

Trade Futures

Legacy family briefing • Global African trade, enterprise and shared prosperity

THE AFRICA HOUSE INITIATIVE

Africa House is establishing the Trade Futures Network: a membership and partnership platform connecting credible businesses, institutions and leaders across African markets, between Africa and its global diaspora, and from Africa to the wider world. It will translate Pan-African relationships into prepared trade opportunities, institutional cooperation and sustained commercial follow-through.

This briefing explains the present opportunity, the Network's purpose and the ways legacy members may choose to participate. The Network will proceed independently of any individual member's participation. Missions, partnerships and envoy mandates will be activated only with the necessary agreements, funding and safeguards.

The current opportunity

The opportunity is no longer theoretical. AfCFTA trading began in January 2021 and implementation is moving into practical infrastructure, payments, value chains and market access. Afreximbank reports that trade between African countries grew 12.4% in 2024 to US\$220.3 billion. Yet Africa accounted for only 3.3% of global exports, demonstrating both momentum and the scale of the unfinished opportunity.

Commercial platforms are also showing measurable demand. The 2025 Intra-African Trade Fair brought together participants from 132 countries and reported US\$48.3 billion in trade and investment agreements. PAPSS—the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System—is expanding local-currency cross-border payments; by July 2026, the Bank of Central African States had joined, connecting the six CEMAC countries to the system.

The potential is significant but depends on implementation. World Bank modelling estimates that deeper AfCFTA integration could raise African incomes by 9%, create almost 18 million jobs and lift up to 50 million people from extreme poverty by 2035. It could increase African exports by as much as 32% and intra-African exports by 109%. These are modelled outcomes, not automatic results: infrastructure, finance, regulation, business readiness and inclusion will determine who benefits.

WHY NOW

Africa has the continental framework, expanding payment and trade platforms, a growing base of prepared enterprises, renewed diaspora engagement and increasing global-market opportunity. The immediate task is to connect these assets into credible, reciprocal and investable relationships.

Trade as a Pan-African legacy

African economic connection predates modern trade agreements. Networks across the Sahara, Sahel, Nile and Red Sea, Swahili coast, Great Lakes, Congo Basin and southern Africa linked production, markets, infrastructure and diplomacy. Colonial rule imposed borders and redirected many systems towards external extraction; contemporary integration can therefore be understood partly as recovering and modernising an African capacity for exchange on terms increasingly shaped by Africans.

Pan-African and liberation movements connected political freedom with unity, sovereignty and control over development. The OAU, the Abuja Treaty, the Sirte Declaration and the African Union carried this aspiration into an institutional project. Trade Futures places contemporary market-building within that longer movement from political liberation towards economic agency and shared prosperity.

Why legacy families matter

Many families within the Africa House Legacy Initiative are connected to movements that advanced liberation, Pan-Africanism, civil rights, peace, dignity and international cooperation. Individual members may bring trusted relationships, public standing, intergenerational memory and experience across government, diplomacy, enterprise, investment, education and civil society.

Their role is not to replace trade ministries, AfCFTA institutions, chambers, technical experts or businesses. It is to stand alongside them—opening trusted relationships, strengthening public and institutional support, convening credible partners and sustaining cross-border cooperation beyond a single event or mission.

Legacy ambassadors across the Seven Futures

Legacy family members are welcome to contribute as Africa House ambassadors across the Seven Futures, according to their experience, relationships, stewardship and interest. The Seven Futures are Technology Frontier, Human Capital, Trade & Investment, Culture & Identity, Lived Experience, Governance, and Environment & Climate. Ambassadorial participation may be family-led, individual or undertaken through a defined Africa House mandate; it does not require participation in every programme or confer authority to speak for another family or institution.

The current programme directions brief gives examples of how this wider contribution may take shape: Reparative Futures; Pan-African Trade and Exchange; Legacy Memory and Education; and Global Legacy Leaders. Trade Futures is one specific Network opportunity within that wider Africa House initiative architecture.

Trade, international relations and Africa's global standing

Trade creates recurring relationships between governments, institutions, businesses and communities. It gives countries a shared interest in reliable infrastructure, compatible regulation, mobility, security and regional stability. Properly designed missions can therefore advance commercial objectives while strengthening economic diplomacy across Africa, between Africa and its global diaspora, and between Africa and the wider world.

These relationships can also influence how Africans see themselves and each other, and how Africa and African people are understood globally. Trade cannot by itself resolve xenophobia, inequality, distorted narratives or weaknesses in migration governance. It can, however, create sustained encounters in which Africans experience themselves and each other as producers, innovators, investors, customers, suppliers, colleagues and institutional partners, and in which African markets, ideas and capabilities are represented to the world with greater confidence, accuracy and agency.

Trade Futures therefore has a representational purpose as well as a commercial one: to strengthen relationships within Global Africa, reinforce Africans' confidence in their own collective capacity, and enable Africa to stand before the world through the quality of its enterprises, ideas, institutions and partnerships.

The Africa-diaspora opportunity

The African Union recognises the diaspora as an integral part of the continent's development. The economic relationship already exists through enterprise, professional expertise, consumer markets, tourism, culture, investment and remittances. Officially recorded remittances to Sub-Saharan Africa reached US\$54 billion in 2023, although the average cost of sending US\$200 remained 7.9%. The priority is

to lower friction and build trusted, voluntary routes from connection to enterprise and investment—not to treat household support as capital available for redirection.

