

**Africa Forward Summit
Round table on AI and digital**

I. Presentation

Artificial intelligence offers both an unprecedented opportunity and a pressing challenge for Africa. Driven by the continent’s youth, diasporas and vibrant culture of innovation, this new industrial revolution could bring about a “leapfrog” in key areas such as healthcare, agriculture, education or public services. However, Africa also urgently needs coordinated investment in local capacity, data sovereignty, talent and governance frameworks to enter the age of AI not as a passive consumer, but as an active co-designer of AI systems aligned with its needs and priorities, creating local value and preserving Africa’s agency.

Building on the momentum from the 2025 Paris AI Action Summit and Africa’s national and continental AI strategies, this roundtable will explore how France and Africa can work together, as strategic partners, to build resilient, and sustainable AI ecosystems across the continent. Co-chaired by Rwanda and Egypt, the discussion will focus on the three mutually reinforcing objectives of this partnership.

Suggested topics & objectives:

- 1) **INFRASTRUCTURE: Building a resilient AI backbone (compute, data, connectivity):** Identifying the infrastructure projects, investments, innovative solutions and policy choices needed to strengthen Africa’s capacity and agency across the AI stack
- 2) **SKILLS: Supporting vibrant AI ecosystems (training, research, innovation)** Strengthening the full talent pipeline, from students and researchers to engineers, entrepreneurs, and senior executives, through joint research and training programmes, scientific mobility and partnerships linking universities, research labs, start-ups, and industry.
- 3) **GOVERNANCE. Promoting sustainable AI (public interest, ethics and digital rights).** Ensuring that AI development and deployment remains ethical and accountable, notably by urgently tackling risks related to child protection online, algorithmic bias, and digital freedoms. Transmit joint positions and commitments to the AI and digital track of the French G7 presidency

Moderation: Ambassador Clara CHAPPAZ (French Ambassador for Digital Affairs and AI) and Ambassador Philip THIGO (Kenya's Special Envoy for Technology).

Format: Statements limited to 5 minutes for Heads of State and Government, 3 minutes for other heads of delegation and guest speakers

II. Run of show

Quick introduction by moderators

General introduction by co-chairs of the roundtable (10’):

- H.E. President Paul KAGAMÉ, Rwanda (co-chair)
- H.E. President Duma Gideon Boko, Botswana (co-chair)

Statements by the participating Heads of States and government, by protocolar order (30')

H.E. Mr Faure GNASSINGBÉ, Togo
H.E. Hakainde HICHILEMA, Zambia
H.E. Bola TINUBU, Nigeria
H.E. Duma Gideon BOKO, Botswana
H.E. Romuald WADAGNI, Benin (President elect)
H.E. Sarra Zaafrani Zenzri, Tunisia (Prime Minister)

Mr Jeje ODONGO, Uganda, Nigerian (minister of Foreign affairs)

Intervention by guest speakers and deliverables (15')

- **Strive MASIIWA** (CEO, Econet Global): Announcement of the Regional Data Centers shortlisted to host data center regional nodes powered by Cassava (*tbc*)
- **Jean-François FALLACHER** (CEO, Eutelsat): Phase II of the "Konnnect Afrika" program for high-speed broadband connectivity in Africa (supported by the European Investment Bank and the European Union)
- **Christel HEYDEMANN** (CEO, Orange): presentation of latest Orange projects in Africa (on skills or multilinguism, TBD)
- **Frédéric PASCAL** (VP AI, Université Paris-Saclay,): launch of the "Africa Forward AI clusters" network
- **Karim BEGUIR** (CEO, InstaDeep): Building a unicorn start-up out of Africa

Conclusive remarks – (2')

- Summary by moderators and formal transmission of roundtable conclusions,

Annex: Other possible guest speakers / observers

- Jean-Pascal TRICOIRE (CEO, Schneider Electric)
- Ambroise FAYOLLE (VP, European Investment Bank)
- Grégoire DE PADIRAC (CEO, Digital Africa)
- Moustapha CISSÉ (CEO, Kera Health)
- Koen DOENS (DG INTPA, European Commission)
- Cyril CASANOVA (CEO, Sharp Vision)
- Ayah BDEIR (CEO, Current AI)
- Kate KALLOT (CEO, Amini AI)
- Hugo MICHERON (Co-founder, Arlequin AI)
- Snehar SHAH (iXAfrica Data Centres)
- Claver GATETE (Executive Secretary, UNECA)
- Lerato MATOBOGE (Commissioner for Infrastructure and energy, African Union)
- Kathleen SIMINYU (Board Chair, Masakhane Research Foundation)