

Last rev. 1 May 2026

## Africa's Development Pathways in a Fragmenting World: Youth, Regional Integration and Sustainable Growth

### *A Global Policy Dialogue with the UN High-level Advisory Board on Economic and Social Affairs*

Friday, 8 May 2026  
12:30-14:00 EAT (Addis Ababa) /  
11:30-13:00 CEST (Geneva) / 05:00-06:30 EDT (New York)

Africa Hall, UN Convention Centre  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and online

#### **Introduction**

Africa stands at a pivotal moment in its development trajectory. With the world's youngest and fastest-growing population, abundant natural resources and growing regional cooperation through the African Union and the African Continental Free Trade Area, the continent holds significant potential to drive inclusive and sustainable economic transformation. At the same time, persistent inequalities, employment challenges—particularly for young people—and the growing impacts of climate change underscore the need for new policy approaches that place social inclusion, resilience and regional integration at the center of development strategies. These challenges are unfolding in a global context marked by rising geopolitical tensions, conflicts and economic fragmentation, which are reshaping trade patterns, investment flows and development prospects worldwide.

Against this backdrop, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), will convene a hybrid Global Policy Dialogue in Addis Ababa on the margins of an upcoming meeting of the UN High-level Advisory Board on Economic and Social Affairs (HLAB). In three dynamic panel discussions, these global thought leaders will explore pathways to advance social inclusion, expand opportunities for youth employment and strengthen regional integration to support Africa's path to inclusive and sustainable growth.

This dialogue is made possible by the UN Peace and Development Trust Fund. It is free to join, and all are welcome.

#### **Format**

The 90-minute event will include three panel discussions. The discussions will be led by a professional moderator. The audience will be invited to submit questions in advance when registering.

#### **Location**

The event will be recorded in person at Africa Hall at the ECA Headquarters, UN Conference Centre, in Addis Ababa, with an in-person and virtual global audience.

### Platform

The event will be organized with the support of ECA. The audience can watch the event in person and through Zoom or UN WebTV.

### Language

The event will be held in English with multilingual captioning available in the six UN languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish) on Zoom. International Sign Interpretation will be provided.

### Host/moderator

DESA will hire a professional moderator, Yvonne Ndege, to facilitate this event.

## Programme

### Introduction

**(4 minutes)**

- Moderator welcomes the audience and provides logistical information

### Welcome remarks

- **Mr. LI Junhua**, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs **(3 minutes)**

### Discussion 1: Global Fragmentation and Africa's Development Pathways

**(30 minutes)**

*This panel will examine how rising geopolitical tensions, conflicts and economic fragmentation are shaping Africa's development prospects—including impacts on trade, food and energy security, investment flows and international cooperation—while exploring policy pathways to strengthen resilience, advance social development and support inclusive growth across the continent.*

### **Speakers:**

- **Ms. Eudine Barriteau**, Emerita Professor of Gender and Public Policy, former Principal and ProVice Chancellor, University of West Indies Cave Hill Campus; Member of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
  - **Mr. Claver Gatete**, Executive Secretary, UN Economic Commission for Africa
  - **Ms. Nyovani Madise**, President of the Union for the African Population Studies
  - **Mr. Jose Antonio Ocampo**, Professor, Columbia University
  - **Mr. Danny Sriskandarajah**, Chief Executive of New Economics Foundation, former Chief Executive of Oxfam, former Secretary General and CEO of CIVICUS
  - **Ms. Kori Udovicki**, Head, Center for Advanced Economic Studies
- Moderator to ask each participant 1-2 guiding questions (2-minute responses).

### [Panel transition] Video from UN DESA, "Youth in the spotlight"

**(1:30 minutes)**

**Discussion 2: Africa's Youth Dividend: Pathways to Employment, Skills and Sustainable Growth for All**  
**(24 minutes)**

*This panel explores how Africa can translate its demographic dividend into opportunities for all. Speakers will discuss education systems, labor markets, entrepreneurship ecosystems, and the role of green and digital transitions, while considering how inclusive job creation can contribute to social stability and resilience in a rapidly changing global context.*

**Speakers:**

- **Mr. Parfait Eloundou-Enyegue**, Professor of Global Development and Brooks School of Policy, Cornell University
  - **Mr. Alex Ezeh**, Professor at Drexel University, Dornsife School of Public Health; Former Director of African Population and Health Research Center
  - **Ms. Anastasia Gage**, Professor at the Department of Global Community Health and Behavioral Sciences, School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, Tulane University
  - **Ms. Raya Muttarak**, Professor of Demography, University of Bologna
- Moderator to ask each participant 1-2 guiding questions (2-minute responses).

**[Panel transition] Video on “Economic Development in Africa Report”** **(1:35 minutes)**

**Discussion 3: Regional Integration, Climate Action and Africa's Role in a Changing Global Economy**  
**(24 minutes)**

*This panel will explore how advancing regional economic integration, including through the African Continental Free Trade Area, can support Africa's sustainable development by strengthening resilience, accelerating climate action and positioning the continent as a key actor in shaping a more inclusive and cooperative global economy. In an era of rising geopolitical tensions, climate risks and economic fragmentation, regional cooperation can play a critical role in strengthening economic resilience, diversifying trade and advancing sustainable development pathways.*

**Speakers:**

- **Ms. Åsa Persson**, Strategic Advisor, KTH Royal Institute of Technology and Senior Research Fellow, Stockholm Environment Institute
  - **Ms. Elizabeth Sidiropoulos**, Chief Executive, the South African Institute of International Affairs
  - **Mr. David Christopher Smith**, Director, Centre for Environmental Management, The University of the West Indies
  - **Ms. Izabella Teixeira**, Former Minister of Environment, Brazil
- Moderator to ask each participant 1-2 guiding questions (2-minute responses).

**Wrap-up and closing** **(1 minute)**

- Moderator's final remarks