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H.E. Dr Amani Abou-Zeid
Outgoing Commissioner for Infrastructure & Energy

It is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to the first edition of the Spotlight Infrastructure Newsletter, the official bulletin of the African Union Infrastructure and Energy Department. This biannual newsletter aims to provide updates on advancements in infrastructure, energy and digital initiatives, as well as policies across the African continent in strategic areas fuelling growth and innovation across the continent.

The year 2024 has been a tremendous year for our department, as we have registered multiple successes in advancing existing programs, devising favourable policies and strategies for sustainable infrastructure development, and strengthening partnerships. Additionally, we have advocated for Africa's prominent role on the global stage, including climate action, renewable energy, and alternative fuels. The year also saw impressive wins in the digitalisation front, with Africa adopting an Artificial Intelligence Strategy to stay ahead of the digital revolution. Furthermore, we began implementing a Child Online Safety and Empowerment Strategy to protect children while empowering them to make the best of the opportunity's digital platforms present. Meanwhile, we have continuously advocated for sustainable transport and urban mobility, where the African Union's global role has significantly increased.

Within these pages, you will find highlights of some of the impactful work underway in our department across the three divisions it oversees. The Energy section highlights our proactive energy development endeavours, including green hydrogen, clean cooking, energy efficiency, geothermal, as well as our rally to build the world's largest electricity market, AfSEM. In the Digital Sector, Africa's Digital Compact, which became part of the global Digital Compact at the UN's Summit of the Future, with Africa's common position, is featured along with other major advancements in data policy and governance. Endeavours under the Transport and Mobility Division are also covered, from the Single African Transport Market (SAATM) to the Maritime Charter and Road Safety.

We hope this newsletter serves as a platform for information sharing, collaboration, and inspiration as we work together to build a more integrated, prosperous, and resilient Africa. Let this first edition mark the beginning of open dialogue and fruitful partnerships. We welcome your ideas, suggestions, and contributions to help make this newsletter as relevant and useful as possible.

We look forward to further engagement and collaboration in 2025 as we continue to make strides in transforming Africa's infrastructure and energy sectors.

The African Union Executive Council Adopts Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy

African Ministers have adopted a landmark Continental Artificial Intelligence (AI) Strategy, positioning the continent to leverage AI for sustainable development and innovation. The strategy aims to address key challenges in sectors like healthcare, agriculture, and education while promoting digital literacy and inclusive growth.

Road Safety Calling for Urgent Action

Africa aims to significantly reduce road accidents by 2030. The African Road Safety Charter, adopted by the AU Summit in 2016, has been ratified by 13 Member States. However, for the Charter to enter into force, 15 more Member States must deposit their instruments of ratification. The African Union calls upon Member States to ratify the African Road Safety Charter.





8th PIDA Week: Renewed Commitment to Advancing Africa's Infrastructure & Agenda 2063

The Headquarters of the African Union in Addis Ababa has recently been busy hosting the 8th edition of Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) Week. Attracting more than 1000 delegates from across the continent and packed with over 38 thematic sessions, the week-long intensive deliberations and engagements to transform Africa's infrastructure landscape, concluded with a resounding reaffirmation of the continent's commitment to building quality, resilient infrastructure that will accelerate sustainable development and regional integration.

Hosted by the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the collaborative event between the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) and the African Union Commission (AUC) brought together ministers, delegates, development partners, regional economic communities (RECs), private sector representatives, and key stakeholders from across Africa and beyond. During the week key PIDA regional projects were showcased with a view to benchmarking and accelerating implementation. These included the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia-Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor, a flagship project aimed at enhancing connectivity and trade in Eastern Africa by linking Kenya, Ethiopia, and South Sudan through highways, railways, a deep-sea port at Lamu, and other vital infrastructure, with an estimated cost of \$25.5 billion.

Other notable projects included the Cameroon-Chad Railway, the Maritime Connectivity of the Comoros Islands, the Abidjan-Lagos Corridor, Transborder Submarine Fiber PoPs, and the Regional Smart Hub Facility and Data Center. The Regional Express Train and Rapid Transit Bus projects, which aim to address urban mobility challenges in Grand Dakar, were also discussed, along with updates on the Cairo-Cape Town Corridor.

The event underscored the critical importance of infrastructure as a foundational pillar for achieving Agenda 2063's aspirations, particularly Goal 10, which envisions "World-Class Infrastructure criss-crossing Africa."

The opening Session was graced by the presence President of the Federal Democratic Republic H.E. Taye Atske Selassie as well as chairperson of the African Union Commission H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat who called for renewed commitment to PIDA and emphasized the importance of harmonized policy, partnership and finance. The President singled the power of digital technology, when harnessed, to magnify Africa's potential to revolutionize trade.

Key Highlights from the 8th PIDA Week:

- **Reaffirmation of PIDA's Significance:** The event underscored PIDA as Africa's strategic framework for achieving the goals of Agenda 2063, particularly Goal 10 – ensuring world-class infrastructure across the continent.
- **Continued Commitment from Partners:** The PIDA Week saw active participation from more than 20 existing and new partners
- **The Role of Innovation and Financing:** Leaders emphasized the importance of innovative financing solutions, including public-private partnerships (PPPs), impact investments, and blended finance models, to overcome barriers and ensure the bankability.
- **Focus on Capacity Building and Climate Resilience:** In line with global trends, there was a strong focus on addressing the impacts of climate change.
- **Commitment to Gender Equality and Youth Engagement:** The role of youth and MSMEs in driving innovation in infrastructure was highlighted, with an emphasis on creating entry points for young entrepreneurs and women



PIDA has already made notable strides, providing electricity to over 30 million people and creating 160,000 jobs. Furthermore, significant progress was made in implementing the second Priority Action Plan of the PIDA program, including the modernization and establishment of One-Stop Border Posts, essential for enhancing regional connectivity and trade. However, a substantial gap remains, with only \$82 billion mobilized against the \$360 billion required to achieve PIDA's goals by 2040.

H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, emphasized, "Infrastructure is the cornerstone of Africa's integration and development. "We must leverage partnerships and embrace infrastructure as a high-value asset class to unlock funding from pension funds, sovereign wealth funds, and multilateral development banks." "Despite our achievements, persistent challenges in financing, risk perception, and project bankability hinder Africa's infrastructure ambitions," said H.E. Mrs. Nardos Bekele-Thomas, CEO of AUDA-NEPAD.

Further accentuating this concern H.E. Dr Amani Abou-Zeid infrastructure and energy highlighted 3% of PIDA project funding has been sourced from the private sector, compared to 16-19% in other regions, adding "It is crucial that we examine the underlying reasons for this gap and explore potential solutions to boost private sector participation moving forward. It is important to deploy all the efforts required to mobilize further public resources.



"The progress we have achieved thus far is evident in the many transformative projects underway, from transnational highways to energy corridors".



Dr. Amani Abou-Zeid further remarked, “The success of this week’s gathering is a testament to the collective determination of our leaders, partners, and communities to build the infrastructure that will support Africa’s future. We now look ahead to 2025 with renewed energy, focusing on creating more opportunities for collaboration and investment, and ensuring that infrastructure development is a key driver of sustainable and inclusive growth.”

The event called for action for all stakeholders to commit to Africa’s infrastructure transformation. As H.E. Dr. Alemu Sime, Ethiopia’s Minister of Transport and Logistics, remarked, “Our shared vision for a connected and prosperous Africa requires unwavering political will and innovative solutions. PIDA Week reminds us of what we can achieve together.”

H.E. Nardos Bekele-Thomas expressed gratitude to the people and government of Ethiopia for the hospitality extended to the delegates throughout their stay in Addis Ababa. She commended the impressive presence of over 20 partners during PIDA Week, including both existing and new partnerships. She expressed optimism that this growing engagement signifies increasing investor interest in PIDA’s projects and the potential for further investment in the future.

