

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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3rd AU MSME Forum Concludes with Renewed Commitment to Empower African Startups and MSMEs



Windhoek, Namibia - September 12, 2024 - The 3rd African Union Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Forum, organized by the African Union Commission (AUC) in collaboration with the Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board (NIPDB), has concluded with a renewed commitment to foster financial empowerment and educational innovation for African startups and MSMEs.

The four-day forum, themed "Fostering Financial Empowerment and Educational Innovation for African Startups & MSMEs," successfully convened over 350 delegates from around the globe. This diverse assembly included 50 micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) representing 30 African Union member states, alongside exhibitors showcasing innovations from various regions of Africa. The event served as a vital platform for collaboration, knowledge exchange, and networking among entrepreneurs, policymakers, and development partners committed to advancing the MSME sector across the continent.

Key highlights of the forum included:

Masterclasses, workshops, exhibitions, and information sessions, participants engaged in a series of masterclasses, workshops, exhibitions, and information sessions that provided practical knowledge and skills in critical areas such as digital marketing, intellectual property protection, and accessing green financing. These sessions were designed to equip MSMEs with the tools necessary to thrive in today's competitive landscape.

A high-level panel discussion, that delved into the critical theme of "Fostering Financial Empowerment and Educational Innovation for African Startups & MSMEs." This engaging session brought together influential leaders and experts from various sectors, providing a platform for in-depth dialogue on the challenges and opportunities facing micro, small, and medium enterprises across the continent.

The launch of the AU MSME definition A significant milestone was achieved with the launch of the AU MSME definition, which aims to standardize the classification of micro, small, and medium enterprises across Africa. This initiative will facilitate targeted policies and support mechanisms that empower these businesses, ensuring their effective participation in regional and global markets.

The launch of the Lithium-Ion Hackathon, the forum also saw the launch of the Lithium-Ion Hackathon, a competition designed to promote innovation in the lithium-ion battery sector. This initiative encourages entrepreneurs to develop sustainable solutions that can contribute to the growing demand for clean energy technologies.

The forum's overarching goal was to enhance the capacity of MSMEs through targeted training sessions, establish a platform for policymakers and the private sector to interact and share knowledge, and facilitate regional and continental collaboration to support MSMEs.

During his opening remarks at the 3rd AU MSME Forum, H.E. Amb. Albert Muchanga posed a thought-provoking question to the attendees: "Why are you here?" This inquiry was a deliberate challenge aimed at prompting self-reflection among the participants, who included entrepreneurs, policymakers, and stakeholders from across Africa.

"This forum provides a platform for capacity building, networking and exhibitions for MSMEs. " said Amb. Albert Muchanga "Let us take these opportunities by being better equipped to run and grow our enterprises"

Amb. Muchanga's opening question set the tone for a forum focused on empowerment, innovation, and the future of MSMEs in Africa. It challenged participants to reflect on their motivations and to take proactive steps towards achieving their business objectives, ultimately contributing to the economic development of the continent.

Mathew Kaholongo, the Director at the Cabinet Secretariat within the Office of the Prime Minister, highlighted the significant impact of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) during his remarks. He referenced a United Nations report from 2024, which emphasizes that MSMEs comprise 90% of businesses globally, account for 60% to 70% of employment, and contribute 50% of the world's GDP.

The African Union Commission and the Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board expressed their gratitude to all participants, partners, and sponsors for their invaluable contributions to the success of the forum. They reaffirmed their dedication to continuing their efforts to support the growth and development of MSMEs in Africa.

The date and time for the AUMSME Forum 2025 will be officially announced through the AU Platform.

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