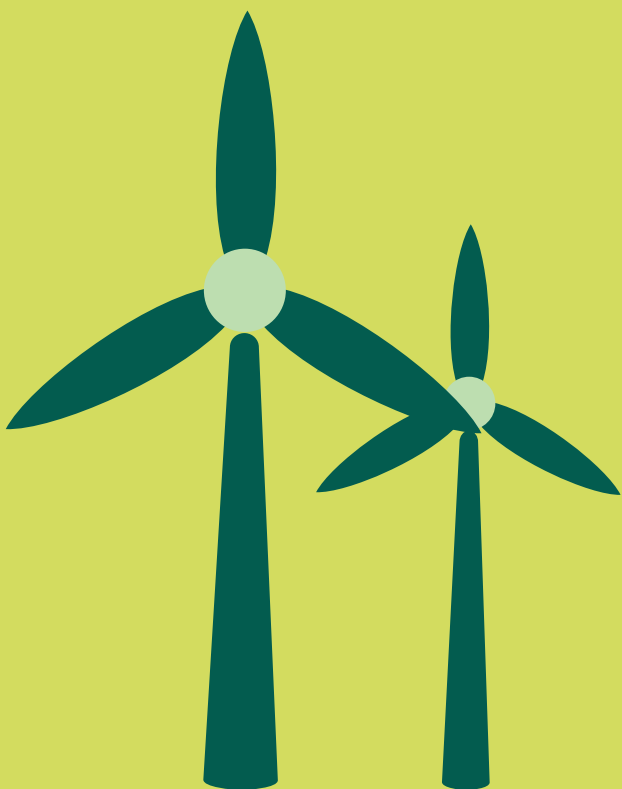
⁹ AUC/OECD. 2025. *Africa's Development Dynamics 2025: Infrastructure, Growth and Transformation*, African Union Commission, Addis Ababa/OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/c2b40285-en> (consulté le 18 mars 2026)



This policy momentum creates a major opportunity for think tanks

As reform programs move from general commitments to country compacts, investment plans, tariff reforms, utility restructuring, and regional power trade arrangements, the need for evidence-based, context-specific policy support becomes more acute. The 2026 Summit can therefore position African think tanks not only as commentators on energy policy, but as co-designers, reviewers and monitors of practical reform pathways that improve energy outcomes and broader economic transformation.

RATIONALE AND JUSTIFICATION



02

AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT TRAJECTORY INCREASINGLY DEPENDS ON ITS ABILITY TO TRANSITION FROM BASIC ENERGY ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY, RELIABLE, AND PRODUCTIVE ENERGY SYSTEMS.

While significant attention over the past decade has focused on expanding electricity connections, there is growing recognition that access without reliability, affordability, and scale does not translate into economic transformation. Moreover, in many countries, connection numbers have improved, but power remains too unreliable, too costly, or too limited in quality to support productive use at scale. The persistence of outages, self-generation, and utility

underperformance shows that the next phase of African energy policy must move beyond counting new connections and toward building systems that enable firms to invest, industries to expand, and public services to function effectively. This makes a transition from access metrics to system performance an urgent policy priority. The Summit is therefore timely and necessary for four interrelated reasons.

FIRST, AFRICA FACES A WIDENING GAP BETWEEN ENERGY ACCESS AND ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION.

Despite progress in electrification, the limited reliability and high cost of electricity continue to constrain industrialization, digitalization, and value addition as well as reliable public services such as health, education, and water systems. Nearly 600 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa still lack electricity, even as demand is rising quickly with population growth, urbanization, and industrial expansion. Across the region, firms often rely on self-

generation because public supply is too unreliable or expensive, with firm-owned generation estimated at 6% of installed capacity in Sub-Saharan Africa and around 12% in lower-income and post-conflict countries. This means that access gains alone therefore deliver limited economic returns unless matched by reliable grids, utility reform, and lower-cost power for productive users^{10 11}.

¹⁰ McRae, S., Blimpo, M., Steinbuks, J. 2018. Why Are Connection Charges So High?: An Analysis of the Electricity Sector in Sub-Saharan Africa. Policy Research Working Paper; No. 8407.

