



GLOBAL AFRICA
BUSINESS INITIATIVE

Africa CEO Forum
16 - 17 May, 2024
Kigali, Rwanda

www.gabi.unglobalcompact.org



GABI

CONVERSATIONS

**Digital Transformation – The Key to
Africa’s Inclusive Economic Growth
and Prosperity**



Kigali Conference Centre



INTRODUCTION

Following two successful outings of the annual flagship Unstoppable Africa convening held during the UN General Assembly week, the Global Africa Business Initiative has solidified its place as a crucial event of the High-Level Week. Keeping the conversations and connections going throughout the year, with the aim to provide a high-level platform for in-depth dialogue on amplifying and accelerating Africa's business, trade, and investment opportunities is an important aspect of the Global Africa Business Initiative.

It is for this reason that GABI participated in a UN Global Compact roundtable conversation at the Africa CEO Forum on 16th May in Kigali, Rwanda. Under the GABI theme of Digital Transformation, GABI brought together a small group of key stakeholders including members of the GABI Circle to engage in targeted solution-oriented conversations.

GABI's focus on positioning Africa as the world's premier business, trade, and investment destination; and reshaping Africa's global narrative is a key shift that we seek to have echoed by the CEO Forum and other continental convenings going forward.

OBJECTIVES

- Powering a dialogue on Digital Transformation that identifies the opportunities and solutions to drive investment and growth on the continent.
- Connecting global and African businesses, Government, and other stakeholders to facilitate dialogue, identify policy, partnership, and business enablers to enhance Africa's business, trade, and investment opportunities through Digital Transformation.
- Providing African CEOs an opportunity and platform for policy advocacy through GABI and the United Nations.
- Accelerate investment and solution creation in and for the African continent.



Alex Okosi, CEO of Google Africa



THE AUDIENCE

The GABI Conversations had over **40 participants** who included global and African private sector, representation from Government and other stakeholders. We thank everyone in attendance for their contributions to the lively and inspiring discussions.

We would like to also thank our Speakers, **H.E. Professor Yemi Osinbajo** – Former Vice President of the Nigeria & Guardian – timbuktoo Africa Innovation Foundation, **H.E. Paula Ingabire** – Minister of ICT and Innovation, Republic of Rwanda, **Mr. Alex Okosi** – CEO of Google Africa representing the GABI Circle, our moderator **Dr. Acha Leke** – Chairman, McKinsey Africa and our host **Mr. Ozonnia Ojielo** the UN Resident Coordinator to Rwanda.

AGENDA

● Opening

Mark Eddo (MC)

Welcome Remarks: **Ms. Sanda Ojiambo** – Assistant Secretary-General and CEO of the United Nations Global Compact

● Fireside Chat: Investments, Infrastructure and Reform: Digital Transformation as a lever to Africa's Economic Success

This fireside chat brings together the Government and private sector to set the scene before the roundtable discussion. This conversation will delve into the need for a digitally transformed continent and the role that Government, the private sector, and other stakeholders are playing and offer case studies for solutions.

- **H.E. Professor Yemi Osinbajo** – Former Vice President of the Nigeria & Guardian – timbuktoo Africa Innovation Foundation
- **H.E. Paula Ingabire** – Minister of ICT and Innovation, Republic of Rwanda
- **Mr. Alex Okosi** – CEO of Google Africa

Moderated by **Dr. Acha Leke** – Chairman, McKinsey Africa

● Facilitator-led Discussion: Moving from Dialogue to Action – Multi-Stakeholder Discussion

Facilitator-led discussion on specific questions designed to delve into the real and practical ways in which the lives of people on the continent can be transformed through unlocking the power of digital.

Facilitated by **Mark Eddo**

● Closing

Mr. Ozonnia Ojielo – United Nations Resident Coordinator to Rwanda

MC Closes
Group Photo

CONVERSATIONS

During these GABI Conversations, participants delved into critical discussions aimed at the solutions needed to drive Africa's economic growth on the continent and beyond and discussed how to bridge the digital gap by providing skills, infrastructure, finance, and opportunities. Areas touched on through the discussions included:

- A.I.: Governance v Innovation
- Technology and the Supply Chain
- The Digital Economy
- Investing in Digital Transformation
- An Enabling Environment
- Upskilling of the world's future workforce



KEY CONVERSATIONS INSIGHTS



1. Creating the Right Environment for Digital Skills:

Highlighted that digital transformation is not just about upskilling individuals but also about creating an environment where these skills can thrive. This involves comprehensive strategies that include infrastructure, policy support, and ecosystem development.

