

AUDA-NEPAD Africa Policy Bridge Tank 2024 INCEPTION CONFERENCE ON AFRICAN FUTURES



Introduction

The AUDA-NEPAD Policy Bridge Tank programme held its first Inception Think Tank Conference in Addis Ababa from the 10th to 11th January 2024, on the theme Africa Futures, in collaboration with The African Futures and Innovation (AFI) program.

The Conference drew upon the extensive foresight work of the African Futures website, focusing on Africa's development prospects in terms of the Agenda 2063 vision. The three-day event was preceded by an eight-part erudite seminar series from June to October 2023 that set the scene, in different sectors, for the keynote presentation on day one on Africa's development prospects and how global developments affect the continent.

The conference brought together representatives from the diplomatic community, the various Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the African Union system, Member States and experts from academia and policy think tanks active across the African continent. Given unfolding foresight evidence, the aim was to share expertise and insights on Africa's long-term development future.

In collaboration with the Frederick S. Pardee Centre for International Futures, the AFI team also provided training on the International Futures forecasting tool and the African Futures website. The training was attended by representatives from six of the eight Regional Economic Regions (REC's) and various AUDA-NEPAD staff.



Opening Session

The conference commenced with the recognized opening remarks by AUDA-NEPAD, the AUC, ISS and BMZ. This was followed by two keynote addresses and an open Q&A session.

The High-level opening was inaugurated with an address by **Dr Msingathi Sipuka, AUDA-NEPAD Chief of Staff on behalf of Her Excellency, Madame Nardos Bekele-Thomas, AUDA-NEPAD Chief Executive Officer**. Mr Sipuka expressed sincere appreciation for the presence of the participants at this significant conference aimed at bridging African knowledge production to African decision-making. He added his appreciation for the contributions of the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) and the esteemed dignitaries, including keynote speaker Ms Mavis Owusu-Gyamfi, Executive Vice President of the African Center for Economic Transformation (ACET), and His Excellency Albert Muchanga, Commissioner for Trade and Industry of the African Union Commission.

The Inception Think Tank conference, organized by the AUDA-NEPAD Policy Bridge Tank program in collaboration with the African Futures and Innovation program at the ISS, is a testament to AUDA-NEPAD's commitment to building the required capacity of all social actors across the continent. As we look to the next 10-year implementation plan of our continental vision, Agenda 2063, we are acutely aware of the unique challenges that confront the African continent. Our strategic approach is anchored on long-term thinking, leveraging foresight analysis to support policy-making for Africa's prosperity, and emphasizing the knowledge and expertise of Africans within the continent and the diaspora. We believe that non-state actors, like think tanks, can and should play a more active role in supporting our continental institutions. As we look to the second decade of Agenda 2063, we hope this conference serves as a platform to reflect on how we can strengthen both policy formulation and implementation through robust knowledge generation systems and evidence-based approaches. We aim to generate a wealth of knowledge that can support our implementation capabilities across the continent.

Our focus is on long-term thinking and foresight analysis to support policy-making for Africa's prosperity. We acknowledge the role of non-state actors, like think tanks, in supporting our continental institutions and aim to strengthen policy formulation and implementation. We recognize the need for independent evaluation of programs and see this as a role for knowledge institutions. The workshop, themed "African Futures," encourages collective exploration of Africa's development prospects. We thank you for your participation and believe this workshop will contribute significantly to shaping Africa's future. On behalf of our CEO, we thank you for your active participation and are confident that this workshop will significantly contribute to shaping Africa's future.

This address was followed by **His Excellency Commissioner Albert M. Muchanga, African Union Commission Department of Economic Development, Trade, Tourism, Industry, and Minerals (ETTİM)**, who emphasised the support of the AUC to this timely gathering of African Think Tanks. He echoed that the contribution that commodities could make to growth prospects is substantial. Policymakers and stakeholders must delve into this dynamic to formulate strategies that ensure sustainable development while maximizing the potential of commodities, especially considering the emergence of new geo-economic frontiers that are not only emerging but will continue to shape Africa's place in the world this century.

In his opening remarks at the conference, **Dr Fonteh Akum, the Executive Director of the Institute for Security Studies (ISS)**, underscored the intricate link between Africa's pursuit of prosperity and the broader global dynamics. This is a principle that is often reiterated at ISS and is embodied in the African Futures and Innovations policy, which takes a keen interest in Africa within the context of global changes.

Akum spoke avidly about the urgency driving the work of his colleagues at the African Futures and Innovation programme at the ISS. He emphasized the importance of partnerships in achieving substantial progress, citing the collaborations they have built with AUDA-NEPAD and the University of Denver's Pardee Center for International Futures.

He also highlighted the need to factor in a more competitive global trade context when considering Africa's development future. The dynamics of trade, industry, and labour availability, including aspects of demography and migration, were also brought to the fore.

Climate change, Akum noted, remains a central consideration in policies about manufacturing, trade, industry, and human development. The transformative impact of artificial intelligence on labor productivity and industrialization was another key point in his address. Lastly, he pointed out the emergence of the debt issue as one of the biggest threats to Africa's development future.