In his official closing remarks at PIDA Week, the State Minister of Transport and Logistics H.E. Bareo Hassen thanked AUDA-NEPAD and the AUC for hosting an excellent event that unites Africa’s vision for infrastructure. He reiterated Ethiopia’s unwavering commitment to developing regional impact projects that strengthen connections between Ethiopia and its neighboring countries. The African Union Commission and the African Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) seized the opportunity to call on investors, the private sector, and multilateral partners to tap into the growing infrastructure opportunities in Africa. As the 2025 PIDA Mid-Term Review approaches, it’s critical to fast-track efforts to attract investments for projects in the PIDA PAP2 pipeline, ensuring that infrastructure helps unlock Africa’s sustainable development.

The Week also offered participants the opportunity to attend Ethiopia’s Green Mobility Symposium, a key event showcasing the country’s significant strides in sustainable transportation & renewable energy initiatives. The symposium highlighted Ethiopia’s advancements in green mobility solutions, including the development of eco-friendly transport technologies and infrastructure. It served as a platform for exchanging ideas and exploring innovative approaches to reduce carbon emissions and promote sustainable urban mobility. Participants gained valuable insights into Ethiopia’s commitment to integrating environmental sustainability into its transport sector, contributing to broader efforts for a greener, more sustainable future.





Revised Abuja Safety Targets:

Considering the high importance of aviation safety in the efforts to improve African aviation, the ministers also considered the revised Abuja Aviation Safety Targets. To further enhance air transport safety and efficiency across Africa, the Ministers endorsed the Revised Abuja Safety Targets. This strategy aligns with global safety standards established by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and seeks to harmonize air navigation and safety practices across the continent.

African Green Hydrogen Strategy and Action Plan: Unlocking Africa's Renewable Energy Potential

The African Green Hydrogen Strategy and Action Plan represents a significant step toward unlocking the Africa's vast renewable energy potential. Green hydrogen, produced using renewable energy sources such as solar and wind, is seen as a key solution for improving energy security, advancing decarbonisation, and driving economic diversification across Africa.

By tapping into green hydrogen, African nations aim diversify their energy mix while fostering the promoting industrialisation, creating job opportunities, and revenue streams.

Highlighting the fact that countries, including Namibia, Egypt, Kenya, Mauritania, Morocco, and South Africa, are already leading the way with green hydrogen projects, H.E. Dr. Amani Abou-Zeid, the African Union Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, remarked "Green hydrogen is a game-changer for Africa, offering sustainable energy solutions while driving economic transformation. By advancing this strategy, Africa stands to not only enhance its energy security but also play a critical role in the global transition toward cleaner, more sustainable energy sources"

African Energy Efficiency Strategy: Advancing Energy Productivity for a Sustainable Africa

The African Union (AU) has placed significant emphasis not only on achieving universal access to electricity across the continent but also on improving energy efficiency to ensure sustainable development. The African Energy Efficiency Strategy and Action Plan (AfEES) outlines ambitious goals, aiming for a 50% increase in energy productivity by 2050 and 70% by 2063. This strategic framework focuses on deploying energy-efficient technologies and practices across critical sectors such as power, transport, and industry. It encourages the adoption of Minimum Energy Performance Standards (MEPS), rigorous market surveillance, and the implementation of smart grid technologies to create a resilient and sustainable energy system.

Dr. Abou-Zeid, emphasized the critical role of the AfEES in achieving Africa's energy and climate goals, noting that the strategy will drive both economic growth and environmental sustainability. The strategy is designed to address the growing demand for energy across the continent while tackling the urgent need for climate action.

Continental Policy on Climate Resilient and Smart Infrastructure: Building Africa's Future-Proof Infrastructure for a Changing Climate

The ministerial gathering also approved the Climate Resilient and Smart Infrastructure Policy, meant to ensure that Africa's infrastructure investments are climate-proof, adaptable, and sustainable. By prioritizing the development of resilient energy, transport, water, and ICT infrastructure, this strategy will strengthen Africa's ability to withstand climate impacts while promoting economic growth and regional integration. The emphasis on smart infrastructure will ensure that investments are future-proof and capable of adapting to climate-related challenges.

The strategies, marking a critical turning point in Africa's efforts to enhance climate resilience, reduce emissions, and achieve sustainable infrastructure development, will be presented to the 46th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council in February 2025 for adoption and subsequent implementation by AU member states.

African Ministers Endorse Landmark Strategies to Underpin Climate Resilience, Promote Alternative Fuels

African Ministers of transport and energy endorsed five ambitious strategies aimed at underpinning climate resilience and enhancing the sustainability of infrastructure across the continent. These strategies align with the African Union's (AU) vision to promote sustainable development, tackle climate change, and drive economic growth through clean energy solutions, safer air transport, and efficient resource use.

Convened under the African Union's Specialised Technical Committee on Transport, and Energy (STC-T&E), the 3rd extraordinary ministerial meeting that took place from 3-5 December 2024, gathered ministers and experts from more than 39 African countries.

Focused on sustainable aviation, green hydrogen, energy efficiency, and smart infrastructure development, all designed to promote a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable future for Africa, the strategies represent a significant step toward realizing Africa's climate goals, aligning with the global sustainability agenda while addressing the continent's unique opportunities & challenges.

Continental Strategy for Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF) and Low Carbon Aviation Fuels (LCAF):

The Continental Strategy for Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF) and Low Carbon Aviation Fuels (LCAF) was developed by the African union cognizant of the urgent need to decarbonize the aviation sector and support continental efforts for net zero transport emissions by 2050 in line with the global climate agenda.

By 2050, the aviation industry will require 450-500 million tonnes of SAF annually, a target that can be achieved through innovative feedstocks and technologies. The strategy calls for the development of a robust policy and regulatory framework, the enhancement of technical capacity, and the mobilization of funding for SAF production in Africa. This strategic shift will reduce the continent's carbon footprint and establish Africa as a leader in the global transition to sustainable aviation.

Chair of the STC- T&E H.E. Dr. Alemu Sime, Minister of Transport and Logistics of Ethiopia, stated, "This strategy positions Africa at the forefront of the green aviation revolution, helping to reduce emissions while creating economic opportunities in the aviation sector".



AfSEM: A Transformative Milestone for Africa's Energy Future

The African Single Electricity Market (AfSEM) is strategically designed to advance Africa's energy security, ensure sustainability, and drive economic integration across the continent. Anchored in the principles of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement and aligned with the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063, AfSEM envisions a harmonized, well-connected, and competitive electricity market to deliver secure, reliable, affordable, and sustainable electricity services for all African nations.

Realizing Africa's Energy Vision

Adopted at the 34th AU Summit in February 2021 and officially launched in June 2021, AfSEM was further endorsed as a flagship initiative of AU Agenda 2063 at the 44th Executive Council Meeting in February 2024. The accompanying Continental Power System Masterplan (CMP) serves as the blueprint for developing the generation, transmission, and enabling infrastructure required to operationalize AfSEM fully.

Through AfSEM, African countries can:

- Harness vast renewable energy resources, including solar, wind, hydro, and geothermal, through cross-border electricity trade.
- Provide affordable and sustainable energy access to improve socio-economic conditions.
- Enhance regional and continental energy security through interconnected power markets.

Strategic Implementation and Governance

AfSEM's short-term implementation phase (2025-2028) focuses on establishing governance organs, strengthening regional power pools (EAPP, SAPP, WAPP, CAPP, and COMELEC), enhancing regulatory frameworks, and building institutional capacity. Plans are underway to develop functional regional regulatory authorities to harmonize network codes, market rules, and investment policies.

Key Highlights of 2024

AfSEM was promoted at major events throughout the year, showcasing progress, challenges, and collaborative opportunities:

1. First AfSEM Electricity Forum | April 2024 | Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt

The inaugural AfSEM Electricity Forum was held alongside the HLEF Conference, gathering utilities from over 30 countries, regional power pools, RECs, AfDB, and other continental institutions.

In his opening speech, Eng. Papa M. Biteye, President of APUA, emphasized the importance of addressing cultural, regulatory, and financial barriers to achieve a unified electricity market. He called for harmonization of market rules to facilitate seamless cross-border electricity trade.

