



Agenda Design and Facilitation of Multilateral Summits for Attracting Foreign Direct Investment in Africa

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Abstract

The article examines the challenges of agenda design and facilitation for multilateral investment summits in Africa, considering them as a strategic mechanism for attracting foreign direct investment. The topic's relevance is driven by an unprecedented surge in FDI to the continent: in 2024 alone, investment flows reached 97 billion US dollars, representing 6% of global flows (UNCTAD, 2025). This boost doesn't just remain a reputational gain, but rather translates into faster total factor productivity and real GDP growth, demonstrating the institutional role of investment forums as primary pathways for gathering long-term funds. The goal of the study is to identify the structural and organizational elements that transform summits from isolated events into institutional tools for economic integration. The originality of this work stems from its effort to organize the multi-layered setup of investment forums, where high-level coordination with the African Union's Agenda 2063 plan and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) meets detailed planning of transactional steps — covering everything from initial project checks to post-forum deal tracking. The main results show that summit success comes from the mix of three things: (i) plan match with top-level wants, cutting rule risk; (ii) a mixed group setup where fast digital and money plans plant trust and cash flow while big spending on buildings and green steps add to the portfolio's depth; and (iii) a shut help loop taking in smart matching, sample deal rooms, and after-forum checks which builds strong trust links and cuts deal costs. The article will be helpful to researchers in international economics, organizers of investment forums, and practitioners involved in attracting and stewarding foreign direct investment.

Keywords: Foreign Direct Investment, Africa, Investment Summits, Facilitation, Agenda 2063, AfCFTA, Economic Integration.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two years the African continent has experienced a singular increase in inflows of foreign direct investment: according to UNCTAD, FDI to Africa rose by 75% in 2024, reaching 97 billion US dollars and raising the region's share of global flows to 6%; even excluding a one-off megaproject in Egypt, net growth amounted to 12%, and 36% of new regulatory measures in African countries were oriented toward improving the investment climate (UNCTAD, 2025). The macroeconomic payoff from such inflows is manifested primarily in an acceleration of total factor productivity: the World Bank forecasts that the region's real GDP growth rate will increase from 3.3% in 2024 to 3.5% in 2025, with the contribution of FDI becoming increasingly tangible (World Bank Group, n.d.). These data emphasize that investment capital, unlike short-term portfolio inflows, establishes a durable trajectory of capacity expansion and export growth while reducing income volatility.

Within this favourable dynamic, the role of multilateral investment forums is salient: such events convert fragmented investor interest into formalized financial commitments. For example, the Africa Investment Forum in Rabat in 2024 secured bids totaling \$ 29.2 billion over three days of negotiations (AIF, 2024b). Concentrating heads of state, transnational corporations, and multilateral banks on a single platform simultaneously reduces information costs, expedites legal due diligence, and removes regulatory barriers, thereby positioning summits as a key channel for mobilizing long-term capital for projects of regional and continental scale.

MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

The study of agenda design and facilitation for multilateral investment summits in Africa was based on an analysis of a broad array of empirical and normative sources. As a baseline, UNCTAD statistics on FDI dynamics were used, documenting a 75% increase in 2024 that resulted in a volume of \$ 97

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billion and raised the region's share of global flows to 6% (UNCTAD, 2025). These figures were compared with World Bank forecasts that reflect an expected acceleration of the region's real GDP growth from 3.3% to 3.5% as a result of long-term capital inflows (World Bank Group, n.d.), which enabled the identification of the macroeconomic foundation of the phenomenon under study.

African Union documents provided the theoretical framework, principally Agenda 2063, which frames investment as an instrument of strategic transformation and income doubling over a two-decade horizon (African Union, 2015), as well as analyses from Brookings forecasting a 111–159% increase in FDI inflows by 2035 following the removal of non-tariff barriers under AfCFTA (Fofack, 2024). Together, these sources enabled the development of criteria for evaluating the extent to which summits align with long-term continental priorities.

Methodologically, a comparative analysis of practices at leading investment forums was applied. The Africa Investment Forum was treated as a case of a tripartite B2B2G format, where the 29.2 billion US dollars of interest recorded over three days (AIF, 2024b) were compared with institutionalized models such as the EU–Africa Business Forum (European Commission, 2025) and the US–Africa Summit (The White House, 2024). Sources on deal structure and conclusion velocity (World Finance, n.d.) made it possible to isolate characteristic facilitation features, from preliminary project screening to a post-forum deals tracker.