In conclusion, Akum stated that the inception conference is another stride in the journey towards collaborative, evidence-informed engagement for Africa's transformation. He emphasized the role of the ISS as an applied policy think tank that has been advancing peace, security, and development in Africa for over 32 years.

Futures research at the ISS, he explained, is less about predicting the future than it is about envisioning and analyzing different potential outcomes. This approach makes it a valuable tool for informed decision-making and long-term planning, especially in times of uncertainty. Given their reliance on historical datasets, futures methods provide clarity that cuts through the noise, equipping policy makers with the capacity to make evidence-informed choices.

The keynote speech delivered via video recording by **Ms. Birgit Pickel, who holds the position of Director General for Africa at the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)**. The core of her address revolved around four main themes.

Firstly, she underscored the critical role of African-driven research in shaping political decisions, particularly in these uncertain times. She expressed her delight at BMZ's support for AUDA-NEPAD Africa Policy Bridge Tank Programme and the Think-Tank inception conference. She further emphasized the growing importance of African research institutions in the current geopolitical climate and advocated for increased research, cooperation, and unified African positions. She concluded this theme by stressing the mutual need for Europe and Africa to be strong and stable partners.

Secondly, Ms. Pickel acknowledged the dual nature of Africa's current situation, characterized by promising prospects and significant challenges. She highlighted the profound impact of global geopolitical crises on Africa and identified industrialization and climate change adaptation as the continent's primary challenges. Despite these challenges, she painted a picture of a dynamic Africa with a rapidly growing population. She also noted the strengthening voices of African countries in international processes, thanks to AU membership of G20. She ended this theme on a hopeful note, envisioning Africa as a potential global powerhouse fueling the energy transition.

The third theme of her speech focused on Germany's collaborative efforts with African countries to combat state fragility and the impacts of climate change. She outlined Germany's initiatives, such as supporting regional actors, investing in social security in the Sahel region, and introducing the

innovative 'debt for climate swaps' initiative. She also mentioned Germany's contribution to the first Africa Climate Summit and the Africa-EU Green Energy initiative.

Lastly, Ms. Pickel emphasized that the foundation of German development cooperation is respect, reciprocity, and alliances. She called for a critical reflection on the direction of its agenda and the knowledge it is based on. She reaffirmed BMZ's commitment to building on African initiatives and institutions and expanding African participation in multilateral forums.

The keynote address was also delivered by **Ms Mavis Owusu-Gyamfi, Executive Vice President of the African Center for Economic Transformation**. The address was themed on Connecting African Knowledge Production to Decision Making and highlighted the role of Africa's youth as key contributors to Africa's transformation. She emphasized the need for visionary leadership and a developmental approach that leverages the energy and ideas of the African people. Indeed, it was highlighted that the African Union's Agenda 2063 serves as a guiding light towards this future. A flexible roadmap is being developed to adapt to changing landscapes and meet the needs of diverse member states. The importance of context-specific responses, robust knowledge infrastructure, and the potential of Africa's young population was also underscored. Strategic investments in education, infrastructure, skills development, and job creation were highlighted during the address. Ghana was recognized as a representative of Africa, with a focus on equipping youth with tools for progress, including critical thinking, problem-solving, and technological skills. The value of diversity and inclusivity was emphasized, along with the importance of leveraging Africa's membership in key forums like the G21 and BRICs to strengthen the implementation of the AU Agenda 2063. The need for political leadership that understands cultural nuances and promotes regional and continental cooperation was stressed. Lastly, the necessity of leveraging technological advancements to enhance knowledge generation and inform decision-making for Africa's transformation was highlighted.

In her opening address, **Ms Pamla Gopaul, Senior Programme Officer Economic Analysis and Foresight Unit** provided a comprehensive overview of the Policy Bridge Tank programme's role in supporting AUDA-NEPAD initiatives. She spoke to the uniqueness of Policy Bridge Tank programme on the continent and provided a comprehensive overview of its pivotal role in supporting the AUDA-NEPAD programmes and projects. She reported that the programme stands at the intersection of knowledge production and policy implementation and aims to facilitate the successful implementation of AUDA-NEPAD programmes and projects. It was also noted that the programme provides advisory services to member states and regional economic communities, aligning with the AU Agenda 2063. The conference explored how the programme could contribute and support the African Union, focusing on areas such as infrastructure, industrialization, trade, and agriculture. She added that the Policy Bridge Tank's commitment to shaping policies and actions was underscored by its 2023 achievements. The conference highlighted these achievements and emphasized the importance of economic analysis and foresight thinking in shaping Africa's future.

Following Pamla Gopaul's address, **Mr Lukovi Seke, Programme Officer, of the Africa Science, Technology and Innovation (ASTTI) Programme** presented an overview of the trilateral cooperative initiative between the UK, Brazil and Africa on the study of Demographic.

