

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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African Union Innovation Festival 2025 Celebrated Youth Innovation as the Driving Force for Africa's Digital Transformation

Youth-led innovation lies at the heart of Africa's transformation. With more than 70% of the continent's population under the age of 35, Africa's young innovators



are shaping solutions to address the continent's most pressing challenges from climate change and health to digital inclusion and industrialization. Recognizing this, the AU Women, Gender and Youth Directorate (WGYD), hosted the African Union Innovation Festival 2025 (InnoFest'25) from 22–24 October 2025 at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Convened under the theme “**Repositioning the African Union for Youth-Centered Innovation Leadership**,” InnoFest'25 served as a premier continental platform to celebrate African creativity, connect innovators with policymakers and partners, and strengthen collaboration across the continent's innovation ecosystem. The Festival showcased flagship AU initiatives such as the AU Start-up Act Model Law, the Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020–2030), and the Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy, all designed to foster a digitally empowered and innovative Africa.

The Festival was officially opened by **H.E. Amb. Selma Malika Haddadi, Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission**, who highlighted the pivotal role of Africa's youth in building a prosperous and self-reliant continent. She noted that Africa's young people represent the continent's greatest innovators and problem-solvers, adding that by equipping them with the necessary tools, resources, and networks, the African Union is not only empowering individuals but also shaping the continent's collective future.

Ambassador Haddadi further emphasized that innovation must be rooted in inclusivity and sustainability, reaffirming the African Union's commitment to fostering an enabling environment that nurtures creativity and transforms bold ideas into concrete, transformative action.

Speaking on behalf of German Cooperation, **Dr. Ferdinand von Weyhe, Chargé d'Affaires of the German Embassy in Addis Ababa**, commended the AU for its leadership in strengthening the continental innovation ecosystem, noting that *InnoFest'25* symbolizes Africa's creativity, resilience, and potential, and reaffirmed Germany's pride in supporting the AU's mission to empower youth and promote innovation as a foundation for sustainable development.

The three-day Festival brought together young innovators, AU officials,

development partners, start-up founders, and policy leaders from across Africa and the diaspora to showcase solutions, share experiences, and build partnerships that drive impact.

Key highlights included:

Graduation of the AU Digital and Innovation Fellowship (Cohort II): Eighteen fellows from ten African countries concluded their one-year placements across eleven AU departments and organs, co-developing digital tools and systems to improve efficiency and service delivery.

Launch of AU Go Gal Spark Tank: Twenty young women innovators aged 15–25 presented their projects under the AU’s Go Gal initiative, with top finalists receiving mentorship, technical support, and seed funding to scale their innovations.

Recognition of Civic Tech Innovators: The AU Civic Tech Fund 2.0 innovators were celebrated for their digital solutions that enhance citizen participation, transparency, and accountability in governance.

Ecosystem Strengthening: The Festival served as a flagship initiative of the AU Innovation Lab, developed in collaboration with German Cooperation, to foster open innovation, collaboration, and institutional co-creation across the AU system.

“InnoFest’25 was not just a celebration it was a commitment to turn ideas into impact. Innovation must move from pilot projects to scalable solutions that change lives, especially for Africa’s women and youth,” said Prudence Ngwenya, Director of the Women, Gender and Youth Directorate.

The success of InnoFest’25 was made possible through collaboration with German Cooperation, Afrilabs, UN Women, UNICEF, UNITAR, World Bank, Ushahidi, and the Data Innovation Lab. These partnerships highlight the AU’s dedication to fostering cross-sectoral collaboration and building a vibrant, inclusive innovation ecosystem.

About the African Union Innovation Festival (InnoFest’25)

InnoFest’25 reflects the AU’s commitment to leveraging innovation as a driver of inclusive growth, as outlined in frameworks such as the Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020–2030), the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA-2024), and the Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy.

The 2025 edition featured high-level panels, policy dialogues, pitching sessions, and innovation showcases, aligning Africa’s innovation ecosystem with the AU’s 4Es+H Framework (Education, Employment, Entrepreneurship, Engagement, and Health & Well-being).

The Festival concluded with a renewed continental commitment to scale innovation as a key enabler of Agenda 2063, reaffirming that Africa’s youth, creativity, and technology are the foundation for the continent’s sustainable transformation.

For more information:

Mr. Mohamed Kimbugwe, Digital Governance and Innovation Advisor, WGYD | Kimbugwem@AfricaUnion.org

Mr. Natan Addisu Tafese, Innovation Associate, WGYD | NatanA@AfricaUnion.org

Media Contact:

1. Mr. Noel John | Information and Communication Directorate | African Union Commission | E-mail:
Kenyin@africanunion.org

Information and Communication Directorate, African Union Commission | E-mail: DIC@africanunion.org |

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