¹¹ World Bank. 2025. What Underlies the Poor Financial Performance of Electric Utilities in Sub-Saharan Africa? November 2025. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099912211102516982/pdf/1DU-8c8b805d-8bc2-47fe-853c-65967651a3a6.pdf> (consulté le 18 mars 2026)

SECOND, THE FINANCIAL UNSUSTAINABILITY OF AFRICA'S POWER SECTOR THREATENS LONG-TERM PROGRESS IN ENERGY ACCESS AND ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION.

Many utilities in Sub-Saharan Africa continue to face low-cost recovery, high losses, weak collections, and governance challenges that prevent them from covering operating expenses, servicing debt, and financing new investment. A 2025 World Bank study of 67 utilities in 47 countries found that more than two-thirds of vertically integrated and distribution utilities could not cover operating and debt service costs from revenue, highlighting the depth of the sector's financial fragility. The main drivers of this problem are high fuel costs, low-capacity utilization, technical and commercial losses, and weak institutional performance. These structural weaknesses make it difficult for utilities to attract investment or finance maintenance, system expansion and service improvement. This weakness is especially dangerous because Africa's

broader macroeconomic environment leaves little room for open-ended subsidies. The IMF reported in 2025 that tighter global financial conditions, higher borrowing costs, and debt vulnerabilities are constraining fiscal space across sub-Saharan Africa. In this context, the power sector cannot remain dependent on public subsidies if it is to expand sustainably. Accordingly, reform, must prioritize loss reduction, improved collections, strengthened utility governance, and cost-reflective tariffs with targeted protection for vulnerable households and clearer performance incentives.¹²

¹²Laws, A., Lemaire, T., Pafadnam, R., Spatafora, N., and Khandelwal, K. 2025. "Breaking the Trend: Debt Stabilization in Sub-Saharan Africa." IMF Note 2025/001, International Monetary Fund, Washington, DC.



THIRD, THE SCALE OF INVESTMENT REQUIRED TO EXPAND AFRICA'S ENERGY SYSTEMS AND BROADER INFRASTRUCTURE BASE EXCEEDS THE CAPACITY OF PUBLIC RESOURCES ALONE

Evidence shows that Africa needs about USD 155 billion annually in infrastructure investment through 2040 to support productive transformation, yet average spending was only about USD 83 billion per year between 2016 and 2020, leaving a large financing gap. This shortfall is being compounded by tight fiscal space, rising debt-service burdens, and weaker development finance flows. African governments spent only about 1.3% of GDP on infrastructure in 2019–23, while debt service consumed about seven times more resources than infrastructure investment¹³. Private capital must therefore play a much larger role, however, capital will only flow at scale where projects are better prepared, risks are mitigated, and sector rules are

credible and transparent. Africa attracted only 6–8% of global private infrastructure investment during the 2013–2022 boom, and the average cost of capital for infrastructure projects remains high at about 13%, well above comparable levels in developing Asia and OECD countries. Unlocking more private finance will require stronger regulation, better project preparation, transparent pipelines, and effective risk mitigation instruments such as guarantees, blended finance, credit enhancement and currency-risk solutions. The urgency is clear: while Mission 300 and related initiatives have already mobilized more than USD 50 billion in pledges, public and concessional resources can only catalyze the broader investment needed; they cannot fill the entire gap on their own.¹⁴

FOURTH, CLEAN COOKING AND ENERGY INCLUSION REMAIN CENTRAL TO HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND GENDER EQUALITY

Although electricity access has improved in many countries, nearly 1 billion Africans still lack clean cooking solutions and continue to rely on firewood, charcoal, crop residues, and other traditional biomass fuels. This dependence has serious consequences: indoor air pollution from traditional cooking is linked to about 400,000 premature deaths each year in Africa, while women and girls bear the heaviest burden through fuel collection, exposure to smoke, and lost time that could otherwise go toward school, work,

or income generation. This burden has direct implications for women's economic participation and household welfare. Beyond the health and gender effects, traditional cooking also contributes to deforestation, environmental degradation, and household emissions, making clean cooking a climate issue as well as a development priority. Progress is possible, but the financing gap remains large. The 2024 IEA Summit on Clean Cooking in Africa mobilized about USD 2.2 billion in pledges, yet the IEA estimates

¹³AUC/OECD. 2025. Africa's Development Dynamics 2025: Infrastructure, Growth and Transformation, AUC, Addis Ababa/OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/c2b40285-en> (consulté le 18 mars 2026).

