

03 April 2020

## Top Stories



**How Africa's Economies can Hedge against COVID-19**



**FACTI Concludes First Video Meeting**



**Forests and Biodiversity: Too precious to lose**



**Employment Oriented Skills Development**

## How Africa's Economies can Hedge against COVID-19



In 2018, 44 countries signed the African Continental Free Trade Area at an extraordinary summit in Kigali. There are now 54 signatories. The agreement will create a tariff-free economic environment to spur business growth, boost intra-continental trade, spark industrialization, and create jobs. To mitigate the economic fallout from COVID-19, African Union member countries and the continent's institutions should implement the AfCFTA swiftly. The AfCFTA paves the way for Africa, with 1.2 billion people and a cumulative GDP of \$2.5 trillion – to become the world's largest common market. But with the coronavirus hitting the global economy, a worldwide recession is looming. The crisis is bound to have destabilizing effects on our fragile economies as the health crisis worsens.

Africa must be prepared. Although the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting Africa the least, the majority of African countries have chosen to pre-empt the crisis by restricting non-essential travel and gatherings and closing schools and universities. It is impossible to know whether these measures will stem the health contagion, but Africa will no doubt experience economic shocks.

Africa's main partners in Europe, and possibly China, are already suffering, and the continent's economy is still largely extroverted – and thus highly dependent on global demand, especially for raw materials. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) estimates that losses in export earnings are expected to reach \$101 billion, including \$65 billion for oil-producing countries. Health spending could burden state budgets on the continent by at least \$10 billion. There are also fears of food shortages and breakdowns in the pharmaceutical supply chain. Two-thirds of African countries are net importers of food and medicines.

As for the health crisis, the recurring threat of Ebola has given some African states experience in slowing a pandemic. In the Democratic Republic of Congo and in West Africa, where the 2014-16 Ebola pandemic hit Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, the response to COVID-19 is being organized rapidly. National health institutions have reinforced their institutional capacities. The number of African centers capable of performing diagnostic tests has increased from two to 40 in a month, thanks to the World Health Organization, and the African Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the African Union has received a large donation of COVID-19 testing kits from China. Now, the year-old African Medicines Agency must become operational to ensure the coordination of a pharmaceutical manufacturing plan for the continent.

Aside from the health effects, the looming global recession is bound to destabilize Africa's economies and transform their structure, trade, and commercial channels, as well as how people work and study. Under these circumstances, Africa has no choice but to rely on its resilience, strengths, and agility, rather than hoping for external salvation, to mitigate the impact of the coming crisis and prepare for the next cycle of globalization.

More than ever, new technology will be called upon to play a critical role. African companies must speed up their digital transition to remain attractive, which means that governments must accelerate their rollout of essential telecommunication infrastructure, including fiber optics and high-speed Internet, and invest in human capital and capacity building. The effort will be complex and demanding, but the time has come for large-scale mobilization. In this context, there is a pressing need to reduce the continent's high trade dependence on non-African partners. The AfCFTA can help facilitate this, but that means dismantling tariff and non-tariff barriers as much as possible and intensifying the economic regionalisation processes that have now begun. Accordingly, maximizing the possibilities of the AfCFTA will be an effective economic shock absorber as long as the pandemic, and uncertainty about its course, keeps the global economy depressed. It will also make Africa an attractive proposition when the global economy turns around. The continent has no time to lose.



## Financial Integrity Panel First Video Meeting Concludes #FinancialIntegrity



The High-Level Panel on International Financial Accountability, Transparency and Integrity for Achieving the 2030 Agenda (FACTI Panel) met for the first time on 31 March 2020.

Launched on 2 March of this year, the FACTI Panel was established jointly by H.E. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, the President of the United Nations General Assembly, and H.E. Mona Juul, the President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council – the leaders of two of the UN Charter bodies.

The meeting, held virtually due to COVID-19 related restrictions around the world, allowed the Panel members to meet each other for the first time, and to take the initial steps in organizing their work.

Tax evasion, money laundering and corruption, as well as tax avoidance, especially in an era of digital economic activity, demonstrate that the world needs to put more effort into preventing financial crimes, creating level playing fields, ending financial opacity, and mobilizing resources equitably. The Panel is tasked with making recommendations to address gaps, impediments and vulnerabilities in international institutional and legal frameworks related to financial accountability, transparency and integrity. Its recommendations will build on the successes and ongoing work of existing mechanisms.

