

# Inclusive growth needed for Africa to achieve sustained growth

African presidents reached a strong consensus to focus on regional integration, inclusive growth and youth empowerment in order to achieve continued and sustained growth on the continent at the Africa 2017 Forum in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt.



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President of Egypt Abdel Fattah Al Sisi hosted African heads of state and business leaders including President of the Republic of Guinea, Alpha Condé; President of the Republic of Rwanda, Paul Kagame; President of the Republic of Côte D'Ivoire, Alassane Ouattara; and President of Somalia, Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed.

The business and investment Forum, titled, *Driving investment for inclusive growth*, was convened to increase intra-African investments and cross-border collaboration. The message sent was that entrepreneurship and private sector would be the driving force to transform the continent.

The Forum was preceded by a Young Entrepreneurs Day, which brought together over 200 young African entrepreneurs who were meeting investors to pitch their businesses over the two days of the Forum. Al Sisi highlighted the importance of African youth, saying they should be the cornerstone of development plans in the continent as governments strive to promote innovation and technology.

The second edition of the Forum was another clear statement of intent from the Egyptian President, who, in his opening remarks, highlighted the strong bond Egypt has with the rest of the continent, saying it has always been a partner in African development.

Putting Africa on the global map and paving the way for a prosperous future can be achieved by working harder to attract investment and collaborating more closely, he said.

President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, co-chair of the Young Entrepreneurs Day, reiterated the need for more urgency: "We cannot afford to waste opportunities because of unnecessary red tape and associated delays."

Citing the launch of the Tripartite Free Trade Area in Egypt in 2015, he added it was important that African leaders drive the institutional reform of the African Union in order to get the FTA fully operational.

Heba Salama, director of the COMESA Regional Investment Agency, co-conveners of the Forum, in an emotional address, reminded the young and the leaders in the room that, "if your dreams don't scare you, they're not big enough". This did not go unheeded by the entrepreneurs in the room many of whom had scaled up businesses that were ripe for take-off.

[Africa 2017 Forum](#) was held under the high patronage of Abdel Fattah Al Sisi, 7-9 December 2017, in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, and was organised by the Ministry of Investment and International Cooperation of Egypt and the COMESA Regional Investment Agency (RIA).

The 2017 edition builds on the success of the inaugural Africa 2016, which saw participation of six Heads of State and more than 1,000 delegates from 45 countries. This year the programme was enhanced with exclusive Presidential Roundtables with Africa leaders and CEOs as well as a Young Entrepreneurs Day.

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