The AUC Director for Infrastructure and Energy, represented by Mr. Shehu Ibrahim Khaleel, highlighted the Forum's role as a critical organ of AfSEM governance, providing a platform to discuss technical aspects, capacity-building, and implementation strategies. The Director underscored the need for substantial investment to strengthen regional institutions and national stakeholders, with plans to collaborate with the African Network of Centres of Excellence in Electricity (ANCEE) for capacity-building programs.

2. Second Energy Projects Promotion Conference | October 2024 | Beijing, China

As part of the AU-China Energy Partnership, the second conference focused on energy cooperation to accelerate renewable energy projects and continental initiatives like AfSEM, PIDA, and AREI.

H.E. Amb. Rahamatalla Mohamed Ousman delivered a keynote, while the AUC team, led by Ms. Salome Maheya and Mr. Shehu Ibrahim Khaleel, highlighted Africa's energy development priorities over the next decade. Discussions emphasized the importance of aligning partnerships with Africa's vision for sustainable energy development.

3. Eastern Africa Power Pool Regional Trade Conference | December 2024 | Mombasa, Kenya

This pivotal event addressed the roadmap for launching the regional day-ahead market (DAM) in Eastern Africa by Q1 2025, a critical milestone under AfSEM's Action Plan. Policymakers, power pool representatives, and financial institutions explored ways to enhance transparency, trust, and resilience in regional electricity trade.

The AUC Infrastructure and Energy Division (IED), represented by Ms. Sara Elhag Ahmed and Mr. Shehu Ibrahim Khaleel, underscored the role of regional power markets in stimulating renewable energy development and improving climate resilience.



The African Single Electricity Market (AfSEM) represents a transformative initiative that holds the promise of revolutionizing energy access, driving economic growth, and propelling regional integration across the African continent. A lot of groundwork has already been done since its official launch in June 2021. Now it is time to take a closer look and explore the next steps to reaching energy access for all Africans.



4. Bilateral Engagement with the Independent Regulatory Board (IRB) of EAPP

The Department convened its first bilateral meeting with the IRB on December 16, 2024, at the AUC Headquarters. Discussions focused on strengthening regulatory frameworks to operationalize the Eastern Africa day-ahead market. IRB highlighted technical, economic, and legal areas requiring AUC's support under the AfSEM Technical Assistance program.



Looking Ahead

AfSEM's implementation is gaining momentum, laying the groundwork for an integrated, competitive, and sustainable electricity market in Africa. By addressing regulatory challenges, building institutional capacity, and fostering regional cooperation, AfSEM is well-positioned to deliver on its vision. As Africa moves toward realizing Agenda 2063, the African Union Commission remains committed to supporting Member States, regional power pools, and institutions to achieve a fully operational and interconnected electricity market—a key pillar of Africa's economic transformation.

Africa's Bold Commitment to Clean Cooking at COP29 Marks a Milestone for Sustainable Development

At COP 29, the Africa Pavilion hosted a pivotal high-level event, Addressing Clean Cooking Challenges in Africa, underscoring the critical importance of prioritizing clean cooking in global climate dialogues. The session called for urgent action to scale up clean cooking solutions across Africa, emphasizing its role in protecting public health, combating deforestation, reducing carbon emissions, and driving sustainable economic growth.

The joint event of the African Union Commission and the United Republic of Tanzania brought together influential leaders who stressed the importance of robust leadership and cross-sector collaboration in realizing a clean cooking future for all Africans.

The event featured powerful remarks from influential leaders, who emphasized the importance of advancing supportive policies, unlocking financing, and harnessing technology to overcome barriers to clean cooking access. Among the speakers were H.E. Philip Isdor Mpango, Vice President of the United Republic of Tanzania; ministers from various African countries; senior officials from the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Development Bank (AfDB), and the International Energy Agency (IEA).

In his address, Vice President Mpango, representing President Samia Suluhu Hassan of Tanzania, underscored the vital role of African leadership in driving the clean cooking agenda while encouraging youth innovation. "Considering Africa's young population, we must harness the creativity and innovation of our youth to develop tailored clean cooking solutions. In terms of financing, exploring options such as pay-as-you-go models, smart metering, and prepaid systems—allowing for installment payments—can make clean cooking solutions more accessible to a wider population."

Cognizant of its urgency the African Union Commission launched the African Clean Cooking Programme to drive the continent's transition toward clean, sustainable cooking solutions.



In her opening remarks, Dr Amani Abou-Zeid, Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy at the African Union Commission called for the shifting of the manufacturing, distribution, and supply chains of clean cooking technologies closer to those who need them most in Africa, to stimulate local economies, empower communities, and enhance energy access for all. "We call on all stakeholders to collaborate in building national fuel baskets, leveraging local energy resources, existing value chains, and infrastructure, to ensure a just clean cooking transition that supports socio-economic growth".

According to Commissioner Abou-Zeid, "Investing in clean cooking is an investment in the future of our children and in the sustainability of our economies. This is not just a challenge but also an opportunity to build a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable Africa for future generations."



The year 2024 portends a watershed moment for clean cooking solutions across the African continent. African leaders and global institutions are calling for immediate action, setting ambitious goals, and committing financial support to achieve universal access to clean cooking technologies by 2030. Access to clean and affordable energy for cooking remains elusive for hundreds of millions of people in Africa, with severe consequences for health, the environment, and economic development. However, the political will and financial resources now coming together could finally propel a transition to cleaner, more sustainable cooking solutions at scale. Clean cooking can be a key climate solution, with potential emissions reductions of 1.5 gigatons by 2030. It could contribute around 10% of the proposed doubling of energy efficiency improvement by 2030.

The event also reaffirmed Africa's commitment to the Nairobi Declaration on Climate Change and Call to Action, where leaders pledged to create enabling environments, enact supportive policies, and drive investments in climate-conscious sectors, including clean cooking.

African Development Bank Vice President Kevin Kariuki said, "Africa's just energy transition is incomplete without addressing the clean cooking gap given that around a billion Africans are still reliant on unsustainable and polluting fuels," reaffirming the Bank's pledges of USD 2 billion in financing over 10 years to clean cooking, originally made at COP 28.

Executive Director of the International Energy Agency (IEA), Dr Fatih Birol highlighted the importance of clean cooking as a global climate priority, "ensuring all Africans have access to clean cooking technologies is achievable this decade. The IEA is working closely with Tanzania and other countries across Africa and beyond — as well as the African Union and African Development Bank Group — to make 2024 a turning point following our major summit on the issue earlier this year that mobilized over \$2 billion to help address this critical energy, gender, economic and climate challenge."

Another significant moment during the event was the launch of the Sustainable Scaling: Meeting the Clean Cooking Challenge in Africa publication by the African Union's Energy Commission (AFREC). The report provides insights into innovative technologies, financing mechanisms, and policy frameworks needed to support the transition to cleaner cooking.

African ministers present at the event expressed a unified commitment to accelerating the deployment of clean cooking technologies and ensuring that Africa leads the way in developing sustainable, innovative, and accessible solutions.





Catalyzing Investment for Geothermal Development in Africa: AUC's Participation in ARGeo-C10

From October 25-27, 2024, representatives from the African Union Commission (AUC) through its Department of Infrastructure and Energy, participated in the 10th African Rift Geothermal Conference (ARGeo-C10) held in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania. This landmark event, themed "Catalyzing Investment for Geothermal Development in Africa," brought together stakeholders from across the continent and beyond to explore the vast potential of geothermal energy.

During ARGeo-C10, discussions underscored how geothermal energy presents a remarkably reliable, cost-effective, and indigenous alternative to traditional power sources. Representatives from the AUC emphasized the importance of this renewable energy resource not only in generating electricity but also in its potential applications in agriculture and industry. By showcasing the adaptability and efficiency of geothermal energy, the conference aimed to inspire stakeholders to invest in this promising sector.