¹⁴<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2025/01/28/heads-of-state-commit-to-concrete-plans-to-transform-africa-s-energy-sector-with-strong-backing-from-global-partners> (consulté le 18 mars 2026).

that roughly USD 4 billion per year is needed to deliver clean cooking access at scale in sub-Saharan Africa. That means Africa's energy transition must be judged not only by the number of electricity connections delivered, but also by whether households can cook safely, affordably, and cleanly.¹⁵

FIFTH, REGIONAL INTEGRATION OFFERS ONE OF AFRICA'S MOST IMPORTANT BUT UNDERUSED OPPORTUNITIES TO LOWER POWER-SECTOR COSTS AND IMPROVE RELIABILITY

Many national electricity systems remain fragmented, and too small to realize economies of scale or manage variability efficiently, which keeps generation costs high and weakens resilience. By strengthening regional power pools and cross-border transmission, countries can trade surplus electricity, share reserves, and better utilize hydropower, gas, solar, and wind assets across borders. The potential benefits are significant. The World Bank estimates that regional energy integration could save African countries around USD 40 billion in capital spending, while other analyses suggest that tighter regional power trade could cut system costs by 10–30 percent. In practical terms, this means stronger transmission planning, harmonized regulations, bankable trade arrangements, and more effective regional coordination. Cross-border trade also supports renewable energy development: a study of 21 African countries found that a 1 percent increase in electricity trade is associated with a 0.05 percent increase in the renewable share of electricity output. Yet trade volumes remain limited because of weak transmission infrastructure, regulatory fragmentation, and inconsistent policy frameworks.¹⁶

Africa's energy agenda is increasingly shifting from policy commitments to implementation but translating ambition into results remains the central challenge. Mission 300, which aims to connect 300 million people to electricity by 2030, and the country-level reform compacts now being advanced across the continent reflect a more integrated, results-oriented model that links access targets, utility reform, and investment mobilization. At the January 2025 Africa Energy Summit, partners pledged more than USD 50 billion to support this agenda, including major support from the World Bank Group and the African Development Bank, signaling stronger alignment between policy and finance¹⁷. Even so, the delivery gap remains wide. About 600 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa still lack electricity, and many utilities remain unable to cover operating and debt-service costs from their own revenues, making it difficult to scale access without deeper reform. The next phase, therefore, requires more than new pledges: it needs platforms that connect evidence, policy design, financing, and implementation into a single delivery chain. This means stronger coordination across governments,

¹⁵IEA. 2024. Landmark summit mobilises \$2.2 billion to make 2024 a turning point for clean cooking access in Africa. <https://www.iea.org/news/landmark-summit-mobilises-22-billion-to-make-2024-a-turning-point-for-clean-cooking-access-in-africa> (consulté le 25 mars 2026)

¹⁶Adaji, M, Vasilakos, N. and Kebede, B. 2025. 'Powering Africa's sustainable future: The role of cross-border electricity trade on renewable electricity generation', Energy & Environment. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0958305X251343068> (consulté le 25 mars 2026)

¹⁷<https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/energizing-africa> (consulté le 25 mars 2026)