2. Importance of Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration:

Participants underscored the necessity of collaboration between governments, private sector entities, and other stakeholders to drive digital transformation. This collaborative approach is essential for overcoming challenges and maximizing the impact of digital initiatives.

3. Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a Key Driver:

It was stressed that AI has immense potential for the future of Africa. However, the continent must develop the necessary infrastructure to support AI technologies.

4. Data Centers and Digital Infrastructure:

It was emphasized that for Africa to benefit from digital transformation, it is crucial to have data centers located within the continent. Having data centers in the US or limited African countries hampers progress. Examples like Rwanda, which received subsidies from Netflix and removed taxes to boost digital usage, were highlighted.

Data centers must be financially viable and sustainable to support digital transformation.

5. Empowering Individuals and Entrepreneurs:

Call for capacity building for individuals to ensure they can effectively participate in and benefit from the digital economy. The need for successful entrepreneurs to establish funds to support emerging entrepreneurs, thereby expanding the digital economy was highlighted.

6. Policy and Regulatory Support:

The need to focus on building a skilled workforce, referring to it as an "army" of digital professionals, to drive the digital agenda forward.

7. Project Management is key:

Project management and delivery will be key, and the continent lacks this expertise to support successful delivery on projected. Advocation for making execution of digital strategies appealing and effective, summarizing it as making "execution sexy."

8. Infrastructure and Accessibility:

Achieving digital transformation is too big a challenge to tackle alone. Collective efforts are required to develop infrastructure, ensure access to smartphones, and provide affordable data.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The GABI Conversations highlighted the transformative potential of digital technologies and AI for Africa. However, to realize this potential, it is crucial to address the infrastructure gaps, ensure multi-stakeholder collaboration, and empower individuals and entrepreneurs. By fostering an enabling environment and making strategic investments in digital infrastructure, Africa can pave the way for a thriving digital future.

Recommendation 1

- In 2025 and beyond, GABI should position itself as a leading platform championing Artificial Intelligence in Africa and promoting the development of the necessary infrastructure to support AI technologies

Recommendation 2

- The use of the GABI platform to build on the work of the UN Secretary-General's AI Advisory Body and the outcomes of the report to localize for the African continent.

Recommendation 3

- Leverage the GABI platform to advocate on the African Governments and policy makers on the need for legal and regulatory frameworks and policies around A.I.

SNAPSHOTS



Ms. Aida Diarra - Senior Vice President and Head of Sub-Saharan Africa, Visa



Mr. Charles Murito - Head of Government Affairs & Public Policy, Sub-Saharan Africa, Google



Dr. Ubon Udoh - MD/CEO, ASR Africa



Mr. Olivier Laouchez - Co-Founder of Trace Group with Mr. Alex Okosi, Ms. Sanda Ojiambo and Mr. Charles Murito



Mr. Ozonnia Ojielo - United Nations Resident Coordinator to Rwanda



Ms. Lovetta Sesay Fatmata - Resident Representative, UNDP Rwanda



Ms. Anna Ekeledo, Executive Director of AfriLabs and timbuktoo Africa Innovation Foundation



Mr. Hassanein Hiridjee, CEO of Axian Group



Ms. Tolulope Lewis Tamoka - Chief of Governmental Relations, UN Global Compact



Dr. Herve Lado - Head Africa, UN Global Compact



Mr. Mark Eddo - CEO of Mark Eddo Media



Ms. Cynthia Muffuh - Senior Advisor - Africa Regional Programming, UN Global Compact



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CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The GABI Conversations is a prelude to the Unstoppable Africa event in New York during the UN General Assembly week in 2024. Therefore, the discussions will feed into the broader agenda of Unstoppable Africa.

Furthermore, the recommendations identified will inform and be part of the strategic programming and partnerships for GABI in 2025.

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SEPT. 25-26,
2024

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ABOUT THE GLOBAL AFRICA BUSINESS INITIATIVE (GABI)

Launched in September 2022, GABI is the premier private sector-led global platform that galvanizes African and global leaders from various sectors to amplify and accelerate Africa's unstoppable business, trade, and investment opportunities, for Africa and the world.

GABI is built upon three pillars– to convene the African private sector and global stakeholders to amplify and accelerate opportunities in and for Africa; to connect and showcase Africa's private sector to potential partners, businesses, and investors across the world; and to catalyze and promote collaboration amongst sectors and industries to drive sustainable and inclusive business, trade and investment for Africa and the world.

[Unstoppable Africa 2023 Executive Summary](https://tinyurl.com/3k58cu96)
<https://tinyurl.com/3k58cu96>

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