

Press Release

The 2026 Africa Think Tank Summit to Advance Energy Sector Reform for Africa's Economic Transformation

ACBF, the Government of Benin and the African Union will convene policymakers, think tank representatives, investors and development partners in Cotonou from 28 to 30 October 2026.

COTONOU, Republic of Benin, [20/10/26] – The African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), in collaboration with the Government of the Republic of Benin and the African Union, will convene the 12th Africa Think Tank Summit in Cotonou from 28 to 30 October 2026. The Summit will focus on practical reforms that can make reliable and affordable energy a stronger driver of industrialization, competitiveness and inclusive growth in Africa.

Held under the theme “*From Energy Access to Economic Transformation: Practical Policy Pathways for Power Sector Viability, Growth, and Reform in Africa*,” the 2026 Summit will bring together some 300 policymakers, researchers, private investors and development partners from more than 50 countries to move the energy debate beyond broad commitments towards concrete reforms that improve utility performance, strengthen enabling policy and regulatory environments, and attract investment.

Africa's energy challenge goes beyond access. Nearly 600 million people in sub-Saharan Africa still live without electricity, while many businesses resort to costly self-generation because public power supply remains unreliable. The Summit will examine reforms to strengthen utility viability, mobilize private capital, expand regional power trade and broaden access to clean cooking solutions.

The three-day program will feature a high-level opening ceremony, a ministerial roundtable, plenary sessions, technical breakout sessions and reform-focused workshops. A dedicated research session will also present findings from the three consortia of the Africa Think Tank Platform (ATTP) Project.

For ACBF, the Summit reflects its broader role in strengthening the institutions, expertise and policy capabilities needed to translate Africa's development priorities into implementation. By bringing together policymakers, think tanks, regulators, investors and development partners, the Summit will connect African evidence and expertise with the institutions and actors responsible for delivering reform.

"Reliable and affordable electricity is essential to Africa's structural transformation. But access alone will not deliver that transformation. We need institutions capable of implementing reform, utilities that can deliver sustainably, and African evidence that informs the decisions being made. This Summit is about bringing those elements together and moving from ambition to implementation," said **Mamadou Biteye, Executive Secretary of ACBF.**

The Summit will connect national reform efforts with the African Union's broader agenda for regional integration and cross-border electricity trade.

"Access to modern, reliable energy at scale supports the industrialization and integration goals of Agenda 2063. The African Union is supporting efforts of Member States to promote regional power pools and cross-border electricity trade. This Summit will advance that agenda through evidence and dialogue," said **H.E. Ambassador Selma Malika Haddadi, Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission.**

Effective regulation will also be a key part of the discussions, particularly in addressing the financial sustainability and performance of Africa's power sector.

"Effective regulation is essential to building financially viable energy utilities, attracting investment, and ensuring reliable, affordable electricity. The Summit offers an important platform to advance practical, evidence-based reforms that accelerate Africa's energy transformation," said **Dr. Abdulkadir Shettima, Director of the African School of Regulation (ASR).**

As host country, Benin will bring its experience in infrastructure, governance and energy reform to the continental discussions.

"Benin is proud to welcome the continent's premier think tank gathering to Cotonou. Our reforms in infrastructure, governance and energy reflect the priorities at the heart of this Summit, and we invite delegates to share solutions that deliver tangible results for citizens," said **H.E. Aristide Medenou, Minister of Economy and Finance, in charge of Cooperation, Government of the Republic of Benin.**

Financing and risk mitigation will be central to discussions on how to move viable energy and infrastructure projects to the investment stage.

"Africa's energy transition requires financing mechanisms that can better share risks and reduce the cost of capital. Through its risk-mitigation instruments, particularly guarantees, and its capacity to mobilize resources, FAGACE brings together banks, financial markets and private investors around transformative energy and infrastructure projects. By participating in this Summit, the Fund reaffirms its pan-African mandate: to facilitate access to financing and support inclusive and



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*sustainable growth across its Member States.”, said **Dr Ngueto Tirāina Yambaye, President of the African Guarantee and Economic Cooperation Fund (FAGACE).***

The Summit will bring policy, institutional, regulatory and financing perspectives together in a single dialogue, with a focus on how energy access can translate into productive use, stronger industries and inclusive economic growth.

The 2026 Africa Think Tank Summit will be held in English and French, with in-person participation in Cotonou and virtual access. Policymakers, researchers, development partners and other stakeholders can access the program and registration information at africathinktanksummit.org. Accredited journalists may request interviews and media resources from the ACBF Communications Unit.

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