Mr Charles Wangadya, Economic Planning division, AUC, provided an update on the 2nd Ten-Year Implementation Plan of Agenda 2063, highlighting the endorsement of the seven (7) Moonshots. He noted that the three-fold purpose of the STYIP was to outline the continent's ambitions, articulate a theory of change, and provide guidance for all stakeholders involved in its implementation. He emphasized the need to focus on a few catalytic priorities, pathways, and enablers to achieve a set of ambitions within a decade. Consequently, the next decade will concentrate on delivering the 7 Moonshots, which include every AU Member State attaining at least middle-income status, Africa becoming more integrated and connected, public institutions becoming more responsive, and Africa resolving conflicts amicably. Other moonshots involve promoting African values explicitly, empowering and enhancing the productivity of African citizens, and making Africa a strong and influential global player. Mr. Charles also highlighted the importance of costing the plan, securing adequate resources, and monitoring its implementation. He stressed the need for strong mechanisms and incentives for corrective action and enforcement, lessons that have been incorporated into the plan for the second decade.

Finally, **Dr Jakkie Cilliers, Head of the African Futures and Innovations Programme, ISS** provided a keynote address, speaking to Africa's development trajectory and potential and how global events shape Africa (Africa in the world), the themes on the Combined Agenda 2063 and Africa in the World, which was well received and elicited a lively discussion. The plenary hall seating facilitated dialogue and the multiple perspectives enhanced the discussion.

The plenary session set the stage for the Eight parallel workshops, that followed. This was led by the various Think Tanks Technical Advisory group members of the AUDA-NEPAD policy bridge tank throughout the two days, on the following topics:

- Workshop 1: The Future of Africa's Industrialization: Advancing Economic Diversification, Developing Value Chains, and Facilitating Structural Transformation Across the Continent
- Workshop 2: Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy for Africa's Development
- Workshop 3: Futures of Green Minerals in Africa: Building Anticipatory Governance and Regional Value Chains
- Workshop 4: The impact of full gender equity on development prospects
- Workshop 5: Building forward better: The role of economic transformation.
- Workshop 6: Energy Transition in Africa: Case study on Morocco
- Workshop 7: The Future of Technology in Africa (AI and leapfrogging)
- Workshop 8: Digital Education /Transformation: Shaping Africa's Post-Covid Economic Futures.

High Level Panel session:

Two facilitated discussions followed the opening session. The first panel discussion involved African-based think tanks, policymakers, and development partners on priority policy research areas for 2024. The discussions were facilitated by Dr Marius Oosthuizen and explored the prospects for connecting African knowledge creation with African decision-making.

This session aimed to bridge African knowledge production to African decision-making, with a focus on priority policy research areas for 2024 and focused on two key questions:

1. How can research processes at think tanks be connected to policy at national, regional, and continental levels?
2. How can the research and policy agendas be shaped to impact decision-making?

The panellists affirmed the need to identify emerging areas of research that resonate with the issues and questions tackled by regional bodies, continental bodies, and national governments. By aligning more closely with these, think tanks would be better positioned to inform decision-making.

