

# AFRICA POLITICAL OUTLOOK 2026 FORCES OF THE FUTURE

Main Partners



26 & 27 MARCH 2026  
BRUSSELS

The Africa Political Outlook Summit convened on **26 and 27 March 2026** at the AfricaMuseum and The Hotel in Brussels, bringing together heads of state, ministers, ambassadors, Nobel laureates, CEOs, development finance leaders, cultural figures and civil society representatives from more than 50 countries. Across 14 sessions under the theme **Forces of the Future**, the summit produced concrete commitments on governance, sovereignty, finance, minerals, culture, technology, faith, diaspora and the blue economy.

## Our 2026 Speakers included



**H.E. Dr. Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera**  
6th President  
Republic of Malawi



**H.E. Mahamoud Ali Youssouf**  
Chairperson, African  
Union Commission



**Ms. Melissa Fleming**  
Under-Secretary-General,  
United Nations



**H.E. Ismaël Nabé**  
Minister of Planning,  
International Cooperation and  
Development, Republic of  
Guinea



**H.E. Serap Güler**  
Minister of State at the Federal  
Foreign Office, Federal  
Republic of Germany



**H.E. Gilbert F. Houngbo**  
Director-General, International  
Labour Organization; Former  
Prime Minister of Togo



**Hon. Mulambo H. Haimbe**  
Minister of Foreign Affairs and  
International Cooperation,  
Republic of Zambia



**Hon. Hildegard Bentele**  
Member of the European  
Parliament; Vice Chair of the  
Development Committee



**Mr. Tony O. Elumelu**  
Founder and Chairman,  
Tony Elumelu Foundation;  
Chairman, Heirs Holdings



**Hon. Younous Omarjee**  
Vice-President,  
European Parliament



**Professor Daron Acemoglu**  
2024 Nobel Prize in Economics  
Professor of Economics,  
Massachusetts Institute of  
Technology (MIT)



**Ms. Sandra Kassab**  
Director of the Africa  
Department, French  
Development Agency



**Apostle Grace Lubega Matovu**  
Founder and General Overseer  
Phaneroo Ministries International



**Mr. Youssou N'Dour**  
Senegalese artist, Founder  
of the Fondation Youssou  
N'Dour, Former Minister of  
Tourism of Senegal



**Amb. Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve**  
Director for Africa  
Federal Public Service Foreign  
Affairs of the Kingdom of Belgium



**H.E. Barry Faure**  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
and Diaspora, Republic of  
Seychelles



**Ms. Isabelle Herbert-Collet**  
Vice President, Customer  
Knowledge, Orange  
Innovation



**Mr. Pascal Agboyibor**  
Managing Partner,  
ASAFO & CO



**Mr. Jean Van Wetter**  
Director General, Belgian  
Development Agency  
(Enabel)



**Mr. Olivier Buyoya**  
Regional Director for West  
Africa, International Finance  
Corporation (IFC)



**Ms. Thouraya Triki**  
Director of International  
Partners, European  
Investment Bank (EIB)

### Opening & Governance Outlook

The 2026 APO Report, published in advance as a pre-summit analytical foundation for the first time, reframed the continent's core electoral challenge: the problem is no longer fraud on election day but the systematic narrowing of political competition before votes are cast, through accumulated court rulings, technical disqualifications and restricted civic space. Panelists called for the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance to be activated earlier and more consistently, and for international observer engagement to begin months before any ballot.

### Grand Dialogue Co-Building the Great Realignment

The session challenged European initiatives including the Global Gateway to move beyond reactive positioning and build genuinely equitable value chains, with the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism raised as a concrete example of where unilateral decisions land as protectionism in African partner countries. The panel concluded that combating illicit financial flows is the single most direct lever for unlocking endogenous capital, and that African-developed solutions must be treated as models to learn from rather than programmes to fund.

### Forces of Imagination Nollynomics & African Softpower

Africa's creative economy dominates global culture yet captures only a fraction of the value it generates, in large part because many nations still operate 1980s-era copyright institutions unequipped for digital royalty collection or protection against AI systems trained on African creative heritage without consent. Panelists called for cross-ministerial approaches linking culture with digital infrastructure and finance, and for creative industries to be treated as a high-potential investment sector rather than a cultural subsidy.

The forces that can heal, change and transform this world are also here, in Africa.

**Mr. Adébissi Djogan**

Founder & Executive Director, Africa Political Outlook



### Forces of Plurilateralism Africa in the Post-Aid Era

Nobel laureate Professor Daron Acemoglu set the structural stakes: without inclusive institutions built from the community level upward, AI's gains will pass the continent by while its costs fall hardest on unready populations. Guinea's Minister Nabé presented Simandou 2040, a \$200 billion integrated plan using iron ore revenues to build national value chains across agriculture, education, infrastructure and health, as a live illustration of sovereign development doctrine, modelled on how Gulf states used oil.

### Forces of Faith Africa, God & Us

Outside capital cities, religious leaders are often more trusted than governments, judicial systems or security forces – making them indispensable actors in political transitions and conflict prevention, as demonstrated in the Sahel, Sierra Leone and Mozambique. The panel called for a new model of state-religion partnership rooted in Ubuntu philosophy and servant leadership, replacing both co-option and mutual ignorance.