Keynote speeches from industry leaders highlighted successful geothermal projects that have transformed local economies, providing a roadmap for expanding such initiatives across Africa. Workshops facilitated knowledge sharing on best practices in technology development, project financing, and regulatory frameworks.

In addition, the conference served as a platform for networking, allowing participants to forge vital connections that would catalyze future collaborations and investments. The AUC delegates engaged with other stakeholders, sharing insights on policies and strategies that fuel geothermal energy development.

In their remarks, the AUC representatives reiterated the urgency of integrating geothermal energy into the broader energy mix of African nations. By investing in geothermal projects, countries could significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to their climate goals while promoting economic growth. As ARGeo-C10 concluded, the enthusiasm for geothermal development was palpable. AUC's involvement not only marked a commitment to sustainable energy solutions but also highlighted a profound belief in the continent's potential to leverage its natural resources for a greener, more prosperous future.

Thus, the conference represented a significant step forward in catalyzing African investments in geothermal energy, reinforcing the notion that together, stakeholders can ensure that the rich geothermal resources of the continent are harnessed for the benefit of all. As a result, the path for a sustainable energy future in Africa looks ever more promising, with geothermal energy poised to play a crucial role.



African Union Launches the African Energy Efficiency Programme at COP29

In a crucial step towards securing a sustainable and energy-efficient future for the African continent, the African Union (AU) launched the African Energy Efficiency Programme and the African Energy Efficiency Alliance at COP 29 in Baku, Azerbaijan. Energy efficiency is central to Africa's efforts to enhance energy access, reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs), lower energy costs, and foster a clean energy transition.

The African Energy Efficiency Strategy (AfeES) lays out a roadmap for implementing energy-efficient practices across key sectors, including power, industry, agriculture, buildings, transport and clean cooking, as well as a clear pathway to achieving the AU's ambitious energy productivity targets. These efforts are fully aligned with Africa's commitment to the Paris Agreement and the global push to reduce emissions and enhance climate resilience.

Her Excellency Dr. Amani Abou-Zeid, Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy at the African Union Commission, highlighted the continent's commitment to ambitious energy goals: "We are currently mobilizing stakeholders to implement the African Energy Efficiency Strategy and Action Plan. Through this strategy, we aim to enhance Africa's energy productivity by 50% by 2050 and 70% by 2063, in alignment with the global target to double energy efficiency by 2030."

According to the AFREC savings assessment report, African countries could save up to 175 TWh (equivalent to over 80 new 500 MW power plants) by 2040 through appliance market transformation initiatives. These savings are based on market transformation efforts targeting lighting, cooling appliances, motors, and transformers.



Paving the Path to Sustainable Energy: AU-EU Collaboration at PIDA Week

At the heart of the PIDA Week, a pivotal session was held under the theme "Advancing Africa's Energy Future: AU-EU Collaboration for Accelerated Financing." This session brought together key stakeholders from both the African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU), united in their shared vision of driving Africa's energy and infrastructure goals in alignment with Agenda 2063. The event underscored the vital role of cooperation between these two continents in advancing Africa's energy future.

The discussion centered on several major initiatives aimed at transforming Africa's energy landscape, including the African Single Electricity Market (AfSEM), the Continental Power Systems Masterplan (CMP), and the Africa-EU Green Energy Initiative (AEGEI). These initiatives are at the forefront of efforts to ensure sustainable energy access, promote regional integration, and reduce the energy deficit across the continent.

The high-level panel discussion delved deeply into the progress made so far, highlighting how collaboration between Africa and Europe has already led to significant advancements in the energy sector. However, the session also focused on an urgent question: How can these joint initiatives—AfSEM, CMP, and AEGEI—secure the financing needed to meet Africa's growing energy demands? The panelists emphasized that while the strategic frameworks are in place, the key to success lies in securing sustained investment to bring these projects to fruition.

The importance of innovative funding mechanisms, public-private partnerships, and regional cooperation were key points of discussion. Both the AU and the EU are committed to creating an enabling environment where these financing solutions can thrive, ensuring that the continent's energy needs are met in a sustainable and equitable manner.

Africa's Groundbreaking Continental AI Strategy Poised to Unlock the Continent's Full Potential



Unleashing Africa's Artificial Intelligence Potential: A Vision for the Future

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is not merely a technological advancement—it's a profound catalyst for change, reshaping industries and societies around the world. From revolutionizing healthcare and agriculture to transforming finance and education, AI's impact is undeniable. As the technology continues to evolve, it holds the potential to reshape economies, address complex global challenges, and drive societal progress.

For Africa, AI represents a powerful and strategic asset crucial to realizing the goals of Agenda 2063 and the SDGs. Far from being a distant possibility, AI presents a tangible opportunity to spark innovation, build new industries, and create high-value jobs across the continent. Importantly, AI offers the potential to preserve and advance African culture, while simultaneously fostering greater continental integration.

In a historic move, the African Union (AU) Executive Council endorsed the Continental AI Strategy during its 45th Ordinary Session in Accra, Ghana, on July 18-19, 2024. This endorsement marks a significant milestone in Africa's pursuit of harnessing AI to meet the continent's developmental aspirations. The strategy provides a framework for an Africa-centric approach to AI development—one that prioritizes ethical, responsible, and equitable use of the technology while addressing Africa's unique challenges.

The African Union's commitment to AI as a tool for sustainable development is clear. The strategy emphasizes the need for a continent-wide, people-centered, and development-oriented approach to AI. By focusing on these principles, the strategy aims to ensure that AI benefits all Africans and contributes to achieving the SDGs and the ambitions laid out in Agenda 2063.

Building a Unified Approach

One of the primary objectives of the Continental AI Strategy is to foster unified national approaches among AU Member States. As the landscape of AI evolves rapidly, the need for coordinated efforts across the continent has never been more critical. The strategy calls for African nations to come together to navigate the complexities of AI-driven change, emphasizing collaboration at regional and global levels.

The strategy envisions Africa not only as a beneficiary of AI but as a global leader in inclusive and responsible AI development. This vision calls for building AI capabilities across several key areas, including infrastructure, talent development, innovation, datasets, and partnerships. It also stresses the importance of safeguarding against potential risks, such as algorithmic biases, job displacement, and cybersecurity threats.

Ministerial Session on AI: A Critical Step Forward

A month before the Executive Council's endorsement, over 130 African ministers and experts gathered virtually for the 2nd Extraordinary Session of the Specialized Technical Committee on Communication and ICT, held from June 11 to 13, 2024. This session marked an important step in igniting digital transformation across the continent, fueled by the rapid advancements in AI technology and applications.

The session was an opportunity for African leaders and experts to reflect on the role AI can play in addressing the continent's most pressing challenges. During the opening of the ministerial session, Dr. Amani Abou-Zeid, African Union Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, stressed the importance of harnessing AI for the well-being of Africa's people. She highlighted the need for a continent-wide, harmonized approach to ensure that AI technology addresses Africa's unique challenges while minimizing its risks. "For us Africans, Artificial Intelligence presents tremendous opportunities. It is a driving force for positive transformational change, as well as economic growth and social progress." She further commended the endorsement of the strategy, calling it a "timely and strategic move" for the continent's future.

A Strategy for Inclusive Growth

The Continental AI Strategy is not just about technology; it is about people. At the core of the strategy is the goal of ensuring that AI serves the needs of Africa's diverse populations.

The strategy calls for AI systems that reflect Africa's diversity, languages, cultures, and geographical contexts, while also promoting inclusivity and equitable access to AI-driven benefits.

By investing in human capital—particularly Africa's youth, innovators, computer scientists, data experts, and AI researchers—the strategy aims to cultivate an AI-ready workforce capable of competing on the global stage. Strengthening research and innovation ecosystems, building regulatory environments, and developing AI infrastructure are also central components of the strategy, ensuring that African nations are prepared to harness AI for the long-term benefit of their people.

The African Union's vision is clear: AI is a tool for empowerment, economic growth, and societal progress. The strategy will help African countries unlock the transformative power of AI to achieve their development goals, particularly in areas such as education and skills, health, and agriculture.