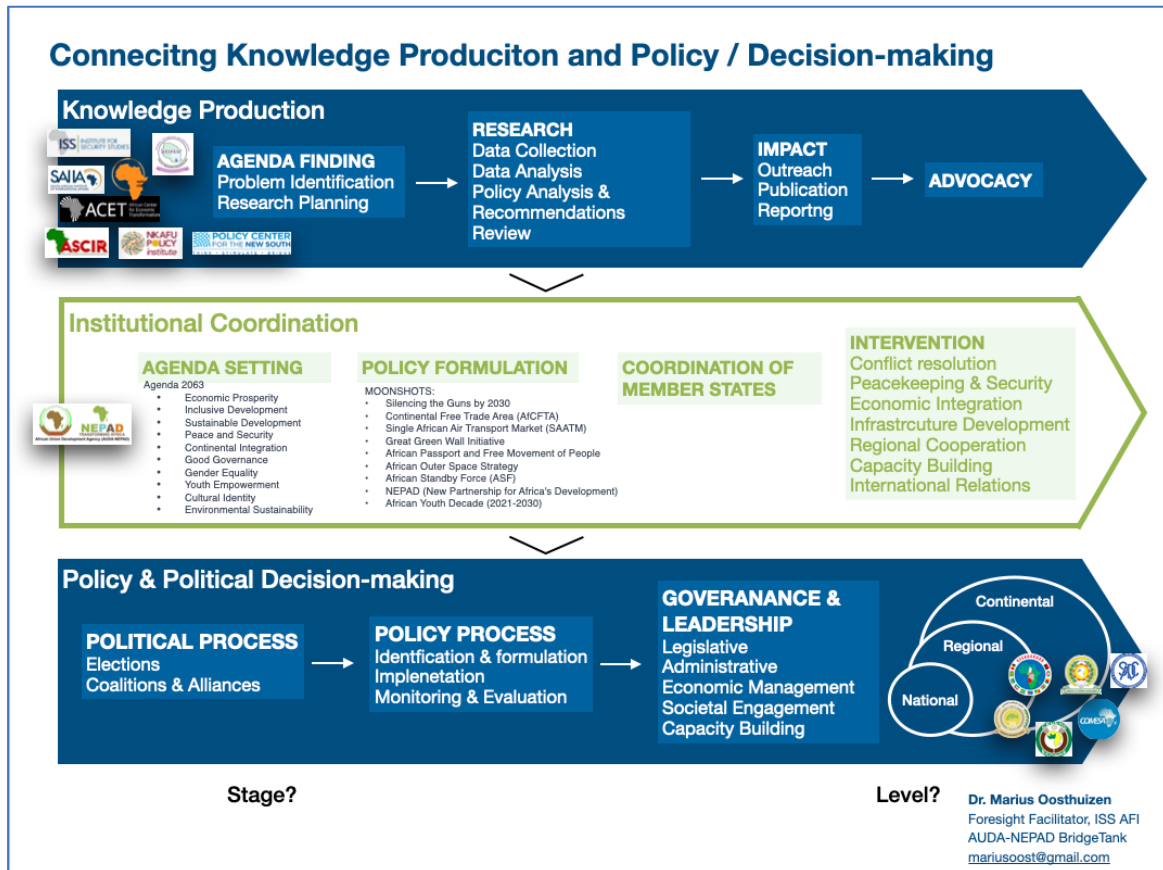


Figure 1: Connecting knowledge production and policy/decision making

The panellists also emphasized the need to connect outputs and publications more directly to the programs, policies, and reference groups emanating from these bodies. This would ensure that the research agendas of the think tanks are recognized as speaking directly to the agendas of decision-makers and their advisors. At a practical level, think tanks could collaboratively create platforms of shared interest, such as the Bridge tank and its meetings, that are ongoing and not once-off. This would serve as a mechanism to bring think tanks and policymakers or decision-makers together.



Figure 2: illustration of engagement between the African Union and the G20

The moderator of the panel suggested a joint study, contributed by the think tanks, to create a set of reference scenarios for the continent and sub-regions. These “reference scenarios” could then be jointly published, regularly monitored and updated, and be complemented by real-time or rapid research outputs that address issues as they arise. This initiative would serve as an entry point for decision-makers to access African experts via think tanks in a coordinated and targeted manner.

The panellists recommended further exploration on:

1. The research/policy areas they want to investigate.
2. The policy areas or recommendations they want to advocate.
3. The target audience they want to focus on.
4. How to mobilize resources to proceed, including options such as AUDA-NEPAD fundraising and subcontracting, a member think tank raising money and crowdsourcing others, or a single partner raising funds and doing work with wider application.

There was also a recognition that the work of African knowledge creators, such as think tanks, was not sufficiently present in Africa's policy and decision-making process.



Figure 3: Plenary session at the AUDA-APBT 1st Inception Think Tank Conference

The Second panel session was led by the Regional Economic Communities and moderated by Dr Denis Foretia, Founder & Executive Chairman, Nkafu Policy Institute and the topic of discussion covered the Futures perspectives from 6 RECs present at the Conference.

The session explored the prospects for connecting think tanks more effectively with national governments, regional bodies such as SADC, COMESA, UMA, CEN-SAD, EAC and ECOWAS, and continental bodies such as the African Union. A significant opportunity exists to leverage the rigorous work of think tanks to the needs of the African Union to provide input into the G20 process as the AU prepares for membership and active participation. At a technical level, the research and publications can be readily fed into the AU and regional body's policy processes. Several key insights emerged as the SADC representative shared insights into the organisation's ongoing initiatives including ongoing development of a regional SADC Think Tank Network. If successfully developed, such a network would have great benefits for knowledge production in the region, positioning relevant stakeholders as key players in shaping joint research across the SADC region.

The discussions considered the vast landscapes of Africa, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) who stand as beacons of hope in playing a pivotal role in promoting economic integration, trade facilitation, and sustainable development within their respective regions. The RECs are not just organizations, but platforms for cooperation among member states, fostering an environment of regional peace, stability, and security.

As we navigate through the 21st century, the importance of embracing innovation and leveraging emerging technologies becomes increasingly apparent. For RECs, these tools will be crucial in addressing contemporary challenges and seizing future opportunities.

Sustainable development initiatives are another key area of focus for RECs. By prioritizing initiatives such as renewable energy projects, climate adaptation strategies, and eco-friendly infrastructure, RECs can position themselves for long-term resilience and prosperity.

The potential for economic growth within these regions is immense. Enhancing intra-regional connectivity through improved transport networks, digital infrastructure, and trade facilitation measures can unlock this potential and foster inclusive growth.

However, the foundation of these efforts lies in strong governance mechanisms. Promoting transparency and combating corruption are essential for building trust and credibility within RECs, facilitating effective decision-making and implementation of policies.

To further strengthen these communities, there is a need for sustained investment in capacity building within RECs, research institutions, and think tanks. This includes providing training

opportunities, resources, and support for researchers and policymakers to enhance their skills in data analysis, policy formulation, and strategic planning.

Research, development, and policy efforts should be context-specific and responsive to the diverse needs and challenges across Africa's regions. In this endeavour, RECs, in collaboration with think tanks, can play a crucial role in contextualizing global best practices to suit local realities and priorities.

