



New Mo Ibrahim Foundation report urges stronger mobility and connectivity to accelerate African integration

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11 May, Nairobi – The Mo Ibrahim Foundation has published a new report, [Africa on the move: Boosting mobility and connectivity](#), to coincide with the Africa Forward Summit in Nairobi, 11-12 May.

This report provides a comprehensive overview of the current situation and the hurdles to overcome regarding both the 'soft' mobility of persons, goods and services around Africa, and the 'hard' physical connectivity infrastructures within a continent of over 30 million km² – over seven times bigger than the EU's territory. It also highlights the important commitments already taken at an African level – though not all fully implemented – to address these challenges.

The report underlines the importance of enhancing mobility and connectivity across the continent in order to accelerate continental integration and the swift implementation of the AfCFTA, as well as of facilitating and encouraging regular migration within the continent. Both are key to boosting the mobilisation of domestic resources needed to effectively leverage Africa's potential.

The incentives are evident. Full implementation of the AfCFTA should boost intra-continental trade to 53% (from around 18% of Africa's current trade), grow the manufacturing sector by \$1 trillion, generate income worth \$470 billion, and create 14 million jobs by 2035. Regarding migrations, the most recent data shows that over 72% of sub-Saharan migrants remain within their own continent, in search of better economic and social prospects.

But there are still many hurdles to overcome regarding both mobility and connectivity on this huge continent. All require enhanced and joint commitment from both Africa's political and economic stakeholders and their partners and could also benefit from exchange of expertise and best practices from other economic unions.

Regarding 'soft' mobility, the ability of African citizens to freely travel around their own continent remains too limited. Only four countries – Mali, Niger, Rwanda, and São Tomé and Príncipe – have ratified the 2018 African Union's Free Movement of Persons Protocol, as concerns around security, public opinion and reciprocity limit political commitment. Only 28% of African citizens do not need a visa to travel to their fellow African countries. Moreover, their ability to study or work in another African country is also hampered by limited educational and professional equivalence across the continent.

The soft mobility of goods and services around the continent, key to facilitating intra-continental trade, is strangled not only by customs fees, but by numerous non-tariff barriers, often 'behind-the-border', such as sanitary and phytosanitary barriers, labelling and packaging standards. Finally, limited currency convertibility prevents swift trade operations, meaning that the continent loses approximately \$5 billion a year to currency conversion costs.

Historically built to support an economic model based on the export of raw commodities outside the continent, connectivity within the continent remains mostly outdated and outbound, thus glaringly insufficient to cover the needs of a 30 million km² wide continent. Travel within the continent remains slower, more expensive and less direct than comparable journeys across any regions of the world.

Ground transport, especially by roads, remains by far the main mode of transport. But roads are too often discontinuous and dangerous, while railway travel suffers from limited interoperability, often obsolete systems with high maintenance costs, and low affordability for transport of people or goods. At least 13 countries, hosting around 17% of the continent's population, many of them landlocked, still have no direct rail access to seaports. Air transport within the continent is increasing, but from a very low base, and remains costly and mostly outbound. Africa's river network remains an under-utilised asset.

Aware of the demand, and the opportunities, Africa's partners have boosted their engagement in the continent's infrastructures. Notably China through the Belt and Road Initiative projects, though those remain essentially outbound – reproducing the former development model of raw commodities exports. EU Global Gateway represents a major investment and commitment to boost the continent's inbound infrastructures, around 55 'strategic corridors', out of which 12 are identified as 'priority corridors', criss-crossing most of sub-Saharan Africa. But this still relies on high carbon industries, such as steel and cement, a major side effect to be addressed, as is the need to build infrastructures able to resist to climate-impact events. All this will increase costs.

In conclusion, investing to boost both mobility and connectivity within the continent presents obvious opportunities given the demand, as well as its evident positive impact on continental economic integration, job prospects for a growing youth population, and increased regular migrations within the continent. This requires joint actions from both African governments whose political commitment is still required on many key points, and from their partners – not only through financial pledges but also through exchange of expertise and best practices.

Mo Ibrahim, Founder and Chair, said: "Africa will not harness its potential while mobility is restricted and connectivity remains outdated. We talk endlessly about African integration and then make it harder for an African citizen to cross a border within their own continent than to leave it altogether. That must change. It is time to press the accelerator on regional integration – to take ownership of and benefit from our continent's huge assets, be it natural resources or demography."

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About the Mo Ibrahim Foundation

Founded in 2006, the Mo Ibrahim Foundation aims to amplify Africa's voice on global issues, with a focus on the importance of governance and leadership. The Foundation provides comprehensive data and analysis on the continent's challenges, brings together key actors for discussion, and supports initiatives to improve leadership and governance.

In this regard, the Foundation concentrates on defining, assessing, and improving governance and leadership in Africa as key drivers of the continent's progress. The Foundation places particular importance on African youth, recognising them as key actors in building their own continent. This goal is achieved through five key initiatives:

- [Ibrahim Index of African Governance](#)
- [Ibrahim Governance Weekend](#)
- [Now Generation Network](#)
- [Ibrahim Fellowships and Scholarships](#)
- [Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership](#)