Content analysis of reports by international organizations and corporate reviews was used to detect agenda transformation: the incorporation of ESG metrics and gender indicators (Ndhlazi, 2025; Summit Africa, n.d.) was juxtaposed with the evolving institutional interest, while data on sectoral shares in export structures (Fofack, 2024) enabled assessment of sectoral priorities. Additionally, information on global capital-mobilization initiatives such as the 150 billion euro Global Gateway (European Commission, n.d.) was considered, allowing African forums to be contextualized within international responses to investment competition.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Over the past fifteen years, investment summits on the continent have evolved from donor conferences—venues for declarative pledges—into high-throughput “machines” for generating transactions. The inflection point was the establishment of the Africa Investment Forum in 2018, which, by June 2025, had garnered nearly USD 225 billion in investment interest (AIF, 2025). In a parallel track of government–business dialogue, Washington at the 2022 U.S.–Africa Summit exceeded its initial USD 55 billion pledge, bringing confirmed commitments to USD 65 billion (The White House, 2024), while Brussels, responding to global competition, launched the EUR 150 billion Global Gateway

package to support Africa's green and digital transformation (European Commission, n.d.).

The qualitative transformation of forums has manifested in the velocity and structure of deals: AIF's closed boardroom sessions managed to register interest in 49 projects worth USD 38.7 billion in under 72 hours, compressing the traditional months-long “project-term sheet” cycle into a matter of days (World Finance, n.d.). This “surgical” approach is complemented by post-forum Deal Tracker mechanisms and virtual platforms that keep investors engaged through to financial close.

Interaction formats have gradually differentiated. The EU–Africa Business Forum institutionalized a classic B2B model and augmented it with a B2G channel to address regulatory “bottlenecks,” thereby providing businesses with direct access to the officials whose decisions govern transaction authorization (European Commission, 2025). The U.S.–Africa Summit, leveraging large-scale sovereign guarantees and grant instruments, remains a vivid example of B2G-dominant logic (The White House, 2024). The Africa Investment Forum went further, transforming its boardrooms into a B2B2G hybrid: corporations, development banks, and line-ministry representatives convene in a single room, simultaneously reducing information asymmetries and removing regulatory barriers (AIF, n.d.). Practice indicates that precisely this tripartite format synchronizes commercial gain with public priorities, increasing the bankability of infrastructure and green projects.

The integration context confers additional strategic depth upon summits. The AfCFTA Investment Protocol promises an increase in FDI inflows of 111–159 percent by 2035 owing to the removal of non-tariff barriers and the scalability of a single market, while Agenda 2063 explicitly names the inflow of long-term capital as a critical condition for doubling incomes over the next two decades (Fofack, 2024). At the same time, Figure 1 displays the apparent dominance of mineral fuels in India's exports to Africa. In contrast, industrial and food products are spread across many categories and carry substantially lower weights.

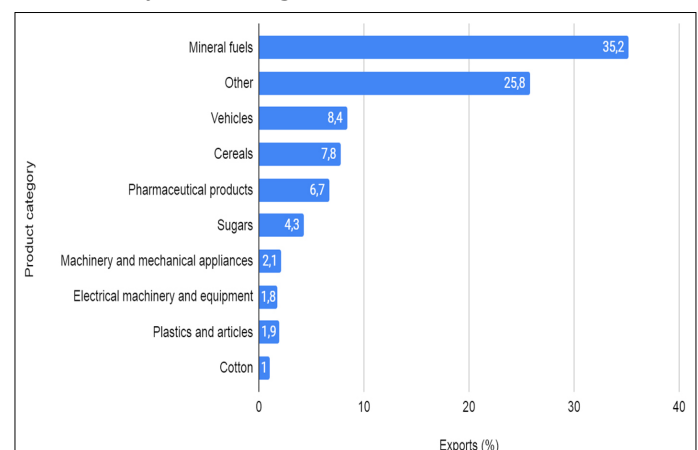


Fig. 1. Product-Level Composition of India to Africa Exports (Fofack, 2024)

It is no coincidence that organizers of the largest forums weave AfCFTA-corridor sections and metrics of alignment with the 2063 goals into their agendas, as shown in Figure 2. This reduces political risk for investors and ties a specific transaction to continent-wide priorities (African Union, 2015).