In conclusion, the session underscored the importance of research findings and evidence-based recommendations, which are actionable and policy-oriented, to be produced by think tanks. These insights are crucial to inform policy advocacy efforts not only within RECs but also at the continental level. RECs, in this context, can act as catalysts for dialogue and advocacy, championing policies that foster inclusive growth, sustainable development, and regional integration. The session ended with a powerful message: an inclusive future is one where RECs lead Africa's path towards sustainable development and prosperity.

Summary of breakaway sessions - APBT 1st Inception Think Tank Conference on Africa Futures

Wednesday, 10th January 2024

Parallel Workshop 1: The Future of Africa's Industrialization: Advancing Economic Diversification, Developing Value Chains, and Facilitating Structural Transformation Across the Continent – led by Nkafu Policy Institute (NPI)

Key Discussion/Comments/outcomes/Reflections/Recommendations

The discourse on the future of Africa's industrialization was a rich tapestry of ideas, challenges, and potential solutions. The conversation highlighted several key determinants for an accelerated industrialization drive in Africa.

The need for skills development and improved labor force participation was underscored as a critical factor. The discussion also touched on the implementation of a new industrialization policy in Africa, emphasizing the importance of an improved business climate for industrial growth.

The conversation delved into the necessity of economic diversification to reduce dependence on a few sectors. The current state of energy production in Africa was deemed inadequate, highlighting the need for significant improvements in this area.

Good governance policies were identified as essential for a successful industrialization drive. The empowerment of women was also recognized as a key aspect of industrial growth. The role of technology and innovation in industrialization was emphasized, underscoring the importance of these elements in driving Africa's industrial future.

The quality of work was another important topic, with participants agreeing on the need for decent work conditions to foster industrial growth. The group also discussed the need to address implementation challenges to move the continent forward.

However, the path to industrialization is not without its barriers. The skills gap, the lack of a uniform continental strategy, disparities between regions, and differing definitions of industrialization were all identified as significant challenges. The lack of existing infrastructures, political will, and the continent's high dependence on imports were also highlighted as obstacles to industrialization.

The discussion also touched on the financial challenges faced by most businesses, with financing out of reach for many and no real measures in place to support small businesses. The lack of cooperation between countries was identified as another barrier to industrialization.

Despite these challenges, the group acknowledged the progress made in terms of coordination between Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Examples such as the Morocco-Nigeria Gas Pipeline Project and the Abidjan Lagos Highway project were cited as positive steps towards industrialization. However, it was noted that Northern and Southern Eastern Africa aren't really creating links and formalized economic relationships outside of political contexts.

In conclusion, the narrative that emerged from the discussion was one of optimism tempered with realism. The journey towards Africa's industrialization is fraught with challenges, but with concerted effort, strategic planning, and cooperation, the vision of a fully industrialized Africa is within reach

Parallel Workshop 2: Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy for Africa's Development – led by Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy Research Organization (STIPRO)

Key Discussion/Comments/outcomes/Reflections/Recommendations

The discussion on Africa's development indicators revealed that over two-thirds of the least developed countries are in Africa. With 70% of the population under 30, employment generation strategies are a top priority. The presentation emphasized the role of science, technology, and innovation (STI) capabilities in achieving structural transformation, citing South Korea's success in coordinating industrial and STI policies.

However, despite having STI policies in place, many African countries face challenges in policy coordination and implementation. The linear model, focusing on science and technology generation with little emphasis on the users of the generated knowledge, was identified as a key issue.

Adding to these challenges, most countries face several implementation hurdles. Many relevant stakeholders are unaware of the existence of these policies and programs, leading to a lack of stakeholder awareness. There is also a lack of adequate financial resources to implement these policies, coupled with a lack of human capabilities to carry out these policies. Furthermore, a mismatch between market needs and existing research was identified, further complicating the implementation process.

Participants agreed on these challenges and proposed in-depth research to understand why African STI policies are not implemented or coordinated with sectoral policies. They suggested using local resources to fund research and holding regular forums to discuss these issues. The need for evidence generation, education, and expertise in research, and monitoring STI policy design and implementation were also emphasized.

In conclusion, the narrative that emerged from the discussion was one of optimism tempered with realism. The journey towards Africa's industrialization is affected with challenges, but with concerted effort, strategic planning, and cooperation, the vision of a fully industrialized Africa is within reach.

Thursday, 11th January 2024

Parallel Workshop 3: Futures of Green Minerals in Africa: Building Anticipatory Governance and Regional Value Chains – led South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA)

Key Discussion/Comments/outcomes/Reflections/Recommendations

This workshop session used the Three Horizons Framework, focusing on the future of green minerals in Africa.

The first horizon (H1) revealed systemic challenges in the green minerals sector, including human rights issues, small-scale mining, pollution, and policy creation. The scarcity of green mineral strategies among African countries was a major concern.

The third horizon (H3) centered on envisioning a positive future for the green minerals sector. The discussion suggested a shift towards transparency, trust, respect, non-exploitative practices, and intergenerational fairness. Participants highlighted the importance of integrated solutions and the adoption of values aligned with preserving ecologically sensitive ecosystems. Initiatives like the Zambia-DRC Battery Alliance and the establishment of an AMDC Green Minerals Observatory were identified as potential seeds for a viable future.