The Role of Homegrown Solutions

The Minister of Information, Communications, Science Technology, and Innovation of the Kingdom of Lesotho, and Chair of the Bureau of the Technical Committee, H.E. Ms. Nthathi Moorsi, emphasized the potential for AI to drive homegrown solutions that stimulate economic growth and sustainable development across Africa. She noted that AI-enabled systems are critical to promoting local innovation, particularly as Africa works toward achieving the priorities outlined in Agenda 2063 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

H.E. Moorsi said, "The adoption of AI-enabled systems will promote homegrown solutions that accelerate economic growth and advance sustainable development, contributing significantly to the goals outlined in Agenda 2063 and the SDGs."

A Bright Future for Africa



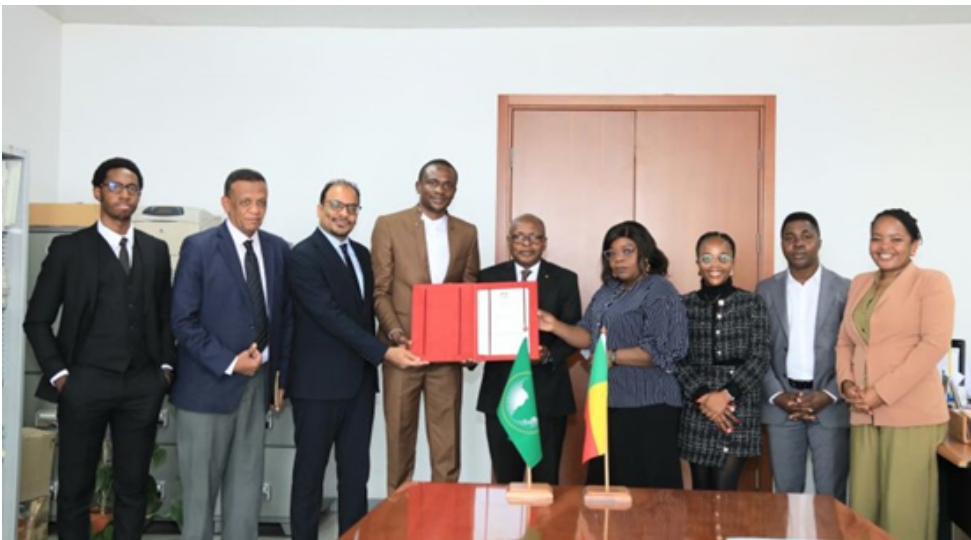
Africa's potential to lead in AI is not just a possibility; it is a reality in the making. By focusing on key areas such as talent development, infrastructure, and partnerships, the Continental AI Strategy provides the roadmap for Africa to embrace the transformative power of AI. The future is bright, and AI will undoubtedly be a critical driver of Africa's economic growth, innovation, and prosperity in the years to come. Dr. Abou-Zeid pointed out, "Adapting AI to African realities is critical. AI systems should be able to reflect our diversity, languages, culture, history, and geographical contexts." She emphasized that the strategy aims to create an inclusive AI ecosystem that reflects Africa's ambitions, providing a clear path toward responsible AI innovation and adoption.

Malabo Convention on Cybersecurity and Data Protection Gains Traction as More African Countries Join

The Republic of Benin Deposited **Instrument of Ratification of the (AU) Malabo Convention on Cybersecurity and Personal Data Protection.**

The African Union Headquarters proudly welcomed H.E. Hervé D. Djokpe, the Ambassador of the Republic of Benin in Ethiopia, along with his distinguished delegation for the official deposit of the Instrument of Ratification of the AU Malabo Convention on Cybersecurity and Personal Data Protection. This important milestone highlights Benin's dedication to strengthening cybersecurity measures and safeguarding personal data across the African continent.

The Malabo Convention is a vital framework that fosters collaboration and protection in the digital realm, ensuring the security of data belonging to African citizens while building trust in the digital economy. With Benin as the 17th country to ratify this convention, we anticipate the participation of more nations in this initiative, paving the way for a safer and more resilient digital future for Africa



Global DPI Summit in Cairo

The Global DPI Summit, held in Cairo in October this year, brought together global leaders and experts to discuss the transformative potential of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for Africa and the Arab region. A key panel titled "Spotlight on Advancing DPI for an Inclusive, Sustainable, Resilient, and Innovative Future" focused on how DPI can drive systemic change by fostering innovation, enhancing connectivity, and promoting inclusive growth. Discussions emphasized DPI's role in bridging digital divides, addressing infrastructure challenges, and supporting sustainable development across the continent. Mr. Waleed Hamdi, the African Union Commission's Head of the Information Society Division, emphasized the African Digital Transformation Strategy, which prioritizes digital inclusion across all 55-member states, ensuring no one is left behind. He called for united efforts among governments, the private sector, and academia to capitalize on the opportunities presented by DPI.

Key insights from the summit included the importance of public-private partnerships and a human-centric approach to digital inclusion, as noted by other speakers like Alessandro Fracassetti, Mahmoud Badawi, Leila Serhan, and Melle Tiel Groenestege.



Shaping Africa's AI Future Strategies for Inclusive and Collaborative AI

The African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, recently hosted a pivotal gathering focused on "Shaping Africa's Artificial Intelligence (AI) Future: Strategies for Inclusive and Collaborative National AI Policy Development." This event emphasized the urgent need for unified AI policies and strategies across the continent to unlock AI's vast potential for driving Africa's socio-economic transformation.

During dynamic discussions, participants highlighted the importance of collaboration in harnessing AI's benefits for Africa. Mr. Waleed Al Hamdi delivered opening remarks on behalf of Her Excellency Dr. Amani Abou-Zeid, addressing the recently adopted Africa AI strategy and underscoring its significance in shaping a collective approach to AI development across the continent.



African Digital Compact (ADC)

As Africa sets out to spearhead a transformative digital revolution, the African Digital Compact (ADC) emerges as the continent's unified voice in this ambitious journey. Adopted at the 45th Ordinary Session of the African Union Executive Council held in Accra, Ghana on July 18-19, 2024, the ADC was pronounced as Africa's common position on digital transformation by the continent's ministers.

This bold initiative is designed to harness the transformative power of digital technologies to drive sustainable development, foster innovation, and ensure digital inclusivity across Africa. ADC brings together governments, businesses, and civil society in a concerted effort to bridge digital divides, protect digital rights, and create a secure and equitable digital environment for all Africans.

By aligning with the Global Digital Compact, while addressing Africa's unique challenges and opportunities, the ADC is committed to building a digitally empowered Africa where technology fuels economic growth, societal well-being, and a prosperous future for everyone.

ADC is an initiative anchored in Agenda 2063 and the AU Digital transformation Strategy.





Africa's Robust Online Child Online Safety and Empowerment Policy

The African Union Child Online Safety and Empowerment Policy establishes key principles such as children's right to safety, privacy, and online participation with prime importance attached to children's best interests and will support member states in developing strategies and programs to promote child online safety and empowerment. The 44th Ordinary Session of the African Union Executive Council that took place from 14-15 February 2024 in Addis Ababa adopted the African Child Online Safety and Empowerment Policy that seeks to provide a strong framework for implementing children's rights in the digital environment and ensure that children maximize the benefits of information and communication technologies while minimizing risks.

The African Union Commission believes that with the right safeguards in place, the digital environment can be harnessed to provide abundant opportunities to enrich children's lives, learning, and development.

Figures show that internet access and usage by children and young people is growing rapidly across Africa and that one in three internet users is a child. However, many children lack the knowledge and skills to stay safe online, while legal protections remain inadequate in many countries. The new policy aims to address these gaps. Access the policy: <https://au.int/en/documents/20240521/african-union-child-online-safety-and-empowerment-policy>



African Union Participation in The Ministerial Meeting of G20 Working Group on Digital Economy

H.E. Mrs. Nthathi Moorosi, Minister of Information, Communications, Science Technology, and Innovation of Lesotho, and Chair of the African Union's Specialized Technical Committee on Communication and ICT (STC-CICT), represented the AU at the G20 Digital Economy Ministerial Meeting on 13 September in Maceió, Brazil.

