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ADIF Report

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Africa Development Impact Forum (ADIF) 2026 Output Report

Part I: Executive Summary

The **Africa Development Impact Forum (ADIF) 2026** was convened by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) under the theme **"Best Practices and Innovative Solutions for Job Creation in Africa."** The Forum responded to one of Africa's most pressing development challenges: translating evidence, policy dialogue, and successful pilot initiatives into large-scale implementation capable of generating productive employment. Bringing together governments, development partners, the private sector, academia, think tanks, youth leaders, and international organizations, ADIF 2026 positioned itself as an implementation-oriented platform designed to move beyond dialogue toward coordinated action for structural transformation and job creation. The Forum therefore called for stronger implementation mechanisms, coordinated partnerships, and greater accountability to accelerate delivery.

ADIF Thematic Session Outcomes

Across the Forum, participants emphasized that Africa's jobs challenge is fundamentally an implementation challenge requiring stronger ecosystems, better financing, skills development, and coordinated policy action.

Youth entrepreneurship discussions highlighted the need to move beyond increasing the number of startups toward scaling high-growth enterprises that create sustainable jobs. Participants noted that while financing exists, it remains largely inaccessible to youth due to inadequate financial products, collateral requirements, fragmented support systems, and weak policy environments. Recommendations included expanding blended finance and credit guarantees, strengthening entrepreneurship ecosystems, improving data systems, and providing long-term mentorship and market access support.

On artificial intelligence and the future of work, participants agreed that AI presents both opportunities and risks. While automation may displace some tasks, AI can create new opportunities in agriculture, health, finance, and public services. However, significant gaps remain in AI skills, digital infrastructure, data governance, and evidence on AI's impact in African contexts. Discussions stressed that AI policies must focus on supporting SMEs and the informal economy, where most Africans work, through investments in digital infrastructure, AI-ready skills, sovereign AI frameworks, and AI-enabled business solutions.

Regional integration emerged as a critical pathway for job creation under the AfCFTA. Participants observed that tariff liberalization is already creating new market opportunities, but youth- and SME-led enterprises continue to face barriers related to trade finance, cross-border payments, regulatory fragmentation, and dispute resolution. To unlock regional value chains, participants called for full operationalization of PAPSS, interoperable digital payment systems, supplier development programmes, blended finance instruments, and stronger digital trade infrastructure.

Skills development and workforce preparedness highlighted successful examples from Ethiopia, Ghana, and Rwanda where TVET systems are aligned with national development priorities. Participants stressed that skills systems must respond to both formal and informal labour markets and prepare young people for future industries. Recommendations included aligning TVET with industrial policies, introducing micro-credentials and apprenticeships, expanding digital learning platforms, strengthening industry participation in curriculum design, and establishing continental frameworks for skills recognition and labour mobility.

In the green industrialization and critical minerals discussions, participants emphasized that the greatest employment opportunities lie not in extraction but in downstream processing, manufacturing,

and renewable energy industries. Regional integration, labour mobility, and skills recognition were identified as critical enablers. Recommended actions included developing regional green value chains, supporting battery manufacturing and renewable energy industries, introducing an African Skills Passport, scaling green jobs, and strengthening industry-led training systems.

Discussions on industrialization underscored the need for Africa to move beyond exporting raw materials and instead build competitive industries in green minerals, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, agribusiness, tourism, renewable energy, and digital services. Participants emphasized that informality should not be accepted as a permanent feature of African economies but transformed through industrialization, value addition, stronger institutions, regional infrastructure investments, and improved policy implementation.

The creative industries session highlighted the sector's significant potential to generate employment across entire value chains, including production, design, marketing, publishing, and digital services. Participants stressed that stronger support for creators could drive economic growth, reduce irregular migration, and strengthen social cohesion. Key recommendations included improving intellectual property protection, expanding creative sector financing, supporting African brand development, and investing in creative entrepreneurship and skills development.

One of the Forum's flagship innovations was the Policy and Strategy Hackathon, which demonstrated the creativity and leadership of young Africans in addressing employment challenges. Nine multidisciplinary teams presented innovative policy and business solutions, with five finalists selected based on innovation, feasibility, scalability, and potential impact. Rather than treating youth as beneficiaries of development, the Hackathon positioned them as co-creators of solutions and established a pipeline through which promising innovations will receive continued mentorship, partnership brokering, and implementation support under the ADIF Implementation Clock.

ADIF 2026 was widely regarded as both a technical and operational success. **Participants consistently praised the Forum's implementation focus, describing ADIF as a platform that is "different" because it emphasizes accountability, partnerships, and delivery rather than producing recommendations alone**. The five-month pre-Forum webinar series significantly strengthened the quality of discussions by enabling evidence-based dialogue before the event. Operationally, the Forum was delivered successfully through strong collaboration across ECA divisions, conference management, ICT, logistics, finance, procurement, communications, and partner institutions, despite considerable resource constraints. The Performance Scorecard reported exceptionally high participant satisfaction (96%), strong content relevance, effective logistics, and outstanding youth engagement.

The report also identifies important operational lessons for future editions. Delayed budget confirmation affected planning, procurement, stakeholder outreach, and government participation. Roles and responsibilities were not always clearly defined, the Secretariat operated with limited staffing relative to the scale of the event, participant management systems require strengthening, and the programme would benefit from more networking opportunities and streamlined scheduling. The report recommends earlier planning, clearer governance arrangements, increased Secretariat capacity, standardized operational procedures, and a strengthened implementation architecture to maximize ADIF's long-term impact.

