Regional Programme Economy Africa

Africa Data Summit

Event Report

The Africa Data Summit was held on 26 June 2025 and hosted by the KAS Regional Programme Economy Africa in partnership with the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), Policy Center for the New South and African Center for Economic Transformation (ACET). The Summit brought together over 95 participants from more than 10 African and European countries including policymakers, think tanks, government representatives, students, civil society and private sector entities working on various aspects of the data economy.

The future is African, and the future is digital

The opening keynote titled "*The Need for Accelerated Digital Infrastructure in Africa*" was delivered by Dr. Audrin Mathe Executive Director (Permanent Secretary) Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, Namibia. Dr Mathe not only emphasised the importance of investing in data infrastructure but went on to share experiences of how such investments were bearing fruit in Namibia. His mantra "*the future is African, and the future is digital*" set the stage for provocative and insightful discussions throughout the day.

Digitalisation holds enormous potential in the creation of digital economies

The first session focused on "*Challenges and Opportunities for Africa's Data Economy*" and was moderated by Dr Pencho Kutzev, Data and Digital Policy Coordinator from the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. This panel explored how African nations could craft policies that foster innovation and competition and discussed regulatory frameworks that promote fair digital ecosystems. From this session, it was noted that digitalisation holds enormous potential in the creation of digital economies and ease of doing business through innovative fintech solutions for economic growth. With a growing population, this presents numerous opportunities for Africa. Moreover, this session highlighted that while it is imperative for Africa to not be left behind in the digitalisation evolution, the continent must be careful not to import regulations and laws from the Global North, which might not be suitable for the region's context. This is because data fed to Artificial Intelligence tools remains predominately Western and this presents an immense opportunity for African designers to generate Afrocentric data that can be developed and fed into such systems.

Robust data ecosystems help African economies integrate into regional and global markets and attract investment

The second session of the day was on "Data Access for Africa's Economic Transformation" and was moderated by Rob Floyd, Director, Innovation and Digital Policy, African Center for Economic Transformation. This session noted that appropriate access to data fosters innovation and drives entrepreneurship and promotes decent jobs. Additionally, panellists and discussants pointed out that without access to data, new emerging technologies will not be commercialized, thereby robbing citizens of new solutions to key development problems. The key take-away from this session was that beyond the impacts of transparency and trust with open data, robust data ecosystems help African economies integrate into regional and global markets and attract investment.

Trust in the authenticity and analysis of data generated in Africa is a priority

The third session was titled "Building Trust Through Transparency: Realizing the African Credit Rating Mechanism" and was moderated by Badr Mandri Economist, Policy Center for the New South. This panel focused on the operationalization of the African Credit Rating Mechanism (ACRM) - a critical initiative to provide the continent with an independent, credible alternative to global credit rating agencies. The discussion explored how improved access to standardized data across Africa could reduce information asymmetries, support domestic and international investor confidence, and ultimately lower sovereign borrowing costs. From this discussion, the session underscored that for entities already generating data, *trust* is the key word. A lack of trust in the authenticity and analysis of data generated in Africa must be addressed through transparent mechanisms in the collection and use of such data. Moreover, the session noted that regulation plays an important role here but how far can laws go in the balance between protecting the collection, use and integrity of data and encouraging innovation.

Data can improve outcomes in key sectors such as health, education, agriculture, and climate change

The fourth session of the day was moderated by Litha Mzinyati Project Coordinator: Futures Programme SAIIA and was titled "Unlocking Data's Potential: Driving Sustainable Development Goals in Africa". This panel session discussed how data could be used to improve outcomes in key sectors such as health, education, agriculture, and climate change. It explored the challenges and opportunities of using data for evidence-based policymaking and development planning. The panellists have forward-thinking and innovative examples of how data tools were advancing developmental targets such as education and agriculture.

Digital sovereignty requires robust legal, technical, and infrastructural frameworks

The final session of the day was on "Data Sovereignty and Regional Integration: Towards a Pan-African Data Ecosystem" and was moderated by Kenneth Muhangi, Partner KTA Advocates, Uganda. This panel discussed the concept of digital sovereignty and its critical role in safeguarding Africa's interests in the global digital economy. The panellists examined the essential prerequisites for digital sovereignty, focusing on the need for robust legal, technical, and infrastructural frameworks that have the potential to empower African nations to control their data while navigating global digital dynamics. One of the key

takeaways from this session was that while Africa has immense potential to facilitate economic growth; the question of who holds (through data centres) and controls the data needs to be addressed. This remains a challenge if Africa does not invest in its own data centres.

During the course of the Africa Data Summit, Prof. Dr. Torsten Schmidt, Head of Research Department: Macroeconomics and Public Finance, RWI-Leibniz-Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung, Germany gave examples of the use of Data for Predictions in the agricultural sector and used examples from studied conducted in Rwanda on how data can aid in the growth of the agricultural sector in the whole of Africa.

The KAS RP Economy – Africa wishes to thank all discussants and participants from Kenya and beyond for engaging and thought-provoking ideas that were shared during the Africa Data Summit.

Dr. Chantelle G. Moyo, Programme Manager, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Regional Programme Economy Africa

www.kas.de