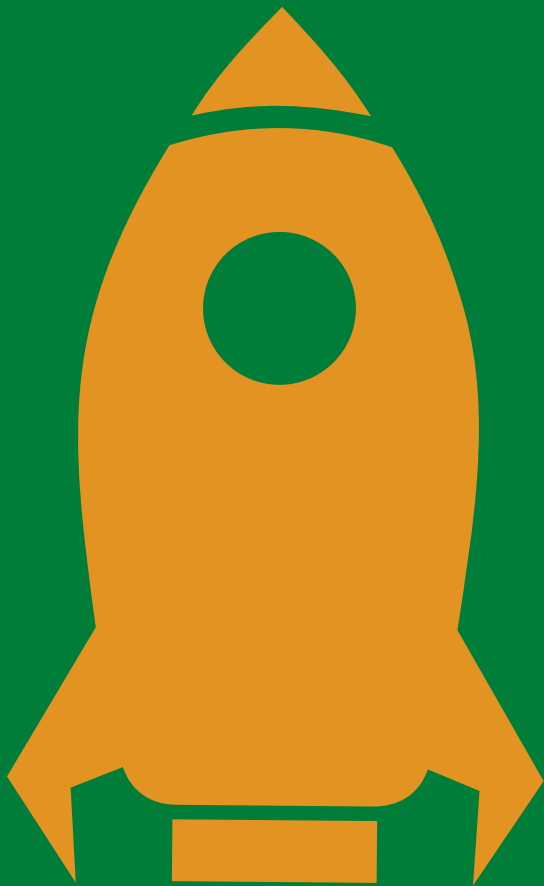
regulators, utilities, and development partners, along with measurable milestones and accountability mechanisms that can turn commitments into household connections, reliable service, and productive power.¹⁸

In this context, the 2026 Africa Think Tank Summit on “From Energy Access to Economic Transformation: Practical Policy Pathways for Power Sector Viability, Growth, and Reform” offers a timely opportunity to reposition energy at the center of Africa’s development agenda.

The continent still faces a large electricity access deficit, weak service reliability, financially stressed utilities, and a substantial infrastructure financing gap, all of which limit the economic returns from electrification. By bringing together governments, think tanks, investors, and development partners, the Summit can help move the discussion beyond access targets toward the practical reforms needed to make the power sector viable, bankable, and growth-enhancing. Its value lies in five areas: shifting the discourse from access to transformation, identifying implementable and context-specific policy pathways, strengthening the link between research and investment, promoting peer learning and regional cooperation, and catalyzing partnerships across public and private actors. By focusing on viability, growth, and reform, the Summit aims to reposition the energy sector as a central pillar of Africa’s structural transformation, rather than a standalone infrastructure challenge.

¹⁸ AUC/OECD. 2025. Africa’s Development Dynamics 2025: Infrastructure, Growth and Transformation, AUC, Addis Ababa/OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/c2b40285-en> (consulté le 25 mars 2026).

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIC APPROACH



03

The main objective of the 2026 Africa Think Tank Summit is to catalyze coordinated, action-oriented partnerships among African think tanks, policymakers, and stakeholders to translate energy access gains into sustainable economic transformation through practical policy pathways that enhance power sector viability, investment, and reform.

The specific objectives are to :



Foster multi-stakeholder collaboration among think tanks, governments, private sector actors, financiers, and development partners to co-create practical, scalable, and implementation-ready solutions for power sector reform.



Generate actionable policy insights by assessing energy, institutional and macro-fiscal frameworks, identifying implementation gaps, and advancing reforms that improve utility performance, sector governance and financial viability.



Strengthen the capacity of policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to design, implement, and monitor policies that link energy access to productive use, industrialization, and economic growth.



Facilitate structured dialogue and peer learning on successful power sector reforms, including regulatory innovation, utility turnaround strategies, tariff reform and financing models.



Advance strategies to mobilize domestic, private, and blended finance for energy infrastructure, including through improved tariffs, governance reforms, project preparation, and public-private partnership frameworks.



Promote inclusive and sustainable approaches to energy transition, ensuring affordability, gender equity, clean cooking access, and expanded energy services for underserved communities.