A defining outcome of ADIF 2026 was the adoption of a shared implementation agenda. Member States committed to strengthening entrepreneurship ecosystems, investing in skills and AI readiness, promoting industrialization and regional integration, and advancing AfCFTA implementation. ECA committed to providing evidence-based policy support, convening partnerships, monitoring progress, and facilitating peer learning. Development partners committed to expanding technical assistance and blended finance; the private sector committed to investing in youth enterprises and supplier development; think tanks committed to strengthening evidence generation and monitoring; and youth leaders committed to continuing to drive innovation and advocate for accountability. These commitments represent a new social compact for job creation based on shared responsibility and collective action.

To ensure these commitments translate into measurable outcomes, the report proposes the **ADIF Post-Forum Implementation Clock** as the Forum's principal implementation mechanism. **The Implementation Clock is conceived as a co-owned, multi-stakeholder platform that coordinates implementation through Communities of**

Practice, implementation monitoring dashboards, strategic partnerships, technical advisory support, and annual stock takes.

Five initial priority actions have been identified: strengthening youth entrepreneurship ecosystems; advancing AI-ready skills and digital transformation; accelerating AfCFTA and regional value chains; building skills for future industries and green industrialization; and operationalizing the ADIF Implementation Partnership. Together, these priorities provide a practical roadmap for coordinated action over the next 24 months.

Finally, the report concludes that realizing the ambitions of ADIF 2026 requires sustained coordination beyond the Forum itself. It recommends establishing a dedicated coordination function during the initial implementation phase to operationalize the Implementation Clock, establish governance arrangements, mobilize partnerships, launch Communities of Practice, develop monitoring systems, and support delivery of the agreed priority actions. By institutionalizing implementation support, ADIF can evolve from a successful continental forum into a year-round platform that bridges evidence, partnerships, and policy implementation, helping Member States and partners translate commitments into measurable progress on Africa's jobs agenda.

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1. Introduction and Theory of Change

1.1 Africa's Employment Challenge

Africa is experiencing one of the fastest demographic transitions in the world. The continent's youthful population represents a significant source of innovation, entrepreneurship, and productivity. However, this demographic dividend can only be realized if economies generate sufficient opportunities for productive employment. Despite strong economic growth in several countries over recent decades, job creation has often lagged labour force growth, resulting in high youth unemployment and underemployment.

1.2 Why ADIF?

The Africa Development Impact Forum was established to bridge a longstanding gap in Africa's development ecosystem: the disconnect between evidence generation and implementation. Too often, promising ideas, research findings, and pilot projects fail to translate into scaled interventions that improve livelihoods and create jobs. ADIF responds to this challenge by creating a platform that brings together policymakers, practitioners, entrepreneurs, researchers, youth, and development partners to identify practical solutions and support their impactful implementation. Africa's implementation gap is structural and requires dedicated mechanisms that convert ideas and solutions into delivery. ADIF therefore seeks not only to facilitate dialogue but also to create mechanisms for accountability, foster partnerships, and support implementation over time.

The Africa Development Impact Forum (ADIF) 2026 was convened under the theme "Best Practices and Innovative Solutions for Job Creation in Africa" to move beyond diagnosis and toward implementation-oriented solutions that generate decent jobs at scale. The Forum is a strong multi-stakeholder platform that brought together governments, youth leaders, development partners, private sector actors, academia, think tanks, and international organizations to identify practical pathways for inclusive and sustainable job creation. The Forum programme reflected this ambition through a combination of high-level dialogues, thematic solution sessions, a policy and strategy hackathon, and a simulation roundtable designed to stress-test implementation pathways.

1.3 ADIF Theory of Change

ADIF is built on a simple but powerful theory of change:

Evidence → Dialogue → Innovation → Partnerships → Implementation → Impact

The Forum recognizes that evidence alone is insufficient, and outcomes emerge when research informs policy; partnerships mobilize resources, and institutions are accountable, and implement measurable solutions effectively. The establishment of the ADIF Implementation Clock reflects this commitment to ensuring continuity between dialogue and delivery.

2. ADIF 2026 Technical and Operational Evaluation

2.2 ADIF Technical Successes

See Annex 1: Performance Scorecard

- **Across the Forum, participants and partners highlighted the distinctive nature of ADIF, with several commenting that** "ADIF is different" **and** "ADIF is real" **because of its strong focus on implementation rather than dialogue alone.** ADIF 2026 demonstrated that Africa's principal challenge remains the persistent gap between evidence, policy, and implementation. Unlike many policy forums that conclude with recommendations, ADIF deliberately emphasized accountability, practical solutions, and sustained follow-up. Real constraint to job creation is the inability to translate successful pilots, research findings, and policy commitments into scalable interventions capable of generating employment and economic transformation. **This implementation gap emerged as a defining theme of the Forum and informed the establishment of the ADIF Post-Forum Implementation Clock.**

- **The quality and relevance of the Forum programme were widely recognized by participants and partners.** Thematic sessions covering youth entrepreneurship, artificial intelligence and the future of work, regional value chains under the AfCFTA, creative industries, green industrialization, skills development, and global financial architecture were praised for their practical focus and cross-sectoral relevance. Rather than treating these issues in isolation, discussions highlighted the interconnected nature of Africa's jobs challenge and generated integrated, evidence-based solutions that reflected the continent's diverse development priorities.

- **A key factor contributing to the quality of discussions was the five-month pre-Forum stock take webinar series, which provided an important foundation for the Forum's substantive agenda.** These webinars enabled experts, policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to examine emerging evidence, identify implementation challenges, and refine policy recommendations well in advance of the Forum. Consequently, ADIF discussions moved beyond introductory dialogue and were able to focus on practical solutions, implementation pathways, and partnership opportunities. This evidence-to-action approach distinguished ADIF from many traditional conferences and ensured that recommendations were grounded in prior consultation and technical analysis.