Dr. Ibrahim Mayaki, former Prime Minister of Niger and Co-Chair of the Panel, welcomed the appointment of the co-chair, Dr. Dalia Grybauskaitė, former President of Lithuania and four new panelists:

“In this time of global crisis instigated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of robust, reliable public resources becomes especially clear,” he said. “I look forward to working closely with Dr. Grybauskaitė and our fellow Panel members to make recommendations toward a less porous, more equitable financial system.”

“The global financial system is overdue for changes, and I am pleased to join this effort to bring about positive change,” said Dr. Grybauskaitė. “I hope the FACTI Panel will provide some of the building blocks for a more just and equitable financial system that can emerge after the COVID-19 crisis.”

The FACTI Panel consists of 17 members drawn from policymakers, academia, civil society and the private sector. The appointees since the launch of the Panel include:

- Ms. Benedicte Schilbred Fasmer, Member of the Executive Board of Norges Bank, Norway;
- Mr. Bolaji Owasanoye, Chairman of the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission, Nigeria;
- Mr. Karim Daher, Managing Partner of Hadad Baroud Daher - Tria Law Firm and Director of the Lebanese Association for Taxpayers' Rights and Information, Lebanon; and
- Mr. Thomas Stelzer, Dean and Executive Secretary of the International Anti-Corruption Academy, Austria.

They join the two co-chairs, and the other FACTI Panel members who were appointed before March:

- Ms. Annet Wanyana Oguttu, Professor at University of Pretoria, South Africa;
- Ms. Heidemarie Wiczorek-Zeul, former Minister for Development, Germany;
- Ms. Irene Ovonji-Odida, Former Member AU/ECA High Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa (Mbeki Panel), and former Chair of the board of ActionAid International, Uganda;
- Mr. Jose Antonio Ocampo, Professor at Columbia University, Board of Governors of Banco de la República (central bank of Colombia), former Finance Minister, Colombia;
- Ms. Magdalena Sepulveda Carmona, Former UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Chile;
- Ms. Manorma Soeknandan, Deputy Secretary General of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Suriname;
- Mr. Shahid Hafiz Kardar, Vice-Chancellor, Beaconhouse National University, former Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan, Pakistan;
- Ms. Susan Rose-Ackerman, Professor of Law at Yale University, USA;
- Ms. Tarisa Watanagase, former Governor, Bank of Thailand, Thailand;
- Mr. Yu Yongding, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, China;
- Mr. Yury Fedotov, former Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Russia;

Panelists will meet several times over the course of the next year in global and regional consultations, convene experts and stakeholders from across all sectors, and explore new analyses of the issues and solutions. The work of the panel is supported by a secretariat based in New York. An interim report will be issued in September 2020 and a final report in February 2021.

individual can ultimately ignite a whole community.

## Up close and Personal with AUDA-NEPAD's Research Fellow, Mercedes Leburu

By Millicent Kgeledi

International Women's Day has assumed a new global dimension for women in developed and developing countries alike. The growing international women's movement has helped make the commemoration a rallying point to build support for women's empowerment. Sadly, in spite of our benefaction in freeing the society from the chains of oppression and segregation, most women are still marginalized socially, politically and economically.



Despite the prevailing circumstances, women are more active as actors of economic development in Africa than anywhere else. We perform the majority of agricultural activities, own a third of all firms and, in some countries, make up some 70% of employees. Over and above our income-earning activities, we are central to the household economy and the welfare of our families, and we play a vital — if sometimes unacknowledged — a leadership role in our communities and nations.

In light of this historic day, I held a one-on-one interview with the Research Fellow, Ms Mercedes Leburu, on issues related to the empowerment of young women, the economic potential of these women and youth, and the role that senior women can play in empowering junior women in the development space and the potential of young women in realising Africa's Agenda 2063 vision.

This is what she had to say:

**Question: Mercedes, a lot has been said and done to address gender inequality in the political, economic and social landscape in Africa, but has this 'movement' or 'activism' reached the small-scale woman farmer or marginalised woman in the rural areas of Africa? How has she benefitted from this global mass movement?**

Indeed a lot has been said and done to address gender inequality, however, as of 2019, it has only been in six countries that women have attained equal rights to men. In addition, not a single country to date has achieved economic equality between women and men.