Fig. 2. Schematic presentation of the foundation of Agenda 2063 (African Union, 2015)

Thus, summits are becoming nodal points where normative integration and market logic operate in synchrony, amplifying the effect of every signed investment declaration.

The tests of recent years have demonstrated that the effectiveness of any investment venue correlates directly with the degree to which its content is synchronized with long-term supranational benchmarks. When organizers construct programs around the continental free-trade area and the 2063 Goals, they rely on an already negotiated political consensus, reducing regulatory turbulence and transaction costs. This macro-filter also calibrates the thematic ordering of sessions: transport corridors, green energy, and digital products receive priority not because of fashion but because Agenda 2063 spells them out in detail, positing the doubling of manufacturing's share in total output as an imperative.

Yet mere consistency with high-level strategies does not, by itself, guarantee deal closure; the agenda must strike a delicate balance between a platform for political signaling and the “gravitational room” of concrete contracts. Observation of the 2024 Africa Investment Forum shows that this balance is measurable: of the USD 29.2 billion declared for financing over three days, a particular share pertained to projects pre-approved by line ministers even before the forum opened, while the remaining share was formed during closed negotiation sessions to which investors were admitted

only after verification of the legal readiness of documents (AIF, 2024). Hence, the political block sets direction and minimizes risks, while the transactional block carries the project to signature, removing either “contour” collapses the entire construction.

The working rhythm of the event functions as a metronome governing attention. Morning plenary sessions devoted to macroeconomic trends serve as a unifying role: heads of state and representatives from multilateral banks articulate a common lexicon, which is subsequently used in the negotiation rooms. Afternoon, the stage shifts: the discussion hall yields to parallel tables where curators guide investors to specific sponsors; statistics from the Rabat forum indicate that more than seventy percent of letters of intent were formalized precisely in the afternoon hours, when all necessary stakeholders are present and preliminary legal due diligence has been completed (AIF, 2024a). Such a rigid separation of temporal layers reduces cognitive overload, allowing participants first to assimilate the overall picture and then focus on pinpoint transactions without losing their bearings.

Sustainability integration, gender balance, and youth role from end to end make the contemporary agenda possible. The Wealth of Africa–2025 report shows that high ESG-performing projects attract, on average, 25 percent more applications from institutional investors than similar initiatives with less clear social metrics (Ndhlaizi, 2025). An inquiry into corporate reports for 2023 further supports the notion that the presence of women in management teams increases the financial attractiveness of green-energy projects at their early stages, as investors consider gender diversity an indication of managerial maturity (Summit Africa, n.d.). These facts prove that when the organizers “stitch in” ESG and youth strategy blocks across every thematic session, not only does the agenda mirror normative expectations, but it also creates an absolute premium on the probability of financing.

When the agenda is clustered into thematic streams, it transforms the summit from a sequential line of presentations into a multilayered ecosystem, whereby each track draws its own type of capital while reinforcing adjacent domains. At the first tier lie sectors capable of closing faster than others: the digital economy and fintech, which leverage cloud infrastructure and mobile payments, require comparatively modest outlays, are scarcely entangled with the slow regulatory procedures of construction, and therefore allow investors to witness realized revenue before initial enthusiasm has time to dissipate. Placing such sessions in the early phase of the summit serves as a catalyst: swiftly signed memoranda operate as psychological proof that the venue is effective, elevate trust, and encourage more cautious funds to consider discussing long-horizon transactions.

Next come capital-intensive streams—above all, transport and energy infrastructure alongside green-generation

projects. Their nature differs: a protracted construction cycle, the necessity of an intricate financial close, the participation of multiple jurisdictions, and often elements of sovereign co-financing. By scheduling these sections only after rapid deals have already demonstrated the mechanism's viability, organizers reduce perceptual risk. An additional effect is created by the presence of development institutions, which find it convenient to arrange blended debt-and-equity instruments within large forums where representatives of different ministries are in proximity and can promptly coordinate guarantee letters or tax incentives.