The second horizon (H2) focused on addressing power and resource concentration within the sector and promoting regional governance approaches. Recommendations included developing continental and regional green minerals strategies, enhancing stakeholder diversity, and promoting transparency for mining communities.

In conclusion, the workshop provided valuable insights on applied strategic foresight in practice and highlighted the challenges and opportunities within the green minerals sector in Africa. These insights should inform future policy discussions, collaborative efforts, and strategic planning for the green minerals sector in Africa.

Parallel Workshop 4: The impact of full gender equity on development prospects – led African Futures & Innovation (AFI), Institute for Security Studies (ISS)

Key Discussion/Comments/outcomes/Reflections/Recommendations

The discussions that unfolded revolved around the core development issue of gender parity. The deliberations were rich and multifaceted, touching on various aspects of this critical topic.

The integration of gender parity into all relevant development policies, strategies, and plans was highlighted as a key policy objective. It was agreed that gender parity should not be an isolated goal, but rather a fundamental principle that permeates all aspects of development planning.

The progress made by Africa in terms of gender equality legislation was acknowledged. It was noted that Africa has made remarkable strides in this area. However, it was also pointed out that there is still a significant gender gap, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. The consensus was that efforts need to be doubled to address this gap and ensure that gender equality is not just a legislative goal, but a lived reality for all Africans.

The discussion then turned to the implementation challenges that are evident in Africa. While the progress in legislation is commendable, it was recognized that there are many hurdles to overcome in the practical implementation of these laws and policies. The need for continued focus and commitment in addressing these challenges was underscored.

Studies were cited showing that women can have a positive impact on different sectors of the economy if given equal opportunities to men. However, it was also noted that disparities between regions are very big and varied, notably between Northern and Western Africa.

A recurring challenge that was highlighted is that policies and laws are often drafted by policymakers but are not adequate to the realities of the country, with very little political will to implement them.

The question of how to address gender equality in countries where social norms and contexts are differentiated from current views on women's emancipation and gender equality in the workplace was raised. It was agreed that there is a critical need to respect cultural norms while addressing women's inequalities at the same time.

The discussions underscored the importance of gender parity as a fundamental principle that should be integrated into all relevant development policies, strategies, and plans. The progress made by Africa in terms of gender equality legislation was acknowledged, but it was also recognized that there is still a significant gender gap, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The implementation challenges that are evident in Africa were discussed, with a focus on the need for continued focus and commitment in addressing these challenges. The potential positive impact of women on different sectors of the economy if given equal opportunities to men was highlighted, as well as the disparities between regions, notably between Northern and Western Africa.

The recurring challenge of policies and laws being drafted by policymakers but not being adequate to the realities of the country was discussed. The need for political will to implement these policies and laws in a context responsive manner was emphasized.

This was particularly exemplified when considered alongside the context of rural areas, with the understanding that different strategies may be needed in these settings.

Finally, the discussions served as a reminder that while strides have been made, the journey towards gender parity in Africa is far from over. The need for continued focus, commitment, and action in the pursuit of gender parity was underscored. The narrative that emerged was one of progress, potential, and the persistent need for action.

Parallel Workshop 5: Building forward better: The role of economic transformation – led African Centre for Economic Cooperation (ACET)

Key Discussion/Comments/outcomes/Reflections/Recommendations

The discourse on Africa's Economic Transformation was a comprehensive examination of the various elements of this intricate subject. The dialogue commenced by shedding light on the susceptibilities that typify economic growth in Africa, such as vulnerability to shocks, dependency on raw materials, and distress caused by debt. These characteristics were encapsulated by the African Transformation Index spanning the period from 2000 to 2020.

The discussion also touched on the prerequisites necessary for the envisioned economic transformation. It was noted that Africa needed to tackle all associated prerequisites, including economic diversification, technology and innovation, and human capital development.

Despite the contribution of the agricultural sector to the continent's GDP and employment, it was underscored that it continues to hold significant importance for Africa. Successful experiences

from Tunisia and Ethiopia provided useful examples to demonstrate its impact on socio-economic development.

The discussions also touched upon the significance of the manufacturing sector. It was acknowledged that greater emphasis needed be placed on the development of value chains to expedite the growth of this sector and realization of broader socio-economic development. The Ethiopian experience was showcased as an example that highlighted the potential of investing in developing appropriate value chains to better achieve economic development.

Importantly, the discussion also underscored some of the primary challenges obstructing economic transformation in Africa were highlighted, with a particular focus on the need for a system-thinking approach. A systems approach would ensure that diverse development strategies, such as growth, trade, industrial policy, and human capital development, are properly synchronized and complement each other.

In this context, it was proposed that African countries need a politically neutral medium-to-long term development agenda that remains constant across electoral cycles. This would prevent the continent from stagnating instead of progressing.

An overarching theme from the discussion was the acknowledgment that a cautious, yet optimistic approach was needed to translate existing gains made so far into long-term, transformational economic development. The path towards Africa's economic transformation is laden with obstacles, but with concerted effort, strategic planning, and cooperation, the goal of a fully transformed African economy is achievable.

