

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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African Union intensifies efforts to foster growth of start-up ventures in Africa.

The African Union led by the Department of Economic Development, Trade, Tourism,, Industry, and Minerals(ETTIM) is set to host the second edition of the annual African Union Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Forum from the 4th -8th September 2023 at the AU Head quarter in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The forum will focus on "Start-up Acts: An Instrument to Foster Development and Innovation in Africa," delving on the importance of policies that serve as incentives for young people to start a venture, investors to put their money into promising companies, and other ecosystem actors to lend their support in start-up enterprises.

Tunisia and Senegal are leading on the continent on the adoption of Start-up Acts in 2018 and 2019 respectively. These policies are part of broader government strategies to position their countries as innovation hubs by leveraging an emerging tech ecosystem to improve economic development. Such efforts have continued to demonstrate the pivotal role of MSMEs in Africa's industrialization and economic growth.

MSMEs are the backbone of the African economy, accounting for 80-90% of all businesses and providing employment to around 85% of the continent's workforce. They are also the driving force behind innovation, playing a significant role in the development of new technologies, products, and services.

The focus of the 2023 annual MSME forum on how MSMEs can promote African innovation and growth is a strategic move to support the implementation of the commitment from the [17th Extraordinary Summit on Industrialization and Economic Diversification](#), which emphasized the importance of increasing domestic resource mobilization to support sustainable industrialization. With MSMEs accounting for over 90% of total employment and 30% of exports in Africa, there is an undeniable need for comprehensive policies and strategies to support their growth.

The forum will bring together over 200 Participants and key stakeholders from across the continent who are committed to driving the African Union [Agenda 2063](#) goal of "A Prosperous Africa, Based on Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development." Over the five days, Forum will offer a platform to:

- Promote policies for robust MSME development and growth in Africa.
- Enhance MSME capabilities through inclusive market and value chain development.
- Provide technical support through training sessions on e-commerce, digital marketing, and more.

The forum will also be key in facilitating knowledge exchange, strengthening policy frameworks, and building and strengthening cross-border collaboration. Participants

will also benefit from dynamic dialogue and innovative platforms that will increase capacities for MSMEs to thrive in the continental business environment, a strengthened collaboration between policymakers and the private sector, and an increased commitment to supporting MSMEs across the continent.

Several key events will take place during forum over the five days. This includes,

1. Training sessions.
2. Gala Dinner and an awards ceremony.
3. The AU MSME Market Place (exhibition).
4. The concertation meeting on the Establishment of the African Industrialization Fund organized by the African Union Commission Department of Economic Development, Trade, Tourism, Industry and Minerals (AUC-ETTİM).
5. An Expert Working Group Meeting for Ministries, Departments, and Agencies in charge of MSMEs organized by the AUC-ETTİM, International Trade Centre (ITC), and the All-Africa Association for SMEs (AAASME).
6. An Expert Working Group Meeting on the Enterprise Innovation and Modernization Programme, SME/I Cluster and Network Programm organized by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).
7. A Round-Table on Innovative Financing for African Start-ups and Small Business Growth, organized by the Pan African Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PACCI).

Learn more about the event and the agenda programme [here](#).

For more information, please contact:

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