In line with the ATTP's collaborative implementation model, this activity will be designed and delivered in close coordination with the three ATTP research consortia – namely, the Research Alliance for Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Development (RAISED-Africa) led by the Economic Research Forum (ERF), the Building Resilience and Impact through Dialogue and Galvanising Action for Evidence-Informed Policymaking (BRIDGE-Africa) led by the African Center for Economic Transformation (ACET), and the Consortium for Africa Cross-Border Evidence and Policy Sovereignty (CACEPS) led by the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC). Where consortia members have existing programs, networks, or demonstrated capacity relevant to this activity, the delivery model will prioritize building on and strengthening those existing capabilities. ACBF will provide the overarching framework, quality assurance, and cross-continental coordination, while implementation at the regional or institutional level may be co-led by consortia members where this is the most effective and sustainable approach. This will help ensure that the Summit is grounded in ongoing

research, avoids duplication, and generates outputs that feed directly into the ATTP knowledge ecosystem. Specific modalities for consortia engagement will be agreed upon during the inception phase in consultation with the ATTP Secretariat.

The 2026 Summit program will include a dedicated knowledge exchange session for the presentation of emerging research findings from the three ATTP research consortia (RAISED Africa, BRIDGE Africa, and CACEPS), allowing researchers and the consortia to present preliminary results and receive structured feedback from policymakers, development partners, and peer researchers. The Summit's sub-themes will be aligned with the ATTP's six priority research themes to ensure coherence between policy dialogue, evidence generation and implementation learning.



EVENT THEME



04

The proposed theme “From Energy Access to Economic Transformation: Practical Policy Pathways for Power Sector Viability, Growth, and Reform” is timely, evidence-based, and well-aligned with Africa’s current development priorities.

It reflects the reality that the central policy challenge is no longer how to connect more households, but how to ensure that Africa’s power systems support industrialization, enterprise growth, digital expansion, agricultural modernization, social service delivery, and regional integration. It also reflects the need to shift from a narrow focus on connection numbers toward the wider development outcomes that reliable and affordable energy can unlock.

To operationalize the theme, the 2026 Africa Think Tank Summit will be organized around six mutually reinforcing sub-themes that together cover the full reform chain: **financing, governance, productive use, regional integration, inclusion and implementation**. These are intended to ensure the Summit contributes to repositioning the energy sector not as a standalone infrastructure issue, but as a central pillar of Africa’s structural transformation and long-term competitiveness.



Financing energy transformation in a debt-constrained context, including risk mitigation and private capital mobilization.

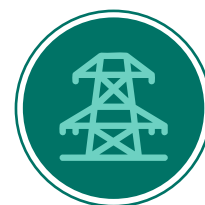


Utility viability, regulation, and power sector governance.

Energy for industrialization, jobs, and productive use,



Regional power pools, cross-border trade, and system integration.

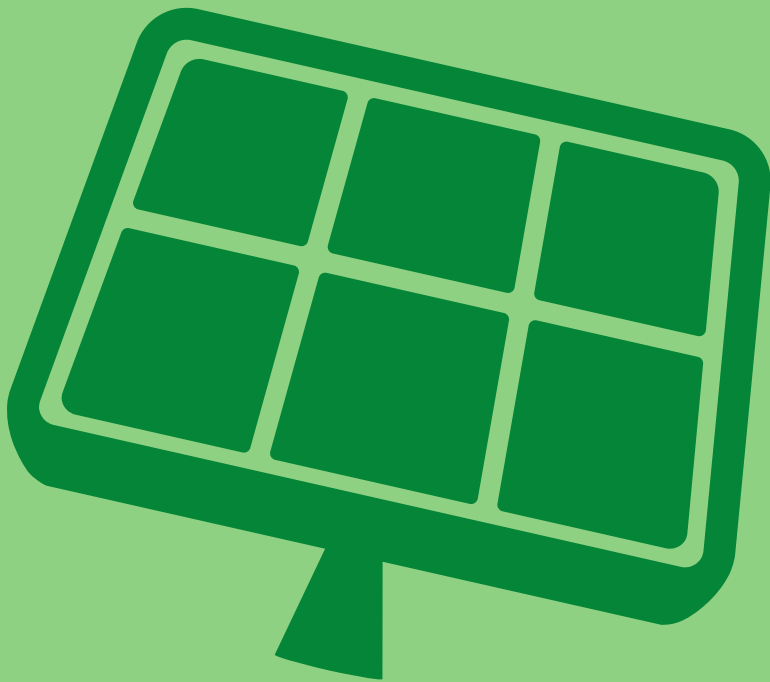


Inclusive energy transition: clean cooking, gender, and decentralized solutions.