Parallel Workshop 6: Energy Transition in Africa: Case study on Morocco – led Policy Centre for the New South (PCNS)

This session discussed a case study on Morocco's Energy Transition at COP28. Morocco has been intensifying efforts to develop its energy sector, prioritizing natural gas and embracing green hydrogen with a focus on its export potential. The country has pursued an ambitious energy strategy since 2009, focusing on increasing renewable energy capacity, enhancing energy efficiency, and fostering regional integration.

In 2021, Morocco introduced its green hydrogen roadmap, envisioning optimistic scenarios for both domestic and international demand.

The potential for green hydrogen to be used in sectors including industrial processes, transportation, and residential applications is increasingly becoming a subject of significant research investment. However, its applicability and appropriateness remains a matter to be explored and understood further these projects require collaboration between governments and the private sector.

At COP28, Morocco showcased progress towards its approach to just energy transition. Key initiatives included the establishment of a Coalition for Sustainable Energy Access (CSEA) with Ethiopia, reflecting Morocco's approach in the context of South-South cooperation. The EU also pledged €50 million to Morocco to support green energy and carbon removal initiatives.

While Morocco's pursuit of a resilient energy future was highlighted in the discussion, the transferability of Morocco's case across the rest of Africa became a matter of discussion. Further, balancing between investment in emerging technologies particularly green hydrogen for the European export market on one hand with other critical energy and economic security needs of African countries remained a question for consideration.

The discussion therefore highlighted the necessity of combining a strategic outlook and focus on renewable energy sources, diversification of existing energy profiles factoring the inherent contexts of various diverse countries and regions in Africa, creation of sustainable energy systems that do not compromising the energy security of African states.

Parallel Workshop 7: The Future of Technology in Africa (AI and leapfrogging) – led African Economic Research Consortium (AERC)

This workshop session focused on the governance of data, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and emerging technologies. The discussions was anchored on the AU's data governance framework and AI strategy, highlighting their significant role in the economic development of African countries.

The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) presented several studies on data governance and financial technology (fintech), emphasizing their critical role in promoting private sector-driven economic transformation by supporting women and youth.

The 90-minute workshop covered a range of issues, including understanding the complexities of data governance, defining and providing examples of ongoing AI applications in Kenya, Togo, and Sierra Leone, and understanding the pros and cons of AI and disruptive technologies for Africa's economic development.

Key takeaways from the workshop included the importance of not undermining the developmental role of data, AI, and emerging technologies in Africa's economic transformation. The need to work through the complexities around the AU AI strategy was also highlighted.

The workshop underscored the benefits AU member states could gain from fast-tracking the domestication of the data governance framework. It also emphasized the role of fintech in promoting private sector development in Africa, particularly in scaling up the provision and access to mobile money transactions for African women and youth.

In conclusion, the workshop called for further policy and research discussions involving not only economists but also engineers, lawyers, data analytic experts, ICT specialists, economic anthropologists, and private sector entrepreneurs in fintech and other technologies.

Parallel Workshop 8: Digital Education /Transformation: Shaping Africa's Post-Covid Economic Futures – led Afro-Sino Centre of International Relations (ASCIR)

The workshop was a vibrant forum of ideas, with the key takeaways centering on the crucial role of technology and digital transformation in realizing the AU's Agenda 2063 aspirations. The discussions that emerged were insightful and thought-provoking.

One of the highlights was the exploration of how technology can enable cross-border payment systems like the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS). This is particularly relevant in the context of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which is a key driver for Africa's economic development.

Another significant point of discussion was the potential of digital education and transformation to enhance intra-Africa communication and knowledge sharing. This could foster stronger connections among institutions, governments, and people across the continent.

The recommendations from the workshop were clear and actionable. The consensus was that digital transformation is pivotal in shaping Africa's economic future. Therefore, intentional efforts must be made to advance the continent's digital education capacity, digital environment, and labour market. This approach should be interconnected, multi-layered, and informed by evidence-based research.

The need for investment in research was emphasized, with a focus on exploring best practices within the African context while learning from international partners. The AU was urged to work with Member States to ensure the implementation of its Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (DTSfA). It was noted that only 15 countries on the continent currently have a national ICT framework, policy, or strategy.

Finally, the importance of ethics in digital education and transformation efforts was underscored. Rather than being an afterthought, ethics should be a central consideration in our digital endeavours. This will ensure that the digital transformation journey is not only technologically sound but also ethically responsible.

Training Day on AFI Website and Ifs

On January 12, 2024, a training day was organized on the African Futures and Innovation (AFI) website and International Futures (IFs) software for AU officials, representatives from Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and AUDA-NEPAD staff. The training aimed to familiarize participants with the AFI website, IFs software, and the technicalities involved in scenario development.

Key Activities:

- ❑ Software Installation: The IFs software was successfully installed on all participating staff laptops.
- ❑ Bilingual Training: Training was conducted in both English and French to accommodate participants from diverse linguistic backgrounds.
- ❑ Interactive Sessions: Participants engaged with the African Futures website, followed by an in-depth exploration of the underlying model and scenario development processes.
- ❑ Interest and Engagement: There was notable interest among participants to further engage in forecasting and training activities. Many expressed a desire to continue working with the AFI team.