In the United States alone, 2023 Census data record approximately 201,000 Black-owned employer firms with US\$249 billion in receipts and 4.4 million Black-owned non-employer businesses with US\$128.7 billion in receipts. Ghana’s Right of Abode and diaspora citizenship initiatives, Benin’s nationality pathway for qualifying Afro-descendants and related return programmes create additional bridges for longer-term relationships. Trade Futures will focus on reciprocal market access, credible partnerships and locally grounded benefit.

PURPOSE

To connect credible enterprises, institutions and markets across Global Africa and between Africa and the wider world, advancing inclusive, reciprocal and sustainable commerce.

The Africa House Trade Futures Network

The Network will provide the standing structure through which Africa House develops member relationships, market intelligence, business preparation, institutional partnerships and trade missions across Africa, between Africa and its global diaspora, and from Africa to the wider world. It will focus on four connected routes:

- **Africa to Africa.** Enterprises entering or expanding into other African markets under the AfCFTA framework.
- **Diaspora to Africa.** Diaspora enterprises and investors building responsible commercial partnerships on the continent.
- **Africa to the diaspora.** African enterprises reaching diaspora consumers, businesses, retailers, institutions and investors.
- **Africa to the world.** Supporting credible African enterprises, products, institutions and investment opportunities to reach international markets and build relationships beyond the continent and its diaspora.

What the Network will do

- **Market connection and missions.** Develop evidence-led corridors, sector programmes, delegations and curated commercial meetings.
- **Business readiness.** Provide market intelligence, export preparation, regulatory guidance, finance readiness and partner due diligence.
- **Institutional cooperation.** Work with trade ministries, AfCFTA structures, chambers, export agencies and financial institutions.
- **Infrastructure and policy advocacy.** Support practical dialogue on payments, mobility, logistics, standards, trade finance and market access.
- **Global market development.** Connect African enterprises with diaspora and international business, consumer, professional and investment networks.
- **Inclusive participation.** Prepare and connect women, SMEs, young entrepreneurs, informal and cross-border traders, rural enterprises, people with disabilities and other under-resourced groups.

Inclusive by design

Inclusion is an operating requirement, not an optional bursary added after delegations are selected. African SMEs represent more than 90% of enterprises, while the AU adopted the AfCFTA Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade in February 2024. The Network will therefore build inclusion into membership pathways, trade readiness, delegation composition, accessibility support, local supplier engagement and outcome reporting.

- **Accessible participation.** Proportionate dues, introductory pathways and sponsored places for qualifying enterprises.
- **Readiness before visibility.** Export, finance, compliance and market preparation so participants can pursue real opportunities.
- **Representative missions.** Published inclusion objectives and bursaries for travel or accessibility where required.
- **Measured outcomes.** Report contracts, finance access, supplier relationships, jobs and local benefit—not attendance alone.

The opportunity for legacy members

Participation is voluntary. Legacy members may engage at one or more levels according to their expertise, relationships and interest:

- **Participate.** Join selected delegations, market briefings, roundtables and relationship-building activity.
- **Lead.** Chair a mission, champion a corridor or sector, convene partners or sustain follow-through.
- **Represent.** Serve through a written, time-limited Africa House Trade Envoy mandate where a defined role, partner agreement and secured funding exist.

An Africa House Trade Envoy represents the Network only within the written mandate provided. The title does not imply appointment by AfCFTA, diplomatic status or authority to bind a government or partner institution.

Principles and safeguards

- **Complementarity.** Strengthen established institutions and market actors rather than duplicate or displace them.
- **Transparent authority.** Use written mandates, accurate public descriptions and clear partner approvals.
- **Integrity.** Manage conflicts, prohibit payment for access and disclose relevant commercial interests.
- **Reciprocity and local benefit.** Create value for destination-market enterprises, workers and communities.
- **Inclusion with substance.** Expand who is prepared and able to trade without lowering standards or substituting visibility for opportunity.
- **Accountable follow-through.** Link missions to documented next steps, relationship support and outcome reporting.

Participation and support

No legacy member should be financially disadvantaged when undertaking an approved representative role for Africa House. Missions will proceed only with secured budgets covering preparation, travel, participation, appropriate remuneration where a role requires substantial work, and post-mission delivery. Commercial participants advancing their own enterprises may pay transparent participation fees; bursaries may support eligible SMEs and under-resourced participants.

First-stage action

1. Introduce the Network and identify areas of legacy-member interest at the inaugural gathering.
2. Consult AfCFTA, selected trade ministries, chambers, export agencies and financial institutions.
3. Select one corridor and sector using evidence of demand and partner readiness.
4. Build a fully costed pilot, written mandates, responsible-trade principles and inclusion objectives.
5. Secure institutional agreements and funding before appointing envoys or confirming delegates.
6. Deliver one pilot mission with six-to-twelve-month follow-through, evaluation and public outcome reporting.

Questions for legacy family reflection

- Where might your experience or relationships add distinctive value?
- Which Africa-to-Africa, Africa-diaspora or Africa-to-world corridor or sector is most relevant to you?
- Would you be interested in participating, leading or serving through a defined envoy mandate?
- What would make participation credible, inclusive and useful to businesses and communities?
- Which institutions or market relationships might you help Africa House approach?

What happens next

Africa House will consolidate expressions of interest, consult prospective institutional partners and develop the first costed pilot. Membership invitations, envoy mandates and mission participation will follow only when the relevant operating structure, partner agreements, safeguards and resources are secured.

Selected reference points

[Afreximbank African Trade Report 2025](#) • [World Bank: Making the Most of the AfCFTA](#) • [UNCTAD Economic Development in Africa Report 2024](#) • [PAPSS: BEAC joins the network](#) • [AU Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade](#) • [World Bank remittance data](#) • [US Census business-owner data](#)