At the meeting, ministers discussed challenges and opportunities arising from digital transformation, including digital inclusion, universal connectivity, digital government, and artificial intelligence for sustainable development. H.E. Mrs. Moorosi highlighted that digital transformation is a top priority for African leaders, citing AU decisions and frameworks to address connectivity gaps, digital skills, and the trust and security of digital technologies. She emphasized the importance of integrating digital into sectors like education and health to ensure that the benefits of the digital age reach all African citizens.

Moorosi welcomed G20 efforts to develop metrics for universal connectivity and expressed support for AU initiatives to boost investments in green and high-quality digital infrastructures tailored to Africa's needs. She also praised the G20's work on digital identity governance, stressing the urgency of implementing secure digital identity systems in Africa to enhance social, economic, and financial inclusion.

Addressing challenges such as misinformation and the misuse of technology, Moorosi called for a global, coordinated response and commended Brazil's efforts in tackling these issues. She also discussed artificial intelligence as a powerful tool to accelerate Africa's development, highlighting the AU's commitment to promoting ethical, responsible AI to achieve Agenda 2063 and the UN Agenda 2030 goals.

The AU's participation in the G20 Working Group on Digital Economy marks a significant step toward positioning Africa as a key player in shaping global digital policies and advancing its role in the digital economy.



Interoperable Digital ID: A Key Enabler for Continental Integration Session at 8th PIDA Week

At the 8th PIDA Week, a crucial session was dedicated to exploring the potential of Interoperable Digital IDs as a key enabler for cross-border mobility and trade across Africa. The session focused on advancing the standardization of digital ID systems across the continent, aiming to facilitate seamless movement of people and goods within the region. Discussions highlighted the importance of identifying and prioritizing use cases for interoperable digital IDs, and proposed a common standard to ensure their smooth integration across African nations. This initiative is set to enhance regional cooperation, streamline trade processes, and support the goal of a more integrated, connected Africa.

The implementation of interoperable digital IDs could significantly reduce barriers to trade, improve security, and provide citizens with greater access to services across borders. By adopting a standardized digital ID system, African countries can create a unified platform for identity verification, enabling faster, safer transactions, and reducing administrative hurdles. The session underscored the importance of collaboration between governments, private sector stakeholders, and technology experts to build a robust framework for digital identity systems that reflect Africa's diverse needs and realities. This move is a crucial step towards realizing the vision of a fully integrated and digitally connected continent.

The Republic of Angola Joins the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) as the 37th Member

The Republic of Angola officially joined the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM), a flagship initiative of the African Union aimed at creating a single unified air transport market in Africa allowing African airlines to take advantage of open skies between Member States.

H.E. Commissioner Dr. Amani Abou-Zeid welcomed Angola's membership, saying "It will further strengthen air connectivity within Africa and boost trade and tourism across the continent by making air transport seamless and more affordable. We look forward to working closely with Angola to further implement SAATM and reap its benefits."

SAATM continues to gain momentum with 37 members to date covering over 90% of the total aviation market in Africa serving 1 billion people. Dr Abou-Zeid went on to say that the full operationalisation of SAATM will be a major boost to accelerate regional integration in Africa reiterating that "The African Union Commission continues to encourage all member states to sign and ratify the SAATM legal instruments to allow for full implementation of the initiative".



THE CONTINENTAL TECHNICAL WORKSHOP ON ROAD TRANSPORT

From June 5th to 7th, 2024, the African Union Commission hosted a significant workshop in Accra, Ghana, aimed at harmonizing road transport regulations across Africa. This workshop brought together representatives from ECOWAS, ECCAS, and various transport stakeholders to enhance regional integration and support the successful implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA).

Key discussions focused on the necessity for an integrated regulatory framework, effective vehicle load management, and the pivotal role of digitalization in boosting road transport efficiency. The workshop fostered collaborative efforts aimed at creating a more sustainable, efficient, and unified road transport sector across the continent. These efforts are essential in facilitating smoother trade and mobility within Africa, ultimately supporting the broader goals of economic integration and development.



Continental Technical Working Group on Aviation Infrastructure Gap Analysis and Seamless Airspace Architecture to Support SAATM

The African Union Commission, in collaboration with AFRAA and ICAO, organized the inaugural Technical Working Group (TWG) to undertake a crucial Aviation Infrastructure Gap Analysis, aimed at developing an airspace master plan for the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM). Held from 27-30 June 2023 in Casablanca, Morocco, the first TWG meeting set the terms of reference and work plan for the Africa 2023 aviation infrastructure gap analysis. The meeting also outlined the roles of various stakeholders in contributing to and collaborating on the study. The gap analysis will be based on the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) requirements for implementing Basic Building Blocks (BBBs) and Aviation System Block Upgrades (ASBUs) as outlined in the Global Air Navigation Plan (GANP) and relevant Regional Air Navigation Plans (ANPs), while aligning with ongoing regional initiatives to ensure necessary harmonization.



African Port Digitalization Study Validation Workshop

The AUC Port Digitalization Study Validation Workshop, in collaboration with SSATP and AFD, brought together key stakeholders at the African union commission Headquarters to discuss the challenges and opportunities in advancing digitalization across African ports. Key topics included the need for increased investment in ICT infrastructure, stronger government support, skills development, and regional cooperation. The workshop emphasized the importance of aligning port authorities and governments to drive digital transformation effectively.





Urgent Call for Action: Ratify the African Road Safety Charter to Save Lives and Drive Economic Growth

Road traffic deaths in Africa have reached alarming levels, with nearly 250,000 lives lost in 2021 alone, marking a significant increase in fatalities over the past decade. This tragic loss underscores the urgent need for concerted action to improve road safety across the continent. Rapid urbanization, the growing number of motorcycles, and an expanding vehicle fleet are all contributing to increased pressure on road networks, many of which were originally designed without safety features. This situation, coupled with insufficient resources and capacity within road safety agencies, has led to a growing risk for all road users, especially vulnerable ones, who account for 44% of fatalities in the region.

These rising numbers are not only a human tragedy but also a substantial barrier to Africa's sustainable economic growth. The impact of road traffic accidents extends beyond the loss of lives, leading to significant economic losses and creating obstacles to development, health, and poverty reduction goals. It is now widely recognized as a critical issue for the continent's progress toward integration, prosperity, and peace.

In response to this challenge, the African Union Commission (AUC), through its Infrastructure and Energy Division (AUC-IED), has partnered with key stakeholders and development partners to develop a shared approach to road safety management. The AUC has committed to supporting the Decade of Action for Road Safety by establishing a road safety observatory to monitor road fatalities, share best practices, and foster partnerships to reduce road casualties. This initiative also includes engaging governmental representatives to work collectively toward a safer and more efficient transportation system for Africa.



VISION FOR THE POST-2020 DECADE OF ACTION FOR ROAD SAFETY

The main goal is to reduce road traffic deaths and injuries by at least 50 per cent between 2021 and 2030 in line with the objective of the Second UN Decade of Action for Road Safety.

A POST-2020 AFRICAN ROAD SAFETY STRATEGY



A key component of these efforts is the African Road Safety Charter, adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State on January 30, 2016. The Charter serves as both an advocacy tool and a policy instrument, aiming to create a conducive environment for dramatically reducing road traffic crashes. However, the Charter cannot come into full effect until 15 AU Member States have ratified it. Currently, 13 countries have signed and deposited their instruments of ratification, but 2 more are needed to meet the threshold for the Charter to enter into force.

The time to act is now. We call on all African Union Member States to urgently ratify the African Road Safety Charter. By doing so, we can help reverse the rising trend of road fatalities, protect lives, and create a safer, more prosperous Africa for all. With the Charter in full effect, Africa will be better equipped to tackle its road safety challenges and pave the way for sustainable development, improved health outcomes, and a brighter future for generations to come.