Over both layers hang cross-cutting themes. Logistics corridors integrate digital solutions with heavy infrastructure, forming territorial-industrial belts in which cargo throughput speed imposes requirements on port terminals and systems for contactless transaction processing alike. Climate finance, in turn, assimilates lessons learned from the preceding segments by allowing green bonds and sustainable development funds access to projects that can reduce their carbon footprints while simultaneously providing commercial returns. The cross-placement of these blocks within the program enhances horizontal linkages, thereby reducing the chances of having island projects. It, therefore, makes the summit a self-propagating network whereby fast liquidity breeds significant investment and cross-sectoral themes stitch it all together, ensuring resilience at an aggregate portfolio level.

Full realization of the potential inherent in thematic clusters begins even before the ceremonial opening of the venue, when project sponsors pass through virtual funnels. The platform's algorithm gathers preliminary materials, assesses legal status, environmental parameters, and market viability, and then invites teams to a series of closed video sessions devoted to comprehensive due diligence. Such selection frees the in-person program from underprepared initiatives while simultaneously building trust: participants arrive already knowing that every presentation has passed a basic solvency filter.

The in-person phase becomes a compressed laboratory of cooperation. Algorithmic partner matching based on artificial intelligence links investor and sponsor within minutes of registration and proposes compatibility maps that mark financial, technological, and social parameters. The exhibition's mobile application synchronizes schedules, charts navigation across pavilions, and dispatches push notifications when a free time slot overlaps for both potential deal parties. This mechanism is complemented by a reverse-pitch format, in which investors themselves formulate the selection criteria, thereby removing information asymmetry and designating "red flags" in advance. As a result, negotiations unfold not around abstract ideas but with reference to pre-delineated zones of acceptability.

The culmination is reached in negotiation rooms for the closure of deals. Here, closing moderators serve simultaneously as arbiters and navigators: they record

agreements, offer templates for key-terms sheets, and ensure that technical specialists, lawyers, and representatives of line ministries join at the right moment without creating pauses. A document structure template with the main parameters of the contract reduces semantic divergence. It reduces the number of iterations required to achieve a close approximation, thereby minimizing the need for lengthy documentation. Time pressure increases motivation: parties work out achievable compromises since another round of discussions is already impending.

When the halls fall silent, the deal-tracking system comes into play. Recorded digitally on a dashboard are deadlines for control milestones to which many inside and outside governments must comply. This allows overrun notifications to be sent to all involved and produces comparative reports by sector and country, giving the secretariat an overview of where bottlenecks exist. Achieving such continuous monitoring creates a high level of attention, as participants feel that their successes or delays come under the spotlight of the entire ecosystem; hence, they have less incentive to prolong the financial close. The facilitation loop does not end with the last applause; it becomes a continuing cycle in which, logically, every pre-processed dossier, every proper alignment of interests, and every promptly signed agreement pushes the continent towards new turns of sustainable growth.

At the level of operational decisions, organizers must first and foremost demonstrate discipline in selection. Only those initiatives whose financial soundness has been validated by an expert filter are admitted to the program: legal cleanliness of land plots, arrangements for raw-material supply, internal-rate-of-return calculations, and an investor exit roadmap are fixed before the first draft of the agenda is circulated. Such preliminary screening eliminates phantom projects and frees up space in negotiation sessions for real transactions, while the very fact of strict selection operates as a signaling mechanism that increases the confidence of even the most conservative funds.

Next, a steady cadence of interaction with all registered parties becomes pivotal. As soon as a speaker or project sponsor receives an invitation, a three-day feedback cycle is launched: organizers respond promptly to comments on the agenda draft, adjust the presentation slot, clarify panel composition, and confirm changes without delay. This circulation of information eliminates chaotic bursts of emails and phone calls in the final hours before the event, instilling in participants the sense of a precise orchestra in which every part sounds on time.

The technological fabric of the event is built on the primacy of digital logistics, featuring a unified accreditation platform, contactless passes, dynamic floor plans, and an instant notification system. This reduces the paper workload, makes scheduling tighter, and, in the increased mobility scenario, naturally evolves into a hybrid format. A participant,

maintaining context, can move between the offline halls and remote sessions, sitting in one place or another-the investment flow keeps circulating notwithstanding its physical location.

