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Policy Taskforce – Roundup Newsletter – Vol. 5

Unlocking the AfCFTA for Startup Scale-Up

Dear honoured member and interested actors,

The Pan-African Policy Taskforce held its fifth session on **May 22nd, 2025**, centered on unlocking the potential of the *African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)* to support startup growth across the continent.

Missed the session? *Don't worry! You can catch up by reviewing the slides here: [Pan-African Policy Taskforce Session 5](#)*

Building on previous discussions around regional integration, this session brought together leading thinkers and practitioners to reflect on how startups can navigate and benefit from AfCFTA's trade protocols, and how policy stakeholders can adapt frameworks to accelerate digital, cross-border entrepreneurship.

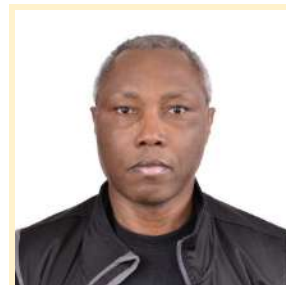
The session featured insights from **Alban Jackohango**, Senior Advisor at the Tony Blair Institute, and **Gideon Brefo**, Co-founder and CEO of HapaSpace Innovation Hub in Ghana.

Key Insights

1. **Startup Scaling under AfCFTA**

Alban highlighted how AfCFTA's protocols, particularly around digital trade and investment, offer new pathways for startups to scale across borders.

Alban urged startups and SMEs to go beyond waiting on policy shifts, to be proactive, informed, and ready to leverage the opportunities that a single continental market offers. As he put it, **“Don't just ask what AfCFTA can do for you, ask what you are ready to do with AfCFTA.”**





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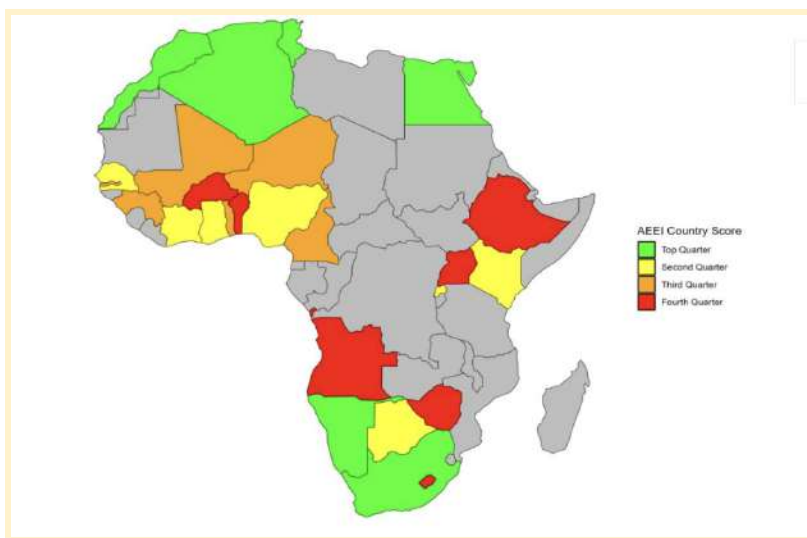
2. Realities on the Ground

Gideon grounded the conversation in practical experience, questioning whether startups truly feel the benefits of AfCFTA yet. He called for stronger ecosystem linkages and more intentional outreach to ensure the startup voice is integrated into trade policy dialogues.



3. The Role of Data and Evidence

Policy Taskforce Member Phumlani introduced participants to the [*Africa Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Index*](#), which provides an evidence-based tool to evaluate ecosystem enablers, governance, market access, infrastructure, support systems, and compare them across countries. The AEEI emerged as a potential compass for targeted policy interventions.



4. Engaging with the Ecosystem

The interactive poll and plenary discussion revealed strong interest in prioritizing tax and regulatory harmonization, access to regional investment, and cross-border talent mobility as core areas for upcoming policy dialogue.



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Looking Ahead

1. **Tailored Policy Instruments**

Members highlighted the need for AfCFTA to move beyond broad protocols and craft sector-specific mechanisms, from digital marketplaces to innovation visas, that can accelerate startup scale-up.

2. **Q4 2025 Session**

Our next session will take place in **Q4 2025** and we are excited to continue this journey with you, diving deeper into policy frameworks and building bridges between public and private sector actors, driving startup growth.

Our community grows stronger with every voice. Feel free to forward this newsletter to your network, and invite other **policymakers, civil society organisations, donor institutions and ecosystems players** to explore new horizons by [joining the Taskforce](#).

Want to help shape the future of the Taskforce?

Share your ideas here: [Pan-African Policy Taskforce – Session 5 Feedback](#)

Warm regards,

The Pan-African Policy Taskforce Team