- **A major success of ADIF 2026 was its positioning of youth as solution providers rather than passive beneficiaries.** The Policy and Strategy Hackathon represented one of the Forum's flagship innovations, highlighted the ingenuity of African youth and demonstrated that young innovators are not merely beneficiaries of development interventions but active architects of Africa's future. Youth entrepreneurs presented scalable

solutions addressing employment, industrialization, agriculture, clean energy, and trade. These innovations demonstrated that young Africans possess the creativity and capacity to address some of the continent's most pressing challenges. Youth (YEN members) were exceptionally prepared, engaged substantively, and demonstrated real maturity.

- **The Forum drew extensively on evidence from the ECA and external research institutions, think tanks, and practitioners including key partners: Oxford Martin School from Oxford University and the Africa Center for Economic Transformation (ACET).** Discussions were grounded in data and country experiences, ensuring that recommendations remained practical and context specific. Furthermore, ADIF fostered new and strengthened partnerships across governments, academia, development partners, the private sector and musicians. These partnerships are essential for mobilizing finance, scaling innovation, and supporting long-term implementation.

2.3 ADIF 2026 Technical Challenges

See Annex 1: Performance Scorecard

- **ADIF 2026 Program was highly ambitious for a two-day event.** While the breadth and diversity of content were widely appreciated by participants, the agenda was highly ambitious, with multiple thematic sessions, the Youth Dialogue, the Hackathon, the Simulation Roundtable, the Knowledge Fair, networking activities, and closing sessions all competing for limited time. As a result, several discussions felt constrained, with insufficient time for deeper engagement, audience interaction, solution refinement, and partnership-building. Some speakers and participants noted that the richness of the content warranted longer discussion periods, particularly for sessions focused on implementation pathways and practical problem-solving.
- **Future editions of ADIF could benefit from a more streamlined programme structure that prioritizes fewer, higher-impact sessions with clearer linkages to implementation outcomes**. Greater thematic clustering, more focused panel discussions, and dedicated time for networking,

deal-making, and solution incubation would allow participants to engage more meaningfully and maximize the value of the Forum's evidence-to-action approach.

Table 1: ADIF 2026 Technical Challenges and Actionable Recommendations

Technical challenges	Actionable recommendations
Insufficient time for deeper engagement and audience interaction as too many sessions packed into two days	Encourage joint sessions between 2-3 divisions e.g., session with SRO-SA and RITD
	Standardize session design: maximum 3-4 panelist minimum 30 minutes breaks, and

Technical challenges	Actionable recommendations
	dedicated networking/breakout time in the programme

ADIF 2026 Operational Successes

See Annex 1: Performance Scorecard

- **ADIF 2026 was successfully delivered through the exceptional dedication, professionalism, and collaboration of ECA staff and partner institutions.** Staff from substantive divisions, conference management, ICT, logistics, procurement, finance, communications, and administrative services worked collectively to deliver a complex, multi-stakeholder continental forum. The strong commitment demonstrated across teams ensured that operational challenges were effectively managed, resulting in a high-quality event that met its strategic objectives. Strong leadership during the final stages of preparation was particularly instrumental in maintaining momentum, coordinating multiple workstreams, resolving outstanding issues, and ensuring that the Forum was delivered successfully.
- **The Forum also benefited from the exceptional commitment of colleagues from the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP), who actively participated in the Event Coordination Working Group despite operating across different time zones.** Team members regularly joined coordination meetings as early as 5:00 a.m. local time, demonstrating a remarkable level of dedication and reinforcing the strong institutional partnership that underpinned the successful delivery of ADIF 2026.
- **The quality of facilitation also contributed significantly to the success of the Forum.** Professional moderation ensured that discussions remained focused, interactive, and within scheduled timeframes despite an ambitious programme. The Policy and Strategy Hackathon successfully showcased nine youth-led solutions addressing employment and structural transformation challenges, with five finalists selected to advance into the implementation phase. The Hackathon demonstrated the creativity, innovation, and implementation potential of young African
- **Operational delivery was equally successful owing to outstanding collaboration across support functions.** The Publications, Conference and Managed Services Section (PCMS) delivered high-quality conference services under considerable time pressure, ensuring seamless audio-visual support, digital nameplates, interpretation services, sound management, and overall programme flow. The ICT team maintained reliable digital infrastructure throughout the event, with only one minor technical issue that was resolved rapidly without disrupting proceedings. Facilities Management responded promptly to operational requirements and the external event management company added considerable value by successfully delivering the Knowledge Fair and coordinating cultural activities that

enriched the overall participant experience and showcased African innovation and creativity. Catering services were delivered to a consistently high standard, with no food safety incidents recorded, marking the third consecutive year in which ADIF has successfully delivered large-scale catering services without incident.

2.4 ADIF 2026 Operational Challenges and Areas of Improvement

See Annex 1: Performance Scorecard

- **The late confirmation of the Forum budget, despite planning commencing approximately one year in advance, had cascading effects across programme delivery.** Budget limitations and delays in budget approval affected planning, procurement, speaker invitations, travel and accommodation arrangements, government outreach, and other operational activities, ultimately limiting participation by some Member States and external partners. Future editions would benefit from earlier budget confirmation aligned with the intended scale and ambition of the Forum, enabling timely planning, resource mobilization, and stakeholder engagement.

- **Roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes were not always sufficiently defined, resulting in duplication of effort, delayed approvals, and uncertainty regarding ownership of key deliverables.** Greater institutional engagement across substantive divisions from the outset, supported by a clearly defined governance structure and RACI framework, would strengthen coordination and reinforce ADIF as an institution-wide flagship initiative rather than one led by a single division.

- **The ADIF Secretariat operated with insufficient human resources relative to the scale of the highly complex continental event**. A relatively small team of three personnel's (including one lead coordinator consultant) managed programme development, involving multiple partners, speakers, youth participants, judges, exhibitors and parallel events. In addition, the team was responsible for logistics, communications, and cross-functional coordination, placing considerable pressure on staW throughout the preparation period. Future Forums would benefit from an expanded Secretariat with dedicated functional leads and embedded divisional focal points to improve coordination, workload distribution, and implementation efficiency.