Eventually, even the best-calibrated matrix will fall victim to outside shocks; thereby, a prearranged risk-management plan moves from being just another formal appendix to becoming a living mechanism. Clear protocols for action during epidemiological alerts, disruptions in transport corridors, or abrupt political shifts allow the schedule to be reconfigured, negotiations to be switched to a secure channel, and content richness to be preserved without postponing the signing of key agreements. When participants see that, even under a force-majeure scenario, organizers can maintain the ecosystem's integrity, they perceive the venue as a long arc of reliability rather than a one-off event, thereby consolidating the trust upon which future capital inflows rest. The final recommendations are presented in Figure 3.

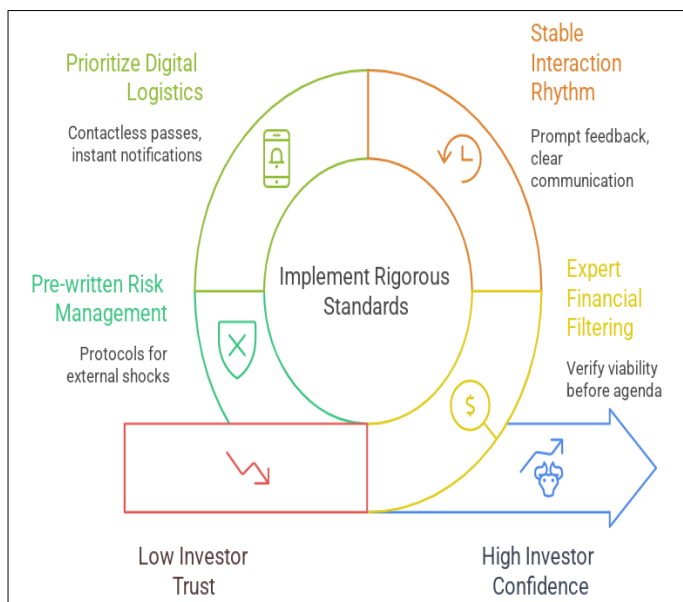


Fig. 3. Building Trust Through Event Excellence

Synthesizing the observed regularities, it can be argued that the effectiveness of African investment summits is governed by a tripartite linkage: strategic alignment of the agenda with continental priorities, a hybrid cluster architecture that combines fast-moving and capital-intensive sectors, and a closed facilitation loop in which pre-forum filtering, algorithmic matching, templated deal-rooms, and post-forum tracking form a unified circuit of trust. This configuration simultaneously compresses transaction costs, diversifies sectoral demand for capital, and sustains momentum until actual financial close, thereby transforming episodic meetings into a durable institution of economic integration.

CONCLUSION

The study confirms that the effectiveness of multilateral investment summits in Africa cannot be reduced to reputational or declarative functions; instead, it is produced through precise agenda engineering and calibrated

facilitation of negotiation processes. When comparing empirical evidence, blending long-term strategies, such as the African Continental Free Trade Area and Agenda 2063, with transactional mechanisms for accelerated deal closure creates a unique institutional environment in which mere potential interest will translate into confirmed commitments and actual capital inflows.

The structure of program content is a decisive factor, particularly in its multilayeredness. The incorporation of rapid digital and financial projects at the very first stages creates trust as well as liquidity. At the same time, the subsequent elevation of capital-intensive directions, infrastructure, and green energy provides strategic depth to the portfolio. Cross-cutting clusters that integrate digital technologies, logistics corridors, and climate finance serve as a stitching function across heterogeneous sectors, creating a network of mutual reinforcement and reducing the likelihood of isolated initiatives.

The combination of pre-selecting projects, algorithmic participant matching, standardized procedures within negotiation rooms, and post-forum deal monitoring constitutes a closed cycle of trust, by which the summit ceases to be a one-off event and becomes a sustained institution of economic integration. It reduces the cost of doing business and regulatory risk while creating a regular pipeline channel for long-term investment to flow into the priority sectors of the continent. In their current design, African investment summits are seminal instruments in the mobilization of foreign direct investment, caught between the imperatives of political signaling and concrete contracts. Their agendas, lodged within that strategic architecture of the continent and accompanied by technological facilitation mechanisms convert interest into a long-term commitment, thereby further consolidating summits as one of the central institutions in Africa's new economic dynamic.

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