Exploring Climate Finance for the African Integrated Rail Network

The African Integrated Rail Network is a major initiative under the African Union's Agenda 2063, aimed at revolutionizing transportation across the continent by establishing 13 pilot railway links. The network aims to facilitate smoother trade and the movement of people by connecting key African capitals and commercial hubs, enhancing economic integration and connectivity.

In line with this vision, the African Union's Department of Infrastructure and Energy, in collaboration with the GIZ African Union and the Central Corridor Transit Transport Facilitation Agency, recently organized a workshop in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The workshop focused on exploring climate finance options to help fund the ambitious project.

Given the scope and scale of the African Integrated Rail Network, securing adequate funding is crucial. Climate finance offers an opportunity to support this massive infrastructure project in an environmentally sustainable manner. Funding sources such as green bonds, climate funds, and development banks can provide the necessary capital to realize this vision. The project's potential to connect landlocked countries to coastal ports and reduce transportation costs holds the promise of transforming Africa's economy. The workshop participants also had the opportunity to visit Tanzania's newly inaugurated Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) project, which serves as a tangible example of how modern rail infrastructure can enhance regional connectivity and economic development.

Countries that have ratified the African Road Safety Charter include Benin, Central African Republic, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Mali, Morocco, Namibia, Nigeria, Niger, Togo, Senegal, Uganda, and Zambia.



15th Meeting of the Yamoussoukro Decision / Single African Air Transport Market (YD/SAATM) Monitoring Body

From October 28-30, 2024, the African Union Commission, in partnership with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the African Airlines Association (AFRAA), and the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC), convened the 15th meeting of the Yamoussoukro Decision / Single African Air Transport Market (YD/SAATM) Monitoring Body in Nairobi. The meeting focused on establishing the Dispute Settlement Mechanism (DSM) Administrative Council and reviewed several agenda items, including progress on the implementation of the Single African Air Transport Market, updates on Key Performance Indicators, and initiatives from partners aimed at supporting the initiative.

Key outcomes included a call for enhanced collaboration among stakeholders, advocacy for Multilateral Air Services Agreements (MASAs), and recommendations to further support the AFRAA Lab initiative. The meeting underscored the importance of strengthening capacity within African airlines and ensuring the adequate training of aviation professionals. This collective effort seeks to enhance air transport connectivity and improve regulatory frameworks across Africa, paving the way for more integrated, efficient, and sustainable air travel within the continent.

PIDA Steering Committee Passes Key Decisions to Accelerate Africa's Infrastructure Development



The PIDA Steering Committee recently convened to discuss progress and key initiatives aimed at advancing Africa's infrastructure development. During the meeting, the committee emphasized the importance of strengthening the PIDA Data Operating Framework, applauding AUDA NEPAD for its efforts in ensuring reliable and up-to-date data for successful project implementation. The committee also highlighted the critical role of AU-EU cooperation under the Global Gateway Africa-Europe Investment Package, advocating for a special stakeholders' dialogue to further explore this partnership.

Furthermore, the committee recognized the African Development Bank's (AfDB) continued support for PIDA PAP 2 projects, which are essential to driving regional infrastructure progress. With a focus on innovation, the committee underlined the pivotal role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and digital infrastructure in building resilient projects. Calls for enhanced collaboration between AUDA NEPAD, the AfCFTA Secretariat, and other key partners were made to ensure that PIDA projects are aligned with the AfCFTA goals, particularly in creating trade-enabling infrastructure across the continent. These collective efforts contribute to Africa's broader push for sustainable development and regional integration.

On June 7, 2024, the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire officially ratified the Revised African Maritime Transport Charter (2010), a significant milestone in the development of Africa's maritime sector. Adopted by the 15th Ordinary Session of the Assembly in Kampala, Uganda, on July 26, 2010, the Charter aims to enhance cooperation among African Union (AU) Member States in maritime transport, port management, inland waterways navigation, and related activities.

The revised Charter outlines several key principles, including the promotion of regional cooperation, the reform of port services, the development of multimodal transport systems, and the protection of the marine environment and seafarers. It is a critical instrument in strengthening Africa's shipping industry, which plays a vital role in international trade and is central to the success of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

During the signing ceremony, Prof. Hajer Gueldich, Director of the Legal Office, and Dr. Kamugisha Kazaura, Director of Infrastructure and Energy, welcomed the ratification, expressing gratitude for Côte d'Ivoire's commitment to advancing Africa's maritime sector. H.E. Maes Annio, Ambassador and Representative of Côte d'Ivoire, underscored the importance of this step in improving the efficiency of Africa's ports and transport systems, which are vital for the economic integration of the continent.

With Côte d'Ivoire's ratification, the number of AU Member States that have ratified the Revised Charter now stands at 13, including South Africa, Angola, Benin, and Kenya, among others. However, more countries must follow suit to ensure the full implementation of the Charter and to accelerate the development of Africa's maritime and transport infrastructure.

We call upon all remaining AU Member States to ratify the Revised African Maritime Transport Charter and contribute to the continent's collective efforts toward economic integration, improved transport efficiency, and sustainable maritime growth. Together, we can unlock the full potential of Africa's maritime sector for a prosperous future.

African Union at UIC General Assembly: Commissioner Abou-Zeid Highlighted Africa's Railway Development Endeavours



The International Union of Railways (UIC) hosted its 105th General Assembly in Paris, France, bringing together railway leaders from across the globe. The assembly focused on shaping the future of rail transport, with discussions on innovation, regional development, and sustainability as critical pillars for advancing the sector in a rapidly evolving world.

A highlight of the Assembly was the keynote speeches delivered by H.E. Dr Amani Abou-Zeid, African Union Commissioner for Infrastructure, Energy, and Digitalisation. Addressing both the African Regional Assembly and the General Assembly, Commissioner Abou-Zeid shared insights on Africa's rail development and the transformative potential of the African Integrated Rail Network (AIRN), a flagship initiative under the African Union's Agenda 2063. She emphasised that harmonised and integrated railway networks are key to unlocking Africa's trade, connectivity, and socio-economic potential. "Through partnerships between the African Union and UIC, we are paving the way for resilient and inclusive transport systems that support sustainable development across the continent," Commissioner Abou-Zeid stated.

She also highlighted the pressing challenges facing the African rail sector, including high transport costs and fragmented infrastructure, but pointed to the enormous opportunities rail offers in overcoming these barriers. The AIHSRN aims to create an interoperable, climate-resilient network that not only enhances trade but also reduces transport costs and connects communities across Africa.

Commissioner Abou-Zeid further underlined the importance of establishing common standards and technical specifications for the African rail network to ensure interoperability and safety. She stressed the need for a robust legal, regulatory, and institutional framework, coupled with efforts to digitise the sector, to foster greater competition and support the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

UIC Director General François Davenne and UIC Chair Dr. Alan Beroud both praised Africa's ambitious vision, with Davenne highlighting the rail sector's unique position to deliver transformative solutions to climate change, improve connectivity, and enhance economic growth. Dr. Beroud remarked, "Africa's potential in rail is unmatched, and its transformative projects inspire the global rail community."



African Union Joins Global Clean Power Alliance at the Recent G20 Summit to Accelerate Clean Energy Investments

At the recent G20 Summit in Brazil, the African Union (AU) took a significant step forward by joining the Global Clean Power Alliance, a new global initiative aimed at boosting clean energy investments across the world. This move aligns with the AU's ongoing commitment to advancing sustainable energy solutions, creating economic growth, and addressing climate change. The alliance's goals coincide with the commitments made during COP28, where world leaders vowed to triple renewable energy deployment and double energy efficiency improvements by 2030.

The AU's participation emphasizes Africa's key role in the global energy transition. As the summit continues, the AU is actively engaging with global stakeholders to ensure that Africa's energy needs and aspirations are well represented. This partnership presents an opportunity for the continent to access cutting-edge clean energy technologies and attract vital investments that will support its energy infrastructure and development needs.