- **Several aspects of participant registration, stakeholder management, speaker logistics and documentation services would benefit from earlier planning, coordination and standardized procedures.** These include establishing participant selection criteria before registration opens, simplifying registration process, improving communication workflows and strengthening early engagement with Member States and key stakeholder groups. Earlier outreach would also support more balanced representation of governments, women, grassroots organizations, and youth,

consistent with ADIF's commitment to inclusive participation. Developing standardized operational procedures, integrated planning timelines, and earlier communication across support functions would improve efficiency and reduce last-minute implementation pressures.

- **The ambition and breadth of the programme were widely appreciated; however, the density of sessions limited opportunities for networking, reflection, and informal collaboration.** Variations in panel composition, compressed breaks, and programme overruns reduced flexibility during implementation. Future editions should adopt a more streamlined programme structure with standardized panel formats, dedicated networking sessions, and suWicient transition time between events to enhance participant engagement and facilitate partnership building.

- **The timing of ADIF immediately following other major ECA conferences (ABF, CoM and ARFSD) contributed to conferencing fatigue for both participants and stah.** Future editions should consider scheduling the Forum later in the calendar year to maximize participation and visibility. In addition, stronger alignment between ADIF and other flagship ECA platforms would help articulate a coherent institutional narrative on Africa's structural transformation agenda.

These lessons provide practical guidance for strengthening future editions of ADIF and reinforce the importance of early planning, clear governance arrangements, adequate resourcing, and a robust implementation architecture to maximize the Forum's long-term impact.

Table 2: ADIF 2026 Operational Challenges and Actionable Recommendations

Operational challenges	Actionable recommendations
Budget limitations and delays in budget approval affected planning, procurement, speaker invitations, travel and accommodation arrangements, government outreach.	Earlier budget confirmation aligned with the intended scale and ambition of the Forum, enabling timely planning, resource mobilization, and stakeholder engagement.
Roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes were not always sufficiently defined, resulting in duplication of effort, delayed approvals, and uncertainty regarding ownership of key deliverables.	Clearly defined governance structure and RACI framework, would strengthen coordination and reinforce ADIF as an institution-wide flagship initiative.
A relatively small team of four personnel's (including one lead coordinator consultant) managed programme development relative to the scale of the highly complex continental event.	Expanded ADIF Secretariat with dedicated functional leads and embedded divisional focal points to improve coordination, workload distribution, and implementation efficiency.

Operational challenges	Actionable recommendations
Uncoordinated and inefficient registration for stakeholders, unclear selection process for registration and slow communication to participants.	Earlier planning, coordination and standardized procedures for registration of stakeholders. Establish participant selection criteria, simplify registration process, improve communication workflows and strengthening early engagement with Member States and key stakeholder groups
Insufficient time for deeper engagement and audience interaction as too many sessions packed into two days	Encourage joint sessions between 2-3 divisions e.g., session with SRO-SA and RITD
	Standardize session design: maximum 3-4 panelist minimum 30 minutes breaks, and dedicated networking/breakout time in the programme.
ADIF Implementation Clock announced as the Forum's principal follow-up mechanism, but its governance arrangements, implementation roadmap, and integration into divisional work programmes remain to be operationalized.	Establishing these mechanisms will be a critical next step in ensuring that Forum commitments translate into sustained implementation and measurable impact.

3. Session Outcomes

Across the thematic sessions, a common message emerged: **Africa possesses the ideas, resources, and talent needed to create jobs at scale, but unlocking this potential requires stronger institutions, integrated ecosystems, innovative financing, regional cooperation, and implementation-focused partnerships.** The discussions highlighted that job creation cannot be pursued through isolated interventions but through coordinated efforts spanning governments, private sector actors, development partners, and young people themselves.

3.1 Session A: Promoting High-Growth Youth Entrepreneurship in Africa

Background

Youth entrepreneurship was recognized as a critical pillar of Africa's employment strategy, though participants emphasized that entrepreneurship alone cannot solve the continent's jobs challenge. Rather, it must be embedded within broader structural transformation and industrialization of agendas. The session examined how Africa can support high-growth enterprises capable of generating sustainable employment. The session

was built upon earlier ADIF stock take discussions on Promoting High-Growth Youth Entrepreneurship for Job Creation in Africa.

Key Insights and Solutions

Participants identified several constraints limiting the growth of youth enterprises, generated important insights and proposed several practical interventions:

Key Insights	Key Solutions and Actions
Entrepreneurship must focus on scaling enterprises that create jobs rather than simply increasing the number of startups. Underrepresentation of women and marginalized groups, but in general Africa's demographic dividend represents both an opportunity and a policy imperative.	Strengthen youth entrepreneurship policies. Develop youth-specific and women financial products and expand structured mentorship programmes.
Financial resources exist but are often inaccessible or poorly tailored to youth needs. Limited access to finance due to collateral requirements and inadequate financial products and heavy reliance on foreign venture capital, exposing startups to global shocks.	Access to data intelligence ad digital technologies can improve access to finance and markets. Expand blended finance, credit guarantee schemes, and youth-focused financial products.
Weak policy frameworks and burdensome regulation and fragmented entrepreneurship ecosystems where training, financing and mentorship operate independently.	Build integrated entrepreneurship ecosystems with linking skills, finance, mentorship, markets, and technology.

3.2 Session B: AI and Jobs in Africa: Opportunity or Disruption?

Background

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming labour markets globally. AI presents both opportunities and risks. While automation may displace some tasks, AI can create new opportunities in agriculture, health, finance, and public services. The session examined whether AI would create or destroy jobs in Africa and how policymakers can maximize opportunities while mitigating risks. The session was built upon earlier ADIF stock take discussions on AI and employment.

