

PRESS RELEASE

Closing of the fourth edition of the Africa Political Outlook: Africa marks the end of the aid era and asserts its strategic sovereignty



Over 300 global leaders convene in Brussels; President Chakwera, African Union Chairperson Mahamoud Ali Youssouf, Nobel Laureate Acemoglu, ILO Director-General Hougbo and UN Under-Secretary-General Fleming headline landmark fourth edition.

Brussels, 27 March 2026 — The fourth edition of the Africa Political Outlook (APO) Summit concluded on 27 March 2026 with a clear political signal: Africa is no longer willing to be a subject of global conversations — it intends to lead them.

Held under the theme ***Forces of the Future***, the summit gathered over 300 decision-makers at the AfricaMuseum in Tervuren and at The Hotel in Brussels. Among them: **H.E. Dr Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera**, 6th President of the Republic of Malawi, Guest of Honour; **H.E. Mahamoud Ali Youssouf**, Chairperson of the African Union Commission; **H.E. Gilbert F. Hougbo**, Director-General of the International Labour Organization and former Prime Minister of Togo; **Ms Melissa Fleming**, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations; Professor Daron Acemoglu, 2024 Nobel Prize in Economics; **Hon. Younous Omarjee**, Vice-President of the European Parliament; the renowned singer **Youssou N'Dour**, alongside ministers, ambassadors and institutional leaders from across both continents.

The message from the summit was unequivocal: the era in which Africa's future was debated in its absence is over, and the paradigm of aid has given way to an agenda of strategic sovereignty, institutional strength and co-authored partnerships.

A Presidential call to action

Guest of Honour H.E. Dr Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera, 6th President of the Republic of Malawi, delivered the summit's defining address: *"Africa does not lack resources, talent or vision. What it demands now is the courage, from its own leaders and from the world, to dismantle the structures that still treat this continent as a recipient rather than a partner. The future of Africa will be built by Africans, for Africans, but it must be built together, across generations."*

President Chakwera called for a genuine intergenerational compact, urging elders and young leaders to forge a shared architecture of African leadership, not as a diplomatic courtesy, but as a strategic imperative.

AI, demography, and the post-aid geopolitics

The summit's intellectual core was shaped by interventions of rare candour and ambition, spanning artificial intelligence, value and faith-driven governance models, demographic opportunity, and the integrity of global information systems.

In his opening address, H.E. Mahamoud Ali Youssouf, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, set the collective purpose of the gathering, calling for the strengthening of positive forces within a renewed Pan-Africanism that delivers tangible improvements to the lives of African people.

Ms Melissa Fleming, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations, set the frame by naming a historical reality that the summit itself was designed to confront: *"For decades, the global conversation about Africa unfolded in rooms where Africa was referenced but not represented, analysed but not heard."* She argued that information integrity (and not just connectivity) is the precondition for African agency in multilateral spaces, warning that *"when misleading narratives dominate, they do more than distort perception, they distort policymaking, investment, and opportunity."*

Professor Daron Acemoglu, 2024 Nobel Prize Laureate in Economics, issued the summit's sharpest warning on artificial intelligence: *"Nobody in Silicon Valley will listen unless the developing world speaks with a unified voice."* He argued that institutions — not technology — will determine which nations benefit from the AI revolution, **and that African states cannot afford to wait for inclusion in decisions already being made on their behalf.**

H.E. Gilbert F. Houngbo, Director-General of the International Labour Organization, turned the continent's demographic trajectory into a question of political choice: *"The question is not whether Africa's youth will shape the future. They will. The question is whether that future will be shaped through opportunity or through frustration."* He called for massive investment in decent work, skills, social protection and green industries, insisting that *"this demographic dynamism is not a challenge to be managed, it is a force of the future to be harnessed."*

These interventions were part of a far broader programme spanning over fifteen sessions and involving senior ministers from Zambia, Guinea, Seychelles and Togo, European parliamentarians, AU commissioners, development finance leaders, and voices from civil society, the creative industries and the African diaspora.

Sovereignty over value chains and strategic resources

Among the summit's policy-defining moments, **H.E. Ismaël Nabé**, Guinea's Minister for Planning and International Cooperation, presented the Simandou 2040 mega-project as a case study in sovereign industrialisation: *"Africa does not need infrastructure alone; it needs complete value chains."* **Hon. Mulambo H. Haimbe**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Zambia, called for a fundamental rethink of the terms on which African states engage international investors, while the progress of the Congolese Battery Council (DRC) in strategic mineral processing illustrated the same shift from extraction to transformation.

African excellence recognised

The Summit's **Official Dinner** at the AfricaMuseum — featuring performances by outstanding artists from Africa and the diaspora — provided the setting for the **APO Awards Ceremony**, which honoured:

- **Sir Mo Ibrahim**, Laureate of the APO Grand Prize
- **Tony O. Elumelu**, Laureate of the APO Prize for Inclusive Prosperity
- **Jean-Pierre Elong Mbassi**, Laureate of the APO Prize for Local Development

Each was recognised for exceptional contributions to governance, private sector development, and institutional development across Africa.

A platform without equivalent

In four editions, the Africa Political Outlook has established itself as the only platform in Europe where African and European Heads of State, multilateral leaders and the continent's sharpest policy minds engage in the kind of frank, substantive dialogue that governance in Africa, and the Africa-global relationship, demands.

The Summit is supported by a coalition of distinguished partners, including the **African Union**, the **Konrad Adenauer Foundation**, the law firm **ASAFO & Co., Orange**, the **International Trade Centre**, and **Public Affairs Africa**.

Download the Africa Political Outlook 2026 Report “The State of African Governance”: <https://africapoliticaloutlook.org/rapports>

Dates: March 26 and 27, 2026

Venues: AfricaMuseum & The Hotel, Brussels, Belgium

Images of the Summit: <https://africapoliticaloutlook.org/galerie-edition-2026>

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