

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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Africa at the Forefront of AI Revolution: AU Commissioner Advocates for a Bold Vision at the AI Action Summit



February 11, 2025 – Paris, France – Africa's economic potential is set to soar with the transformative power of Artificial Intelligence (AI), which could contribute up to \$1.5 trillion, or 6% of the continent's GDP, by 2030. This growth is expected to fuel key sectors such as agriculture, healthcare, and fintech, driving much-needed innovation across the continent. With Africa's young, tech-savvy population, the continent is uniquely positioned to actively participate in the global AI revolution.

In a move to solidify Africa's role as a prominent player in the AI space, the African Union (AU) has recently adopted a forward-thinking AI Strategy laying out crucial recommendations that will optimize the benefits of AI and unlock its vast potential to empower citizens. This AI Strategy provides a comprehensive roadmap for responsible and inclusive AI development across the continent. It recognises that governance is central to ensuring AI serves Africa's development goals while safeguarding fundamental rights. The strategy outlines key principles, including transparency, accountability, data sovereignty, and ethical AI adoption, to guide the continent's approach to AI regulation and policymaking. AI governance is not solely about regulation; it is also about fostering an enabling environment where Africa takes the lead in AI innovation while ensuring that technology benefits all citizens equitably and ethically.

At the recently concluded AI Action Summit in Paris, held from February 10-12, 2025, H.E. Dr Amani Abou-Zeid, African Union outgoing Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, reaffirmed the AU's unwavering commitment to AI-driven inclusive and sustainable development.

The Summit, co-hosted by France and India, brought together global leaders, policymakers, and AI experts to explore the transformative potential of AI in addressing the world's most pressing challenges. The opening plenary session was graced by distinguished leaders, including H.E. Emmanuel Macron, President of France; H.E. Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India; H.E. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations; H.E. J.D. Vance, Vice President of the United States; H.E. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada; and H.E. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission. This powerful gathering highlights the growing determination of global leaders to harness the power of AI for global progress.

The Summit provided a platform to reaffirm the African Union's commitment to ensuring that Africa is not only an active participant in the AI revolution but also a leader in shaping the global AI landscape. *“For Africa to fully realize the potential of AI, we must invest in robust infrastructure, from high-performance computing to skilled AI talent, and create an environment where data flows freely, while respecting privacy and security,”* emphasized the Commissioner.

Commissioner Abou-Zeid also highlighted the importance of inclusive, ethical, and sustainable AI growth. *“AI systems that are not carefully designed can perpetuate existing inequalities. It is crucial that we create frameworks that safeguard the rights and freedoms of our citizens, ensuring AI works for the benefit of all,”* she said.

AI-driven applications are already transforming African economies, driving efficiency, inclusivity, and innovation across key sectors. In agriculture, AI-powered tools are revolutionising farming by providing real-time weather forecasts, soil analysis, and pest control solutions, leading to a 30% increase in productivity for over 33 million smallholder farmers. Machine learning models help optimise irrigation, reduce post-harvest losses, and enable precision farming, making agriculture more resilient to climate change.



In healthcare, AI is improving early disease detection, diagnostics, and patient management. AI-driven imaging technologies are enhancing the early detection of tuberculosis, cervical cancer, and malaria, while predictive analytics are improving epidemic response and vaccine distribution. The continent's health-tech sector has already attracted \$550 million in investments, supporting AI applications in telemedicine, robotic surgery, and supply chain optimisation. In financial services, AI is advancing financial inclusion through smart algorithms that assess creditworthiness based on alternative data, enabling millions of previously unbanked individuals to access microloans and digital banking services. AI-driven fraud detection and automated financial planning tools are strengthening Africa's fintech ecosystem, reducing transaction costs and enhancing security. These advancements underscore Africa's potential to become a global leader in AI innovation, leveraging technology to drive economic growth, improve livelihoods, and foster sustainable development across the continent.

In fostering a conducive environment for the integration of AI across various productive sectors through regulatory frameworks, the African Union aims to cultivate a space where innovation thrives while upholding democratic values and promoting pan-African unity. In her remarks, Commissioner Abou-Zeid also shed light on the importance of preserving Africa's rich cultural and linguistic heritage in the digital age. She stated, “The preservation of our heritage,

languages, cultures, and traditions is a crucial ethical issue. AI must be developed in a way that respects and protects this legacy.

With a firm commitment to positioning Africa at the forefront of the global AI discourse and implementation, the African Union is dedicated to ensuring that AI drives sustainable development and prosperity for all.

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