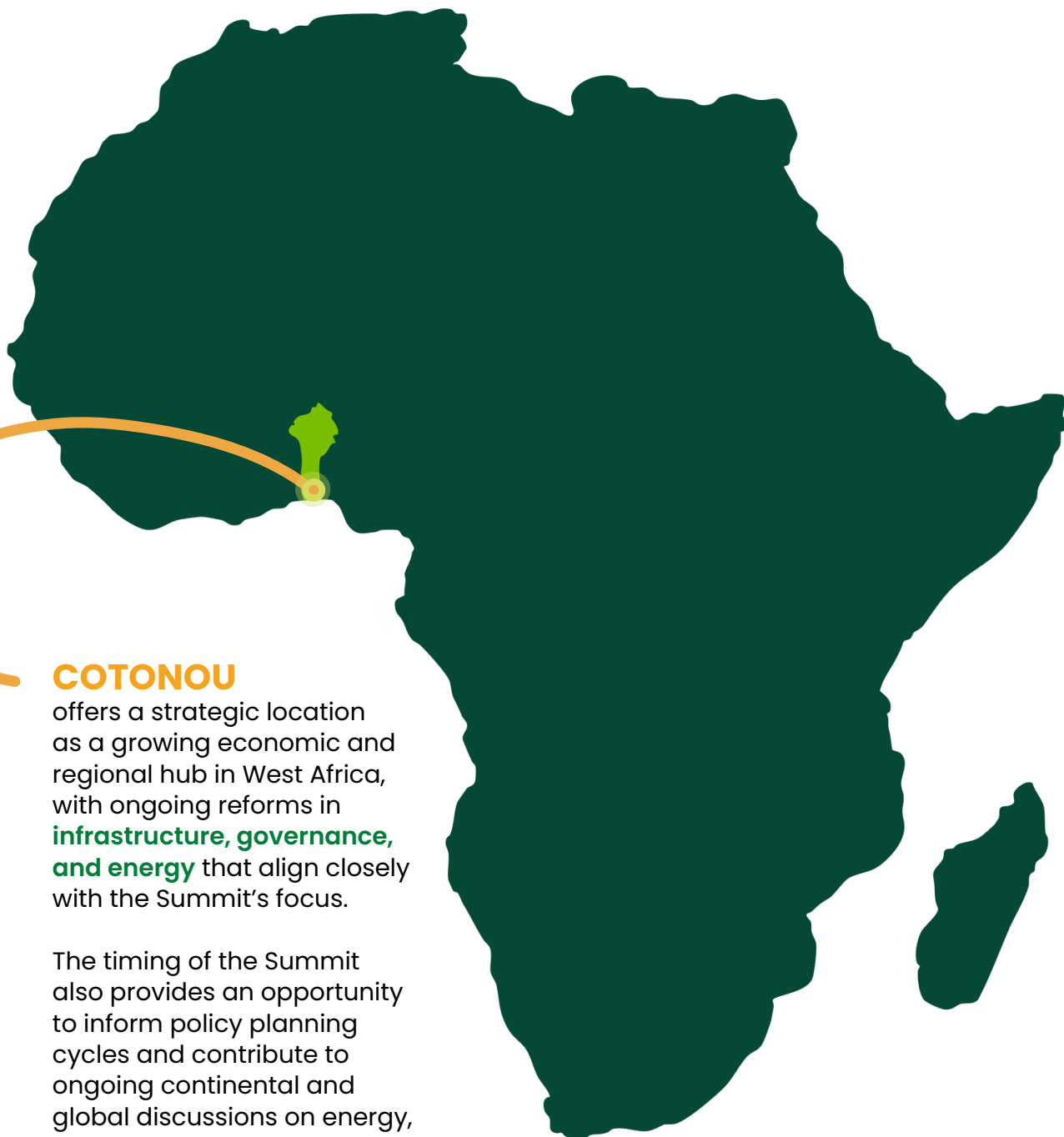
From policy commitments to implementation: evidence, reform sequencing, and accountability

DATES AND VENUE



05

The 2026 **Africa Think Tank Summit** will be held from **28 to 30 October 2026 in Cotonou, Republic of Benin**. It is hosted by the Government of the Republic of Benin through the **Ministry of Development and Coordination of Government Action**, in partnership with continental and international stakeholders.



