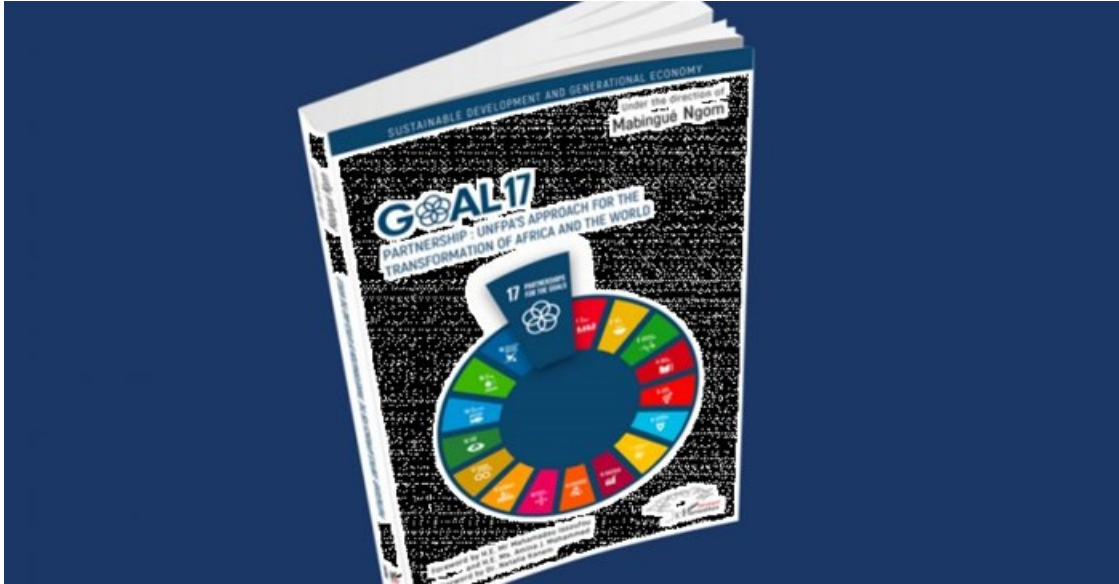


United Nations sounds warning on achieving SDGs

A warning on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was sounded at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) 2019, this week. The African Union believes it will be up to Africa's youth to meet the SDGs propelled by the impact of AfCFTA and significant investment in technology hubs across the continent.



United Nations SDG publication released this week.

Leaders should devise an “incentive structure” to promote a startup culture among young Africans. “I think they will produce the magic,” Albert Muchanga, the African Union’s Commissioner for Trade and Industry, told a gathering on infrastructure at the United Nations on Wednesday.

Muchanga said colleagues were working to “harmonise our policies, rules and regulations” to smooth cross-border trade while focusing on the next generation.

“We’re not leaving the youth behind. We’re promoting startups among African youth. Because we know that if we localise knowledge and innovation, then we’ll be able to spearhead the process of sustainable development,” said Muchanga.

The meeting, called *Promoting Innovation and Infrastructure Development: A Pathway for Boosting Manufacturing in the Fourth Industrial Revolution*, was part of the UN-designated Third Industrial Development Decade for Africa (IDDA III).

United Nations talks on goals to end poverty, inequality and other global ills wrapped up on Wednesday this week, amid

concerns that global efforts were being derailed by climate change, conflicts and violence.

Event organisers said that investment in African infrastructure was \$63 billion in 2016, representing 3.5% of the continent's economy. More than 42% of that funding came from national governments.

Massive investment needed

Africa needs “massive investment” of between \$68-152 billion this coming decade, or between 3.1 and 6.9% of the continent's economy, for building infrastructure and to ensure sustained growth, organisers say.

African Development Bank President Akinwumi Adesina warned that the continent was moving backwards and urged executives to produce more high-value manufactured products instead of exporting raw materials.

“Unfortunately, Africa today is de-industrialising, and there is no region of the world that has actually created wealth without industrialising,” said Adesina. “Infrastructure is critical. Ports, rail, digital infrastructure, all those things are going to be very critical. That's our bread and butter every day at the African Development Bank, connecting Africa and achieving the goal of African unity.”

The Bank has invested more than \$150 million in building technology hubs in Rwanda, Senegal and Cabo Verde. The institution also runs collaboration and mentorship schemes to bring African entrepreneurs and investors together.

Economic transformation

In a pre-recorded video, United Nations secretary-general Antonio Guterres said the “winds of hope are blowing across” Africa as economists from across the continent addressed raising cash for building roads, power plants and other infrastructure.

Guterres said the emergence of free trade areas across the continent offered “concrete opportunities for economic transformation. Yet, challenges remain. Despite progress, new policies are needed to unleash the full potential of industrialisation, especially in this time of technological revolution,” Guterres said.

Acknowledging the “wide recognition that we are off track to achieve the goals by 2030,” UN's deputy secretary-general Amina Mohammed said there had been a “clear renewal of commitment by leader after leader to implement the 2030 agenda” and that the two days of talks in New York marked a “turning point” in achieving the targets.

“This is absolutely critical to respond to challenges that affect all countries – poverty, gross inequalities, discrimination against women and girls, climate change, and a rapidly deteriorating natural environment,” said Mohammed.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were launched by the UN's 193 member nations in 2015 in a bid to tackle conflict, hunger, land degradation, gender inequality, climate change, and other global ills, by 2030.