I think that people around the globe are in agreement that formalised and institutionalised equality are inadequate in the absence of substantive equality. Currently, most of Sub-Saharan Africa assesses gender equality on the basis of statistics and numbers. We ought to pause and ask ourselves whether that's the right approach. Is there truly gender equality if we have the right percentage of women in leadership or at management level? Who is to say that we are not just filling quotas in order to appear progressive? In my view, the real measure of gender equality should be found in the accessibility of opportunities- regardless of gender. It is when we no longer need to speak on feminism that we will have achieved gender quality. It is when we no longer have to define and categorize statistics that measure fairness and equal opportunity. It is when a girl in the village where my mother was born and a girl born in a country like Denmark has an opportunity for a similar education, not only to their male counterparts but with boys born hundreds of miles away. Where a girl born to a housekeeper can easily become an Oprah Winfrey. Not just influential in her own country, but influential in the world.

When equal opportunities are afforded, the decisions made have a ripple effect and can help break the cycle of generational poverty. The evidence from FAO reflects that in developing countries, women make up 45% of the agricultural workforce and when more opportunities are available to them, natural resources are better managed, and nutrition is consequently improved. Furthermore, women in rural areas play a key part in the efforts to achieve the SDGs especially Goal 2 on eliminating hunger and malnutrition worldwide and various programmes such as CAADP ensure that the global mass movement benefits them too. However, there is still more to do in closing the gender gaps in agriculture. Empowering rural women is undeniably empowering humanity and communities as women are incubators.

**Question: What should be done differently to realise Agenda 2063's Aspiration 6?**

In order to realise the above-mentioned aspiration, it is pivotal that all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls be eradicated. Women, youth and children should be adequately empowered to make informed decisions and to appropriately exercise their rights. In addition, they should also be empowered to rightly utilise the resources and opportunities made available to them.

Creating opportunities for Africa's youth for the purpose of attaining self-realisation, access to health, education and jobs; ensuring safety and security for Africa's children and providing for early childhood development are all unequivocally essential.

**Question: Woman to woman mentorship programmes in the development space, how can they be effectively implemented?**

In order for one to be able to empower others, they themselves must be empowered. It is important to have an enabling environment to promote woman to woman mentorship in the developmental space through accessing tools to empower youth in Africa to be their utmost best.

Alignment is crucial in mentorship and as such, a criteria for symbiotic matchmaking is important. The above is so because leadership is, in my view, cultivated on a daily basis thus we need to add to our companies' values by cultivating the positives in the two different genders in order to contribute holistically to the bottom line or, in essence, the end result.

Mentors are undoubtedly a consistent testament to what Africa is capable of NOW. They are a testament to what the youth are capable of NOW. They are a testament of what that young, seemingly unimportant, little girl in the most rural of all villages in Africa is capable of NOW. They bare testament of how investing in an individual can ultimately ignite a whole community.





## Forests and Biodiversity: Too precious to lose

When we drink a glass of water, write in a notebook, take medicine for fever or build a house, we do not always make the connection to forests. And yet, these and many other aspects of our lives are linked to forests in one way or another. Every 21 March, the United Nations raises awareness of the importance of all types of forests.

Forests are home to most life on land, an estimated 80 percent of the world's terrestrial biodiversity. This natural wealth goes far beyond the 60,000 species of trees that have been identified to date. It includes other plants, animals, organisms that together form important forest ecosystems helping us to keep our air, soil, and water healthy and providing us for example with food, fuel, medicine, and shelter. We know that roughly one billion people depend directly on forests for their food and other forest products, and that figure does not include the farms that rely on nearby forests for pollinators like bees, birds, and bats.

All this biodiversity is under serious threat due to climate change and other forces that are chipping away at the world's forests daily. An estimated 73 percent of deforestation and habitat loss in the world is driven by the clearing of forest for agriculture. How, then, do we meet our needs as a growing population without damaging the very forests and biodiversity on which we all depend?

The conservation and sustainable management of forests are essential to biodiversity. So, too, is a better understanding of the conditions and activities that affect forests, such as food and timber production, urbanization, poverty, and land access. Many of the people whose daily activities have the greatest impact on the health of our forests are also among the poorest and most marginalized in the world. Their situations need to be taken into account in encouraging more sustainable use of forests and forest products.