COTONOU

offers a strategic location as a growing economic and regional hub in West Africa, with ongoing reforms in **infrastructure, governance, and energy** that align closely with the Summit's focus.

The timing of the Summit also provides an opportunity to inform policy planning cycles and contribute to ongoing continental and global discussions on energy, financing, and economic transformation.

FORMAT



06

The 2026 Africa Think Tank Summit will be convened in a hybrid format, combining in-person participation in Cotonou with virtual access to broaden reach, inclusion, and engagement across the continent and beyond.

The Summit will be conducted in English and French, supported by simultaneous interpretation to ensure full participation, richer dialogue, and inclusive exchange among policymakers, researchers, practitioners, private sector leaders, and development partners. The Summit is designed to be highly interactive, practice-oriented, and outcome-driven. Rather than relying only on formal presentations, it will use a mix of high-level plenaries, technical breakouts, and collaborative sessions to ensure that ideas are translated into actionable recommendations.

Each session format will be designed to promote dialogue, peer learning, and concrete policy follow-up.

- **Ministerial session:** A high-level session bringing together ministers and senior decision-makers to engage in meaningful dialogue, provide political direction and policy commitments.

- **Keynote addresses:** Addresses and keynote presentations by leading experts and decision-makers on the strategic dimensions of the Summit's theme and objectives.

- **Discussions en panel :** Smaller technical sessions designed for deeper discussion of specific issues and policy solutions.

- **Breakaway sessions:** Des sessions techniques en petits groupes, conçues pour permettre un échange approfondi sur des questions spécifiques et des solutions stratégiques.

- **Side-events:** These sessions allow partners to discuss specific issues of interest related to the theme of the Summit and contribute to addressing Africa's socio-economic transformation.

- **Exhibition :** This component of the Summit will provide a platform for stakeholders to showcase their work, innovations, and products, engage participants, and foster knowledge sharing and networking.

- **Training Sessions :** The Summit will be an opportunity to offer practical skills enhancement sessions for selected stakeholders. Selected partners will provide practical tools and strategies that enable participants to effectively translate policy objectives into actionable steps, thereby directly addressing the barriers that hinder successful power sector reforms.



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à l'action : combler le fossé
politique et mettre en œuvre
dans la gestion des finances publiques



11^e Edition
Africa Think
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SCAN HERE

#ATTS25

EXPECTED RESULTS



07

The 2026 Africa Think Tank Summit is expected to generate both tangible outputs and measurable outcomes that contribute to advancing energy sector reform and economic transformation across the continent. The following outcomes are expected:

1.

Strengthened policy dialogue and structured collaboration among African think tanks, governments, financiers, private sector actors, utilities, regulators, and development partners

2.

Enhanced capacity of policymakers and institutions to design and implement financially viable and growth-oriented energy reforms

3.

Improved alignment between energy policy, financing strategies, debt sustainability considerations and investment pipelines.

4.

Increased engagement of private sector, domestic and development finance actors in Africa's energy sector

5.

Greater integration of evidence-based research into policy design reform implementation and investment decision making

To ensure the effectiveness of these results, the Summit will establish pre-agreed follow-up checkpoints at 3 months, 6 months, and 12 months after the event, using virtual progress reviews or smaller technical meetings, to monitor milestones, commitments, and implementation progress.

The insights, best practices, and commitments generated from this event will be widely disseminated to policymakers, researchers, development partners, and other stakeholders to

support and inform future policy actions and initiatives.