### Forces of Mining Securing African Critical Resources

Africa holds 30% of global critical mineral reserves and 70% of world cobalt, yet retains only 10% of the financial value. The 2025 cobalt export ban was cited as proof that decisive state action can produce an immediate doubling of commodity prices; panelists called for mandatory domestic processing requirements, transparent licensing frameworks, and integration of mining revenues into broader energy ecosystems as the foundational condition for industrial-scale processing.

## Forces of the Diaspora Circularity, Connectivity, Capital

The panel challenged the romantic view of diaspora remittances as a development engine: over \$100 billion annually, the flows represent roughly \$6 per person per month relative to Africa's population, and the overwhelming majority goes to immediate household needs rather than structural investment. Recommendations focused on autonomous diaspora-dedicated financial institutions, unified lobbying bodies, and a reorientation from remittance-as-charity to diaspora-as-strategic-investor.

Every one of us is limited, but our coming together creates a synergy that is unlimited. Nothing for us without us.

**H.E. Dr. Lazarus Chakwera**  
6th President of the Republic of Malawi



## COUNTRY SESSIONS

### Republic of Guinea

Simandou 2040, structured around 122 mega-projects and 36 reforms across five pillars, was presented as a template for using mineral revenues as transformative catalysts. The key implementation mechanism: presidential and ministerial Delivery Units with tracking dashboards to move plans from paper to execution.

### Democratic Republic of the Congo

The DRC spotlight centred on the Congolese Battery Council's plan to use cobalt and copper dominance as leverage for sovereign industrial partnerships, conditioning mineral access on technology transfer and local equity participation. The \$14 billion Grand Inga Hydropower Project was identified as the single most critical enabler of industrialisation.

### Nation Building in Africa

The session reframed the tension between inherited political structures and Africa's diverse ethnic and cross-border identities not as a problem to be solved but as an invitation to rethink sovereignty itself. Credible governance, panelists argued, is built not through external benchmarks but through the deliberate cultivation of legitimacy, requiring political will, civic participation and leaders genuinely committed to a shared national project.

## STRATEGIC CONCLAVES

### Forces of Innovation Technological Partnerships & Digital Sovereignty

The panel drew a hard line between connectivity and sovereignty: digital infrastructure is expanding but underlying architectures, data systems and platform governance remain largely externally controlled. Recommendations included enforceable data governance frameworks requiring continental data to be stored and processed locally, and renegotiation of technology agreements toward joint ventures and shared IP rather than licence-and-access models.

### New African Financial Architecture (NAFA)

Africa faces a \$400 billion annual financing gap yet holds an estimated \$4 trillion in fragmented domestic capital - the challenge is not scarcity but 'capital choreography'. The NAFA framework proposes a three-tiered continental, regional and national architecture on subsidiarity principles, with DFIs repositioned as blended-finance choreographers and reform of Basel III and the Africa risk premium as structural preconditions.

### Blue Economy Ports, Maritime Infrastructure & Continental Integration

The panel reframed African ports as sovereign economic platforms rather than colonial-era extraction exits, insisting that any concession must include binding commitments to adjacent industrial zones and non-negotiable national redlines on data ownership and reversion clauses. Panelists were united that the real unit of transformation is the corridor not the port alone and that financing, governance and security must all be designed at that larger scale.

### Forces of the future Voices of courage

The closing session rejected symbolic inclusion in favour of structural reform: political quotas, lowered age requirements for public office and reformed party nomination processes, which were identified as the primary gatekeeping mechanism. The session framed national sovereignty not as a declaration but as a condition built from the grassroots up - through decentralised power, participatory governance and domestic fiscal capacity as the foundation for negotiating international partnerships from strength.



In a fragmented world, Africa will not choose a camp; it will choose its interests. African plurilateralism is not an opportunistic posture — it is a sovereignty strategy in an uncertain world.

**H.E. Ismaël Nabé**  
Minister of Planning, International Cooperation & Development, Republic of Guinea



"Africa has long suffered because of civil wars, institutional weaknesses, and lack of social peace. Artificial intelligence is not going to bring solutions to these problems countries have to forge their own path."

**Professor Daron Acemoglu**  
2024 Nobel Prize in Economics  
Professor of Economics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)



## APO 2026 PRIZES



### Grand Prize Sir Mo Ibrahim

Mo Ibrahim Foundation

For his commitment to African governance through the Ibrahim Index (IIAG) and decades of work equipping leaders to anticipate structural crises before they escalate.



### Inclusive Prosperity Tony O. Elumelu

Tony Elumelu Foundation

For pioneering Africapitalism and disbursing over \$100 million to more than 27,000 entrepreneurs across all 54 African countries, catalysing 1.5 million jobs.



### Local Development Jean-Pierre Elong Mbassi

United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG Africa)

For four decades building territorial governance as the unified voice of local governments representing nearly 350 million African citizens.

## Join us to shape the future of African governance



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BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