Key Insights and Solutions

Participants highlighted several risks in AI and employment, generated important insights and proposed several practical interventions:

Key Insights	Key Solutions and Actions
Gaps remain in AI skills, digital infrastructure, data governance, and evidence on AI's impact in African contexts.	Support AI applications in agriculture, health, and finance, and expanding digital financial services and AI-enabled business tools for SMEs.
Large skills gaps in AI and digital competencies, unequal access to digital infrastructure, and risk of widening inequalities between firms and workers.	Invest in AI-ready skills and digital infrastructure and integrating AI into national jobs and skills strategies.
Weak data governance systems and limited research on AI impacts on African contexts make it harder to form policy decisions.	Strengthen data governance and sovereign AI frameworks, supporting AI applications in agriculture, health, and finance, and expanding digital financial services and AI-enabled business tools for SMEs. Invest in AI-ready skills, digital infrastructure, and sovereign AI governance frameworks.

Africa's informal economy must remain central to AI policy discussions since most Africans work in informal enterprises. AI should therefore support SMEs and informal businesses rather than only formal firms.	**AI policies must focus on supporting SMEs and the informal economy, where most Africans work, through investments in digital infrastructure, AI-ready skills, sovereign AI frameworks, and AI-enabled business solutions.**

3.3 Session C: Unlocking Regional Value Chains for SMEs under AfCFTA

Background

The AfCFTA represents one of Africa's most important opportunities for economic transformation and job creation. tariff liberalization under AfCFTA is already shifting trade toward intra-African markets creating opportunities. However, youth- and women-led enterprises continue to face significant barriers in participating in regional trade. The session explored how regional value chains can support enterprise growth and employment. The session was built upon earlier ADIF stock take discussions on Unlocking Regional Value Chains for SMEs under AfCFTA.

Key Insights and Solutions

Participants identified several persistent barriers to SMEs unlocking opportunity to access regional value chains, generated important insights and proposed several practical interventions:

Key Insights	Key Solutions and Actions
Scaling youth enterprises requires coordinated financing, digital infrastructure, and supplier development programmes.	Expand supplier development programmes linking SMEs to large firms and blended finance instruments to support SMEs under AfCFTA.
Weak cross-border payment systems, high transaction costs, information asymmetries, regulatory fragmentation and limited access to trade finance and inadequate dispute resolution mechanism demonstrate persistent barriers for SMEs.	Full operationalization of PAPSS, interoperable digital payment systems and digital dispute resolution mechanisms.

3.4 Session D: Skills Development and Work Preparedness

Background

Africa's youthful population can only become an economic asset if supported by relevant skills systems. The session explored how TVET and workforce development can better respond to labour market needs. The session also highlighted successful examples from Ethiopia, Ghana, and Rwanda where TVET systems align with national development strategies. The session was built upon earlier ADIF stock take discussions on education, skills development and TVET and work preparedness.

Key Insights and Solutions

Participants highlighted key constraints with work preparedness, generated important insights, and proposed several practical interventions:

Key Insights	Key Solutions and Actions
Weak alignment between TVET and industrial policies	Align TVET systems with industrial priorities.
Limited private sector participation in curriculum design	Engage with private sector leaders when development TVET and skills programmes.
Skills recognition barriers across countries	Introduce micro-credentials and apprenticeships and create continental frameworks for skills recognition.
Limited AI	Expand digital learning platforms and embed AI into educational curricula.

3.5 Session E: From Extraction to Jobs: Building Youth-Centered Green Minerals Value Chains

Background

Africa possesses abundant critical minerals essential for the global green transition. However, most value addition occurs outside the continent, and job creation is limited. The sessions examined how Africa can create jobs through green industrialization and increasing value within the continent. The session was built upon earlier ADIF stock take discussions on critical minerals value chain and jobs creation.

Key Insights and Solutions

Participants highlighted key constraints with work preparedness, generated important insights, and proposed several practical interventions

:

Key Insights	Key Solutions and Actions
Critical minerals value chain owners limited mineral beneficiation	Develop regional green value chains, battery manufacturing, renewable energy industries, and green jobs.
There is a general skills mismatch and weak labour mobility.	Establishing an African Skills Passport for skills mobility in Africa. Strengthening industry-led training systems.
The financing gap and energy are big constraints in this sector	Collaborate with foreign energy companies and set incentives for FDI.
Limited youth participation in industrial policy making within critical minerals	Collaborate with youth networks and universities to engage youth in industrial policy making with critical minerals.

3.6 Session F: Industries of the Future- Transformative & Labour-Intensive Sectors

Background

The session examined how Africa can transition toward productive, labour-intensive industries while managing technological change and structural transformation. The session was built upon earlier ADIF stock take discussions on Industries of the Future.

Key Insights and Solutions

Participants highlighted key constraints with work preparedness, generated important insights, and proposed several practical interventions:

Key Insights	Key Solutions and Actions
Africa must move beyond raw exports and build competitive industries in green minerals, pharmaceuticals, manufacturing, agribusiness, tourism, renewable energy and digital service.	Accelerate industrialization through regional value chains, Special Economic Zones, and domestic value addition. Domestic resource mobilization, regional infrastructure investment.
Informality should not be romanticized, but it must be transformed.	Scale AI-enabled tools and digital services for SMEs and informal businesses. Provide businesses incentives to formalize to allow for scale and investment of industries. Build stronger institutions and policy implementation

3.7 Session G: Creative Industries and Job Creation

Background

Africa's creative economy is estimated at approximately US$60 billion[1] and employs around five million people. Yet Africa captures less than 1 percent of global creative exports at $2.1 trillion, (UNCTAD 2026)[2]. During the session, participants emphasized that creative industries generate employment throughout entire value chains, including design, production, marketing, publishing, and digital services. Speakers highlighted that stronger support for creators can reduce illegal migration and foster peacebuilding. The session examined how creative industries can drive employment and economic transformation.

