African Union

2ND EGUMENI DIALOGUE



Half Day Convening

Mobilizing Africa's Enterprise Support Ecosystem for Women Financial and Economic Inclusion

21 October 2026 | Medium Conference room

9:30AM - 14:30PM

AUC Headquarters, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Background

The African Union Women and Youth Financial and Economic Inclusion (WYFEI 2030) Initiative provides a continental framework for expanding women's and young people's access to finance, productive opportunities and economic participation. Its ambition to unlock US$100 billion in financial and economic opportunities for at least 10 million African women and youth by 2030 reflects the scale of intervention required to address persistent structural barriers to inclusive economic transformation).

This ambition is particularly relevant to the focus of the 2nd Egumeni Dialogue on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, which is centered on "Building a Resilient Africa through Accelerated Women's Financial and Economic Inclusion." The Dialogue seeks to move beyond discussion towards practical solutions, strategic partnerships, investment mobilization, policy action and stronger accountability for advancing women's financial and economic inclusion.

For women and youth, economic resilience is closely linked to the ability to establish, sustain and grow enterprises, access appropriate finance, develop relevant skills, adopt digital solutions, participate in markets and build connections to regional and continental value chains. Yet many women- and youth-led enterprises continue to encounter interconnected barriers, including limited access to suitable finance, inadequate business development support, weak investment readiness, limited market opportunities, digital gaps and fragmented support systems.

Enterprise Support Organizations (ESOs) are therefore important actors in translating the objectives of WYFEI 2030 into practical outcomes. Incubators, accelerators, innovation hubs, business development service providers, entrepreneurship networks and investment-readiness programmes work directly with entrepreneurs across different stages of the enterprise journey.

Through mentoring, skills development, business advisory services, investment preparation, digital adoption, market linkages and ecosystem connections, ESOs can help women and youth move from enterprise creation towards sustainability, growth and greater economic participation. The provide the lastmile support and ecosystem connections needed to translate WYFEI 2030 objectives into tangible outcomes for women and youth entrepreneurs.

At the same time, the growing enterprise-support ecosystem remains diverse and dispersed. There are considerable experiences and innovation across countries and regions, but opportunities for systematic collaboration among ESOs, financial institutions, investors, governments, development partners and continental institutions are not always fully leveraged. Strengthening these connections can improve the pathways through which women- and youth-led enterprises access finance, markets, knowledge, technology and other forms of support.

Against this backdrop, the Convening of Enterprise Support Organizations will provide a focused platform to connect the enterprise-support ecosystem with the WYFEI 2030 agenda and the priorities of the Egumeni Dialogue. It will bring together ESOs and relevant ecosystem actors to identify what is working, examine persistent gaps, share scalable approaches and explore practical partnerships that can strengthen women's and youth's access to finance, markets, skills, digital opportunities and enterprise growth.

The convening is therefore envisaged as a bridge between continental commitments and enterprise-level action, creating space for ESOs to contribute their experience, networks and solutions while identifying concrete pathways through which they can support the implementation, reach and accountability of WYFEI 2030

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OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of the Convening is to engage Enterprise Support Organizations and key ecosystem stakeholders to build a shared understanding of WYFEI 2030 and establish practical pathways for ESOs to contribute to its implementation, particularly in strengthening enterprise development, access to finance, digital inclusion and market opportunities for women- and youth-led enterprises.

Specifically, the Convening seeks to:
-Align ESOs on WYFEI 2030's objectives, priorities, targets and implementation approach, and clarify the specific roles and contributions ESOs can make to advancing its agenda.
-Identify key ESOs, their geographic and thematic coverage, capabilities and existing support models, while highlighting effective and scalable approaches for supporting women- and youth-led enterprises.
-Facilitate stronger connections among ESOs, financial institutions, investors, development partners, policymakers and RECs, with a focus on strengthening the finance pipeline and unlocking the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and regional market opportunities for women- and youth-led enterprises.
-Generate actionable recommendations, commitments and potential mechanisms for continued ESO engagement, including a community, network or working mechanism to support coordination, knowledge exchange and implementation of WYFEI 2030.



EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The Convening is expected to produce the following outcomes:

1. Shared understanding and alignment among ESOs on WYFEI 2030 priorities and their roles in implementation.
2. A clearer map of the ESO ecosystem, including key actors, support gaps and scalable models for women- and youth-led enterprises.
3. Stronger ecosystem linkages, with practical connections and referral pathways between ESOs, financial institutions, investors and market opportunities.
4. An agreed framework for continued ESO engagement, including priority actions, commitments and a mechanism to support ongoing collaboration on WYFEI.

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PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

The convening will bring together ecosystem actors representing diverse regions and sectors, including:

1. Enterprise Support Organizations (incubators, accelerators, innovation hubs, and entrepreneurship networks)

2. Entrepreneurship, women and youth networks and business development providers financial institutions and investment funds supporting SMEs and startups

3. Development partners supporting entrepreneurship and financial inclusion initiatives

4. Representatives from African Union Member States and Regional Economic Communities and relevant AUC/AfCFTA institutions.



AVAILABLE LANGUAGES

The session will be conducted in **English** and **French** with simultaneous interpretation.

Where a Session 1 speaker works in another language (for example, Kiswahili or Portuguese), interpretation into that language will be arranged.

PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

The workshop will be co-convened by the African Union Commission Women, Gender and Youth Directorate (AUC-WGYD) in collaboration with Mkazipreneur and AfriLabs as strategic partners.

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AGENDA

EVENT PROGRAM

9:00 - 9:20 AM	**SETTING THE STAGE: WYFEI 2030 INITIATIVE** Introduce WYFEI 2030 vision, objectives, targets & the specific role envisioned for ESOs (positioning ESOs as the delivery mechanism connecting finance access to enterprise growth for women-owned businesses). Structure: Presentation
9:20 - 10:30 AM	**HIGH LEVEL PANEL 1: MAPPING AFRICA'S ESO ECOSYSTEM** Ecosystem (incubators/accelerators/UNDP) showcase 4 concrete examples of scalable ESO-led models, one per thematic pillar: - Access to Finance & Investment Readiness - Market Access and AfCFTA Opportunities - Digital Inclusion and Technology Adoption - Skills, Ecosystem Coordination and Referral Pathways Structure: Moderated panel
10:30 - 10:45 AM	**NETWORKING BREAK**
10.45 - 11:45 AM	**PLENARY SESSION** What is expected for systematic collaboration to happen/ to be fully leveraged among actors in: - (A) Access to Finance & Investment Readiness - (B) Market Access and AfCFTA Opportunities - (C) Digital Inclusion and Technology Adoption - (D) Skills, Ecosystem Coordination and Referral Pathways
11.45 - 12:30 PM	**PANEL 2: MAPPING ESOS ECOSYSTEM - FROM CONTINENTAL COMMITMENTS TO ENTERPRISE-LEVEL ACTION** Strengthening the WYFEI-ESO- AfCFTA-pipeline Action-oriented dialogue where participants identify and name concrete partnership commitments, strengthening access to finance, markets, skills, digital opportunities, and enterprise growth. Structure: Moderated panel

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AGENDA

EVENT PROGRAM

12:30 - 13:00 PM	**ACTION-ORIENTED CLOSING SESSION:** Closing remarks - UNDP Rapporteur synthesizing the conversation that happened Priority partnerships, commitments, and the proposed ESO coordination mechanism. Structure: Facilitated Plenary
12:30 - 14:30 PM	**GROUP PHOTO AND NETWORKING LUNCH**

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