The Summit will generate the following outputs:

- **Summit Communique capturing key policy recommendations and action points**
- **Newsletter of the Summit**
- **Policy Brief**
- **Summary Report synthesizing discussions, thematic insights and next steps.**

PARTNERS OF THE SUMMIT



08

The 2026 Africa Think Tank Summit is being convened through a broad partnership of continental, regional, national, and technical institutions committed to advancing Africa’s development agenda. The African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), the African Union Commission (AUC), and the Ministry of Economy and Finance of the Republic of Benin are serving as lead conveners, with funding support from the Hewlett Foundation, the World Bank Group through the ATPP Project, and the African Development Bank (AfDB). The Summit is hosted by the Republic of Benin and further supported by the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), the African School of Regulation (ASR), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the African Guarantee and Economic Cooperation Fund (FAGACE), the Africa Europe Foundation (AEF), the WINGS Network, the European External Action Service of the European Union, the Korea Africa Foundation (KAF) and the International Institute for Sustainable Transition in Africa (Africa Transition Institute) each contributing valuable expertise, networks, and institutional strength to enrich the Summit’s deliberations and outcomes.

At the national level, the Africa Centre for Equitable Development (ACED) serves as the local partner, helping to ground the Summit in the Beninese context and facilitate meaningful dialogue, knowledge exchange, and collaboration among stakeholders. Collectively, these partners provide a strong and inclusive foundation for a Summit aimed at shaping a transformative agenda for Africa.

The Partners’ Platform remains open to organizations that share the Summit’s vision and objectives. Stakeholders who are willing and committed to contribute to the success and continued expansion of this important initiative are encouraged to join and actively participate in shaping a transformative agenda for Africa.



TARGET AUDIENCE



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The 2026 Africa Think Tank Summit will provide space for representatives of more than 300 African think tanks and key stakeholders. It will provide an opportunity to engage with a multi-stakeholder audience in Africa’s energy, economic transformation, and policy reform agenda. The Summit is intended to bring together actors who can shape policy, finance, regulation, implementation, and knowledge generation.

The target audience for the 2026 Africa Think Tank Summit includes, but is not limited to, the following:



Ministers and senior government officials responsible for energy, finance, planning, industry, infrastructure, and economic development.



Think tanks, research institutions, universities, and policy analysts working on energy, macroeconomics, industrialization, and governance.



Heads and senior staff of regional and continental institutions, including the African Union system and related bodies.



Civil society organizations, consumer groups, and advocacy networks focused on inclusion, accountability, and social impact.



Regulators, utility executives, and public agencies involved in power sector planning, operations, and oversight.



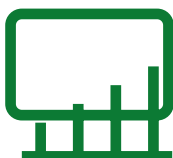
Technical experts, consultants, and practitioners in energy systems, regulation, finance, and project preparation.



Development finance institutions, bilateral partners, and philanthropic foundations supporting Africa’s energy transition and structural transformation.



Representatives of regional power pools, energy associations, and implementation platforms.



Private sector leaders, investors, project developers, and financial institutions active in energy, infrastructure, clean cooking, and related value chains.



Media and strategic communicators covering development, infrastructure, and public policy.

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE



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The 2026 Africa Think Tank Summit will be guided by a multi-tiered organizing structure designed to ensure strong strategic oversight, high technical quality, and effective delivery. This structure brings together conveners, co-organizers, host institutions, partners, and technical teams working in close coordination to deliver a well-managed and impactful Summit. It comprises three main bodies: the Steering Committee, the Executive Committee, and the Organizing and Program Committee.



The **Steering Committee** provides overall strategic direction, validates the Summit agenda, and ensures alignment with the Summit's objectives and partner expectations, with representation from key institutions including government, continental bodies, and development partners.



Supporting this, the **Executive Committee** serves as the coordination hub, translating strategic guidance into operational actions, overseeing day-to-day implementation, and ensuring coherence across all organizing streams.



The **Organizing and Program Committee** is responsible for the detailed design and execution of the Summit, including content development and operational coordination, with active participation from partners and think tanks. It is supported by four technical sub-committees covering program and content, logistics and protocol, partnerships and resource mobilization, and communications and media, ensuring a comprehensive and coordinated approach to delivery.

CONTACTS







Questions related to the organization and delivery of the 2026 Africa Think Tank Summit should be directed to any of the following contacts:

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