Key Insights and Solutions

Participants highlighted key challenges in intellectual property and low capture from global markets, generated important insights, and proposed several practical interventions:

Key Insights	Key Solutions and Actions
Weak intellectual property systems and inadequate infrastructure	Strengthen intellectual property protection systems.
Low value capture from global markets and limited financing	Expand creative financing and support for African brands and creators. Investing in creative entrepreneurship and skills, in addition to the creative skills.

3.8 Policy and Strategy Hackathon

The **ADIF 2026 Policy & Strategy Hackathon** demonstrated the creativity, innovation, and leadership of young Africans in addressing the continent's employment challenge. Designed

as a practical platform for co-creating implementable solutions, the Hackathon brought together multidisciplinary teams to develop innovative policy and business solutions aligned with the Forum's overarching theme of job creation and structural transformation.

Following a competitive selection process, **nine teams** presented solutions spanning youth entrepreneurship, digital innovation, skills development, climate resilience, financial inclusion, and industrial development. After evaluation by an independent panel of judges, **five finalist teams** were selected based on the innovation, scalability, feasibility, and potential impact of their proposals. Finalists received technical feedback and mentorship to further strengthen their implementation plans.

Name	Hackathon Project	Hackathon Short-listed Position
Luc Nebnoma Oueadraogo, Burkina Faso	REVI Burkina	Winner
Eva Nyambura Muthoni, Kenya	Kenya Solar Workforce and Climate Resilience,	Runner Up
Solomon Boakye, Ghana	Credify	Runner Up
Christian Njilou Ntieche, Cameroon	IT KOLA	Runner Up
Nandi Mkwanazi, South Africa	e Agri-Business Trade Corridor Pilot (ATCP),	Runner Up

1 https://unctadstat.unctad.org/insights/theme/97

2 https://unctadstat.unctad.org/insights/theme/97

A key outcome of the Hackathon was the commitment to support promising solutions beyond the Forum through the **ADIF Implementation Clock**. Selected innovations are expected to benefit from continued mentorship, partnership brokering, knowledge exchange, and opportunities for engagement with governments, development finance institutions, private sector partners, and research organizations. In doing so, the Hackathon established an important pipeline for translating youth-led innovation into scalable solutions that contribute to job creation and sustainable economic transformation across Africa.

3.9 Youth Dialogue on Global Finance Architecture & Pact for the Future

The Youth Dialogue on Global Finance Architecture underscored the urgent need to reform global financial systems so that they better support Africa's development priorities and employment aspirations. Participants emphasized that high borrowing costs, weak domestic resource mobilization, and illicit financial flows continue to constrain development and job creation. Importantly, the session repositioned youth as active agents of economic transformation rather than passive beneficiaries. Participants called for:

- Lowering the cost of capital;
- Expanding concessional finance;
- Strengthening governance and transparency;
- Developing African-led credit rating systems;
- Institutionalizing youth participation in policymaking.

ECA reaffirmed its commitment to supporting capacity building, knowledge sharing, and platforms that amplify youth voices across national, regional, and global development agendas.

The Pact for the Future highlighted that global agreements can only be effective if they are understandable and accessible to young people. Participants emphasized that technical language often excludes youth from meaningful participation and called for simplified communication tools such as animations, videos, and youth-friendly materials.

The session reaffirmed the principle that **"Nothing about young people should be decided without young people."** Participants stressed that young people are already contributing to sustainable development and should be recognized not merely as future leaders, but as leaders of today.

4. Commitments and Implementation Roadmap ADIF

4.1 Commitments

A defining feature of ADIF 2026 was the collective recognition that addressing Africa's jobs challenge requires sustained collaboration across governments, regional institutions, the

private sector, development partners, academia, and young people. Throughout the Forum, stakeholders moved beyond identifying challenges and articulated concrete commitments aimed at accelerating implementation, strengthening institutions, and scaling solutions for job creation. These commitments represent a new social compact for employment creation in Africa, one that recognizes that implementation is a shared responsibility requiring continuous coordination, accountability, and adaptive learning.

Stakeholder	Commitments
Economic Commission for Africa ECA reaffirmed its commitment to supporting Member States and partners in translating ideas into action.	Support evidence-based policymaking, provide analytical support, policy advice, and knowledge products to strengthen implementation, amplify youth voices and create platforms that position youth as active agents of transformation and ensure meaningful participation in policymaking.
	Track commitments, monitoring progress, and facilitating peer learning through stock takes and Communities of Practices.
Member States Create enabling environments that support entrepreneurship, industrialization, innovation, and regional integration.	Establish integrated ecosystems linking skills development, finance, mentorship, and market access, and reduce regulatory and administrative barriers affecting startups and SMEs. Strengthen youth entrepreneurship ecosystems by developing comprehensive youth entrepreneurship policies aligned with national development strategies.
	Align TVET systems with industrial priorities and labour market needs by expanding AI-ready and digital skills training and supporting lifelong learning and micro-credential systems.
	Promote local beneficiation of critical minerals, investing in renewable energy industries and green jobs and facilitating labour mobility and skills recognition across Africa.
	Accelerate AfCFTA implementation, scale and interoperable cross-border payment systems, including PAPSS and strengthen trade facilitation and dispute resolution mechanisms.
Development Partners	Expand concessional and blended financing, strengthen

Stakeholder	Commitments
Recognized the importance of moving	technical assistance and capacity building, support
beyond project-based interventions	entrepreneurship ecosystems, invest in digital infrastructure and
toward long-term systems strengthening.	AI readiness, facilitate regional learning and knowledge exchange.
Private Sector The private sector was recognized as a key driver of job creation, investment, and innovation.	Invest in youth-led enterprises, expanding supplier development programmes, participating in curriculum design and apprenticeships, supporting digital innovation ecosystems and strengthening local manufacturing and value addition.
Think Tanks	Research institutions are committed to generating evidence for policy and implementation, strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems, producing labour market intelligence, and supporting learning and adaptive implementation.
Youth Leaders and Entrepreneurs	Youth participants reaffirmed their role as innovators, entrepreneurs, and leaders. They committed to continuing to develop scalable solutions, promoting inclusive entrepreneurship, strengthening peer learning networks, and advocating policy reforms and accountability.