The Global Clean Power Alliance aims to accelerate the global transition to clean energy with several key objectives. One of its primary goals is to triple global renewable energy capacity by scaling up sources like solar, wind, and hydro, addressing the growing demand for energy while reducing carbon footprints worldwide. Additionally, the Alliance focuses on ensuring energy access, security, and affordability, particularly addressing the energy access gap in Africa to provide reliable and affordable power to communities.

Another critical objective is to double the annual rate of energy efficiency improvements across sectors, enhancing energy use and reducing waste.

Promoting gender balance and inclusion is also central to the Alliance's mission, ensuring that energy transitions are inclusive and equitable, empowering women, girls, and marginalized groups. These goals are reinforced by the G20 Leaders' Declaration, which highlights Africa's contributions to global discussions on energy, digital infrastructure, and regional development. The African Union's (AU) role in these sectors is crucial as the continent moves towards sustainable and inclusive growth.

The AU has also made significant commitments in the digital sector, which were prominently featured at the G20 summit. These include harnessing digital technologies to reduce inequalities, ensuring universal connectivity while protecting privacy, and empowering women and vulnerable groups through digital tools. The AU is also focused on addressing the impact of artificial intelligence (AI), advocating for ethical frameworks to ensure responsible and equitable use of AI across sectors.

By joining the Global Clean Power Alliance, the African Union has solidified its position as a key player in the global energy transition. The AU's leadership on issues such as energy access, sustainability, and digital transformation emphasizes Africa's vital role in achieving a clean, inclusive, and sustainable future. As the world works toward meeting its 2030 targets, Africa's participation in these global initiatives will be pivotal in shaping the future of clean energy and climate action.

African Union at Mobile World Congress 2024: Changing Africa's Digital Narrative

An African Union delegation, led by H.E Dr. Amani Abou-Zeid, Commissioner for Infrastructure, Energy, and Digitalisation (IED), actively participated in the 2024 edition of the world's largest and most influential connectivity event. Commissioner Abou-Zeid was invited to speak at the GSMA Ministerial Programme, attended by industry ministers, CEOs, and telecom regulators. During her keynote speech in the session on Digital Inclusion, she explored ways to unlock the tremendous socio-economic opportunities of achieving digital equality for all. She emphasized that while many perceive Africa as lagging behind in technology, the continent is, in fact, a global leader in digitisation. Commissioner Abou-Zeid underscored that Africa is at the forefront of digitisation globally, with innovative solutions rapidly transforming the continent's digital landscape. She also noted that Africa views digitalisation as a key tool for economic growth, highlighting how the expansion of mobile connectivity, the rise of digital entrepreneurship, and the potential for e-governance, e-education, and smart agriculture could allow the continent to leapfrog traditional development obstacles.

Commissioner Abou-Zeid presented a compelling investment case for Africa, calling it the "next frontier market." She emphasized that Africa's rapidly growing population, increased digital access, and immense economic growth potential provide unparalleled investment opportunities. She boldly declared, "If you are not in Africa, you are not in business," urging global investors to seize the unprecedented opportunities in the continent.



As the world's top producer of critical minerals, Africa is also positioning itself to localize value chains and play a central role in powering global digital transformation. She stated, "The ultimate goal is an Africa that is a producer and manufacturer, not only a consumer in the global digital economy."

Commissioner Abou-Zeid also highlighted several important initiatives spearheaded by the African Union Commission. One of the key initiatives is the establishment of a Single Digital Market in Africa by 2030, as well as ongoing efforts to harmonize laws and regulations across the continent. She explained that these efforts would provide the enabling environment necessary to attract digital infrastructure investments, boost connectivity, and help Africa make its leap into the future.

Additionally, the smart mobility sessions offered opportunities for the IED to discuss collaboration with key partners in designing continental standards for electric vehicles. The discussions also explored how Africa's electric railways could benefit from high-quality digital solutions powered by 5G networks. These sessions were a significant step toward integrating advanced technologies into Africa's infrastructure, ensuring that the continent remains competitive in the digital age. The event further solidified Africa's place in the global digital economy and highlighted the AU's strategic direction in achieving sustainable and inclusive growth.

The Infrastructure and Energy Department is one of the key departments within the African Union. It is composed of three divisions: Energy, Information Society, and Transport and Mobility, along with one coordination office, the PIDA Coordination Unit. The department plays a crucial role in overseeing the African Union's infrastructure development programs.

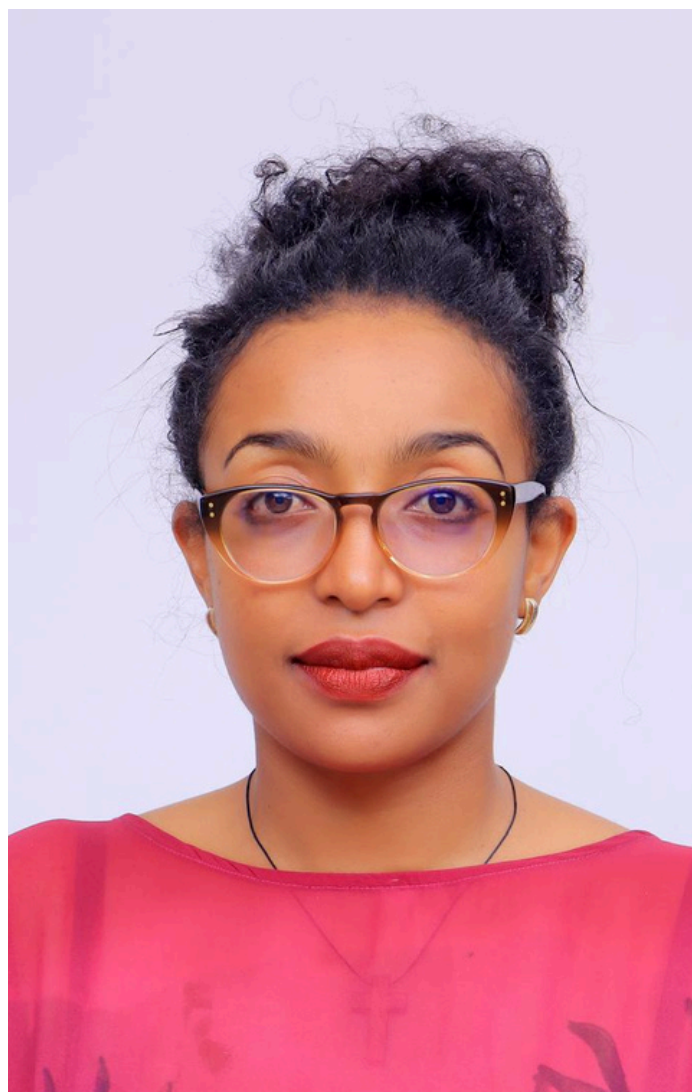
As we wrap up this edition of Spotlight on Infrastructure, we reflect on the significant strides made by the African Union's Infrastructure and Energy Department in 2024. From the groundbreaking discussions at PIDA Week 2024 to the crucial Specialized Ministerial Meeting on Transport and Energy, which approved key strategies to address climate change and promote alternative fuels, the collective efforts have contributed to establishing frameworks for a more integrated, sustainable, and resilient infrastructure and energy landscape across the continent.

We have witnessed key advancements in the energy, transport, and ICT sectors, underscoring our commitment to achieving the AU's Agenda 2063 goals. The approval of pivotal strategies, along with major development milestones, marks a transformative period in shaping Africa's infrastructure.

Discussions at COP 29 have further highlighted the AU's leadership in championing the sustainable infrastructure agenda on global platforms, reinforcing the importance of collaborative action to tackle climate challenges head-on.

We remain optimistic and excited for the future of Africa's infrastructure development as we continue to work together toward achieving transformative change. Thank you for joining us on this journey. We look forward to sharing even more progress and accomplishments in our upcoming editions. In our second edition, due in June 2025, we will focus on major achievements that strengthen our strides toward universal access to energy, sustainable and safe transport systems, and digital transformation.

We thank everyone who has been part of this journey and the team members who contributed to the tremendous work done in 2024.



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