In The Gambia, for example, massive losses in the availability of wild food sources have forced forest communities to turn more frequently to industrially-produced food to supplement their diets. As a measure, the government has started to restore forest ecosystems and biodiversity by giving communities direct ownership of the land on which they have long depended. People now have a greater stake in keeping their forests healthy. They are successful in learning more efficient and sustainable ways to plant crops, control pests, hunt, collect non-timber-forest-products, and gather wood, thus reducing stress on the land and water.

Countries' efforts to improve how people interact with the world's forests are informed by a list of internationally-agreed benchmarks, the Aichi targets, which were adopted in 2010 to help safeguard global biodiversity, and which are set to be revised towards the end of this year. Amid the growing media noise over action to address urgent challenges like climate change, hunger and health hazards, it cannot be stressed enough how important it is for countries to make these targets a priority in planning.

It is vital, too, for all of us to take an interest in the political and organizational decisions that can affect our natural forests. There is no quick way to substitute all those forest creatures and ecosystems which have evolved over millions and millions of years. Forests, with their wealth of biodiversity, have always sustained our lives. It is time for us to return the favour.

This year the International Day of Forests promotes education to learn to love forests. It underscores the importance of education at all levels in achieving sustainable forest management and biodiversity conservation.

### PODCAST

Various African Union organs including African Union Development Agency-NEPAD and the Pan-African Parliament have underscored the need for Member States to ratify the African Medicines Agency (AMA) Treaty so as to ensure the harmonization of medical products regulation in Africa. Mr. Paul Tanui, Senior Program Officer -Technical Support for Africa Medicines Regulatory Harmonisation (AMRH) Programme spoke to Khwezi FM on March 25. Please see below link for podcast.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/pwcidmbw1a3jm87/20200330%20Africa%20in%2010%20Minutes.MP3?dl=0>



## Skills Initiative For Africa (SIFA) Brings Together Business Associations for Employment Oriented Skills Development

The Federation of Kenya Employers (FKE) and Business Unity South Africa (BUSA) held a successful business-to-business engagement between 9 and 11 March 2020. The event was organized under the auspices of the Skills Initiative for Africa (SIFA) and hosted at the FKE/BUSINESS Africa secretariat in Nairobi, Kenya. It was attended by BUSA's Sino Moabalobela, Social Policy Manager, two SIFA Regional Coordinators (Eastern African, Stephen Gichohi and Southern Africa, Cheryl James), as well as the top leadership of FKE led by the CEO, Jacqueline Mugo who also serves as the Secretary-General of BUSINESS Africa.

In recognition of the critical roles business plays in the achievement of the continental skills development agenda, SIFA has been engaging with the business/private sector through employer associations at the policy and operational levels in promoting the occupational prospects of young Africans through innovative skills development. This B2B forum provided an opportunity to share strategic plans of the respective entities including their skills development agendas and lessons learned from their past and current engagement in skills development initiatives. The forum also provided a platform to discuss future collaborative engagements within skills development. The regional coordinators shared their deliverables for 2020 while identifying various opportunities for collaboration between BUSA and FKE including the role of business/private sector in skills competitions and World Skills platforms, geographical scaling of the SIFA regional coordination work in onboarding other Countries and engagement with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs).

Furthermore, the B2B focused on wider engagement with other key stakeholders at the Continental level towards advancing skills development in addition to identifying and facilitating scaling of best practices on industry-training linkages which will be available on the ASPYEE portal.

The B2B culminated with a courtesy visit to the National Industrial Training Authority (NITA) training centre- Machakos County in Kenya for good practice discussions on strategic training-industry collaboration. NITA leads Kenya's agenda on industrial training through training in various vocational fields with demand-driven models in close collaboration with the Industry. FKE and NITA are planning for TVET-Industry open days in 2020.



***NITA Centre, plumbing training workshop supported through industry collaboration***



***NITA motorvicle workshop with Industry support***



***B2B session in progress***



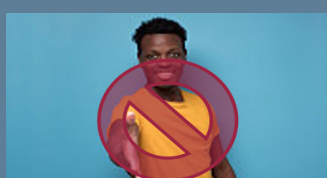
***Welcoming the BUSA team, FKE/ BUSINESSAfrica Secretary General (Middle) Jacqueline Mugo, BUSA Social Policy Manager Sino Moabalobela (right) and SIFA Regional Coordinator -Southern Africa Cheryl James (left)***

### COVID-19

There are simple ways to protect yourself and those around you



**Wash your hands frequently with soap**



**Avoid shaking hands or hugging**



**Sneeze or cough into your elbow**



**Wear a mask if you are sick**