To ensure these commitments translate into measurable outcomes, ADIF proposes that they be operationalized through the **ADIF Post-Forum Implementation Clock**, **which serve as the operational platform for translating the commitments into measurable outcomes over a 12–24-month implementation roadmap and provide a structured framework for coordination, monitoring, partnership development, technical support, and periodic stocktaking.**

While the detailed governance arrangements will be developed in consultation with Member States and partners, **the intended direction is to establish a clear implementation architecture that assigns leadership responsibilities, strengthens accountability, and supports delivery across thematic priorities.**

4.2 ADIF Implementation Clock Roadmap

The Implementation Clock is **co-owned, multi-stakeholder implementation platform** that brings together partners to coordinate delivery, mobilize partnerships, and accelerate implementation. **Table 3 below demonstrates the five priority actions for the ADIF Implementation Clock**, supporting partners to overcome implementation bottlenecks, strengthen institutional capacity, mobilize financing, and scale successful solutions emerging from ADIF.

Implementation of these priority actions is coordinated through the ADIF Implementation Partnership and supported by the four core functions of the Implementation Clock: facilitating dialogue through **thematic Communities of Practice**; creating **accountability through implementation monitoring dashboards and annual stock takes;** fostering partnerships between governments, development finance institutions, think tanks, private sector actors and youth organizations; and providing **implementation support through technical advisory services, policy guidance, coaching, knowledge products and peer learning**. Each priority is co-owned by Member States and strategic partners, with ECA serving as the Secretariat and continental convener to ensure coherence, monitor progress, and facilitate adaptive learning. This phased approach enables ADIF to demonstrate measurable progress on a focused set of priorities while creating a scalable model for expanding implementation in future Forum cycles.

Table 3: Priority Actions for the ADIF Implementation Clock (2026–2028)[1]

Priority Action	Key Commitments	Lead Institutions	Timeline	Success Indicators
1. Strengthen Youth Entrepreneurship Ecosystems	Develop integrated entrepreneurship ecosystems linking finance, skills, mentorship, markets and technology; expand blended finance and youth-focused financial products; reduce barriers affecting SMEs.	Champion Member States, ECA, AfDB, ACET, private sector partners	**0–12 months:** establish Communities of Practice, identify pilot countries and financing partners. **12–24 months:** support implementation of pilot reforms and ecosystem partnerships.	National entrepreneurship action plans launched; new partnerships established; blended finance initiatives supported; youth enterprises accessing finance and mentorship.

[1] For the hackathon and the youth dialogue on the global financial architecture a specific framework of mentorship, coaching and related events was created to be endorsed by the (post) ADIF Steering Committee

Priority Action	Key Commitments	Lead Institutions	Timeline	Success Indicators
2. Advance AI-Ready Skills and Digital Transformation	Support AI-ready skills, digital infrastructure, sovereign AI frameworks and AI applications for SMEs, agriculture, health and public services.	Champion Member States, ECA (TCID), Oxford Martin School, Microsoft Africa, universities	**0–6 months:** establish AI Community of Practice and identify demonstration initiatives. **6–24 months:** support AI policy development, digital skills programmes and pilot AI applications.	Countries supported on AI policy; AI skills initiatives launched; partnerships established; AI pilot projects implemented.
3. Accelerate AfCFTA and	Expand supplier development	Champion Member States,	**0–12 months:** identify priority value	New regional partnerships

Priority Action	Key Commitments	Lead Institutions	Timeline	Success Indicators
Regional Value Chains	programmes, operationalize PAPSS, improve digital payments, strengthen regional value chains and SME participation in intra-African trade.	ECA (RITD), Afreximbank, AfCFTA Secretariat, African Business Council	chains and partnership opportunities. **12–24 months:** support implementation of regional trade and SME initiatives.	established; SMEs participating in regional value chains; progress on PAPSS adoption and cross-border trade initiatives.
4. Build Skills for Future Industries and Green Industrialization	Align TVET with industrial priorities, expand digital and AI-ready skills, promote green value chains, renewable	Champion Member States, ECA, AfDB, ACET, ILO, UNESCO	**0–12 months:** identify demonstration countries and develop implementation support packages. **12–24 months:** launch pilot initiatives linking	TVET reforms supported; industry partnerships established; green skills programmes initiated; labour mobility

Priority Action	Key Commitments	Lead Institutions	Timeline	Success Indicators
	energy industries, labour mobility and the African Skills Passport.		skills development with industrial priorities.	initiatives advanced.
5. Operationalize the ADIF Implementation Partnership	Establish Communities of Practice, implementation dashboard, annual stock takes, partnership platform and governance arrangements under the ADIF Implementation Clock.	ECA Secretariat and ADIF Implementation Partnership Steering Committee	**0–3 months:** establish governance arrangements and Steering Committee. **3–6 months:** launch Communities of Practice and implementation dashboard. **6–24 months:** quarterly implementation reviews and annual stock take.	Steering Committee established; dashboard operational; quarterly implementation reviews conducted; annual implementation report published; commitments tracked.