Recommendations/The Way Forward:

- ❑ Follow-up Communication: A follow-up letter will be sent to all participating REC members to maintain momentum and facilitate further engagement.
- ❑ Collaborative Efforts: AFI, in collaboration with the AUDA-NEPAD Policy Bridge Tank, will reach out to interested individuals to explore opportunities for continued collaboration and capacity-building in forecasting and training.

The training session concluded with a sense of enthusiasm and commitment among participants to leverage forecasting tools for informed decision-making and strategic planning in the African context.

Closing Remarks and Recommendations

In his closing remarks, **Dr. Patrick Olomo, Senior Policy Officer at the African Union Commission**, expressed profound gratitude to AUDA-NEPAD Policy Bridge Tank for convening this significant assembly. He underscored the AUC's recognition of the indispensable role that Think Tanks play in shaping our collective future.

Dr. Olomo emphasized that the AUC is committed to deepening its engagement with Think Tanks, acknowledging their research expertise and the relevance of their content for policy makers. He revealed plans to further integrate Think Tanks into the decision-making process, a move that will undoubtedly enrich our collective wisdom and enhance the quality of our decisions.

In a testament to this commitment, he announced that the AUC will strive to extend invitations to Think Tanks to participate in the STC forums and Ministerial meetings. This gesture is a clear indication of the AUC's recognition of the value that Think Tanks bring to these high-level deliberations.

In conclusion, Dr. Olomo reaffirmed his personal support for the conference and its focus on leveraging the work of Think Tanks for long-term decision making. He assured everyone of his availability and unwavering support in this noble endeavor.

This marks not just the end of a conference, but the beginning of a new chapter in our journey towards a prosperous and sustainable future. Let us move forward together, harnessing the power of collective intelligence to shape the Africa we want.

In his concluding remarks, the **AUDA-NEPAD Chief of Staff, Dr Msingathi Sipuka**,

expressed gratitude on behalf of H.E the CEO of AUDA-NEPAD to the esteemed co-partners and participants for their active engagement in the conference. He reflected on the discussions that had underscored the importance of economic analysis and foresight in addressing development threats and advancing towards the goals of African Agenda 2063 and the UN Agenda 2030.

Mr. Msingathi recognized the need that had been identified for a robust ecosystem for African Think Tanks to promote evidence-based policymaking and bridge the gap between policy and implementation. He noted that, building on the success of the conference, AUDA-NEPAD was committed to fostering partnerships with African Think Tanks, focusing on:

1. Ensuring research output informed policymaking at all levels.
2. Positioning African Think Tanks as key players in implementing the Second 10 Year Implementation Plan of Agenda 2063.
3. Creating a sustainable platform for an ecosystem for African Think Tanks.
4. Developing a stakeholder-driven research agenda that addressed critical development priorities in Africa.

As he concluded, Mr. Msingathi acknowledged Commissioner Muchunga's presence and echoed his support expressed in the opening session. He reiterated AUDA-NEPAD's commitment to working with all stakeholders towards realizing their shared vision. He thanked everyone for their participation and contributions.

Ms Pamla Gopaul

In her closing remarks, Ms. Pamla Gopaul conveyed heartfelt gratitude and appreciation, marking the conclusion of the conference on an optimistic note. She emphasized the importance of collaboration, reciprocal learning, and knowledge exchange, underlining the commitment to these

principles. Ms. Gopaul extended special thanks to GIZ/BMZ for their crucial financial support, the ISS team led by Dr. Jakkie Cilliers, the Policy Bridge Tank TAG members, and the AUC under Commissioner Muchunga's guidance. Special acknowledgments were also given to Ambassador Luiza da Silva and Mr. Yuri De Souza from the ABC Brazilian Development Agency.

Ms. Gopaul expressed pleasure at the opportunity to meet friends in person after a two-year gap and thanked all distinguished participants for their exceptional contributions. She recognized the diligent efforts of the AUDA-NEPAD team, particularly Ms. Zipho Sexwale, for managing administrative and logistical aspects, enabling the physical assembly. Ms. Nyiko Khoza was commended for her exemplary facilitation throughout the event.

The conference, attended by approximately 150 individuals, received positive feedback, with participants acknowledging its effectiveness in providing networking opportunities and sharing best practices among think tanks. It set a solid foundation for future events aimed at exploring specific research areas in detail, fostering better collaboration among think tanks, and aligning their efforts with regional and continental agendas.

Recommendations/The Way Forward:

Several participants expressed interest in continuing forecasting and training activities. AFI, in collaboration with the AUDA-NEPAD Policy Bridge Tank, will follow up with these individuals to explore further engagements.

The success of the conference underscores the need for regular engagements of this nature, bridging the gap between knowledge producers and users. Endorsed by the AUDA-NEPAD CEO, the conference is slated to be held bi-annually, affirming its significance in promoting collaboration and knowledge sharing for Africa's development.

Refer to the one pager on the Key Insights that emanated from the AUDA-NEPAD Africa Policy Bridge Tank (APBT) Inception Think Tank Conference.