4.2.1 Communities of Practice: Facilitating Dialogue

The Implementation Clock convenes quarterly Communities of Practice, implementation roundtables, and regional learning events that bring together policymakers, researchers, private sector leaders, financiers, and youth innovators to exchange experiences, identify implementation bottlenecks, and share emerging good practices. These dialogues maintain momentum beyond the Forum and enable adaptive learning across countries and sectors.

4.2.2 Implementation Monitoring Dashboard: Creating Accountability

The Implementation Clock encompasses a shared accountability framework to monitor progress against commitments made during ADIF. Through implementation dashboards, annual stock takes, progress reports, and agreed performance indicators, participating institutions collectively assess progress, identify delivery challenges, and support evidence-based decision-making. Accountability therefore extend beyond reporting to include peer review, joint problem-solving, and continuous learning.

4.2.3 Fostering Strategic Partnerships

Recognizing that implementation requires collaboration across institutions, the Implementation Clock actively broker partnerships between governments, development finance institutions, private investors, think tanks, research institutions, and development partners. This includes

facilitating investment opportunities, technical cooperation, policy dialogue, and collaborative problem-solving to accelerate implementation of priority initiatives.

4.3 Accountability and Governance: RACI Framework

The ADIF Implementation Clock is established as a **co-owned implementation platform**, with shared leadership across strategic institutions while ECA serves as the continental convener and Secretariat. Rather than concentrating ownership within a single institution, governance reflects the multi-stakeholder nature of ADIF by distributing implementation responsibilities across organizations with complementary comparative advantages.

The proposed implementation model distinguishes between actors that are **Responsible** for implementation, those **Accountable** for overall delivery, those that should be **Consulted** for technical and policy guidance, and those that should be **Informed** through regular reporting, consistent with the RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed) framework **(see Annex 1).**

5. The Case for Continued Coordination and Implementation Support

ADIF 2026 demonstrated that the Forum has evolved beyond a two-day convening into a continental platform for implementation. The Forum generated a portfolio of interdependent commitments spanning policy reform, entrepreneurship ecosystem development, skills development, AI governance, AfCFTA implementation, green industrialization, investment mobilization, and youth-led innovation. These commitments involve multiple Member States, ECA divisions, development finance institutions, think tanks, private sector partners, and youth networks, all of whom expressed a willingness to collaborate beyond the Forum.

Realizing these commitments now requires a dedicated coordination function to transition the ADIF Implementation Clock from concept to operation. Over the next six months, foundational work will be required to establish the governance arrangements, convene the Implementation Partnership Steering Committee, identify champion Member States and strategic partners, launch the Communities of Practice, develop the implementation dashboard and results framework, prepare thematic workplans, mobilize partnerships and resources, and support the implementation of the agreed priority actions. These activities are essential to maintaining momentum and ensuring that commitments made during the Forum are translated into coordinated programmes of work.

Participants consistently emphasized the need for sustained engagement beyond the Forum through structured peer learning, technical advisory support, partnership brokering, implementation guidance, and periodic stock takes. Without dedicated planning and coordination capacity during this establishment phase, there is a significant risk that stakeholder engagement will diminish, partnerships will not be formalized, and implementation commitments will lose momentum before the Implementation Clock becomes operational.

For these reasons, it is recommended that ECA maintain a dedicated coordination function for an initial six-month transition period to operationalize the ADIF Implementation Clock. This coordination role would serve as the Secretariat for the emerging Implementation Partnership, ensuring effective planning, stakeholder engagement, governance, monitoring, communications, and resource mobilization. Investing in this short-term coordination capacity will provide the institutional foundation necessary to transform ADIF from a successful forum into a sustained implementation platform capable of delivering measurable progress on Africa's jobs agenda.

Annex 1: Performance Scorecard

Area	Rating	Notes
Overall Participant Satisfaction	**96%**	Near-parity with COM 2026 (97%) — exceptional for inaugural forum
Content & Thematic Relevance	**95%**	Strong sessions; credible speakers; eWective moderation
Event Delivery & Logistics	**Strong**	PCMS, ICT, catering, facilities all performed well under pressure
Youth & Stakeholder Engagement	**Strong**	YEN members outstanding; diverse participation; interactive format
Pre-Forum Webinar Series	**Strong**	5-month series significantly elevated content quality
Budget Confirmation Timeline	**Weak**	Confirmed only close to event — caused cascading downstream delays
Roles & Responsibility Clarity	**Weak**	No RACI; confusion on ownership of key functions across teams
ADIF Secretariat Capacity	**Weak**	3-person team managing all coordination — critically understated
Registration & Participant Management	**Needs Work**	Indico usability; no selection criteria; pending-approval gap

Area	Rating	Notes
Programme Design & Timing	**Needs Work**	Overpacked sessions; insufficient breaks; no networking slots
Government/Policy Maker Engagement	**Gap**	Underrepresented due to late outreach driven by budget delays
Documentation Services Planning	**Needs Work**	No advance requirements; budget code not shared in time
Conference Timing & Sequencing	**Needs Work**	Back-to-back with ARFSD/COM — conferencing fatigue reported
Follow-Up / Implementation Clock	**TBD**	Announced but not yet operationalized

Annex 2: RACI Framework

Implementation Priority	Responsible (R)	Accountable (A)	Consulted (C)	Informed (I)
Overall coordination of the ADIF Roadmap and	10 team members Secretariat with ECA OES & IDEP (supported by	**ADIF Implementation Partnership Steering Committee**	ACET, Oxford Martin School, Policy Centre of the New South, AfDB, ILO, UNDP, youth networks	All ADIF partners and Communities of Practice

Enterprise Partnerships	Foundation (or agreed partners)		associations, governments	Communities of Practice
Monitoring, Evaluation & Annual Stock take	ECA Secretariat	**ADIF Steering Committee**	Think tanks, development partners, Member States	All ADIF stakeholders

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