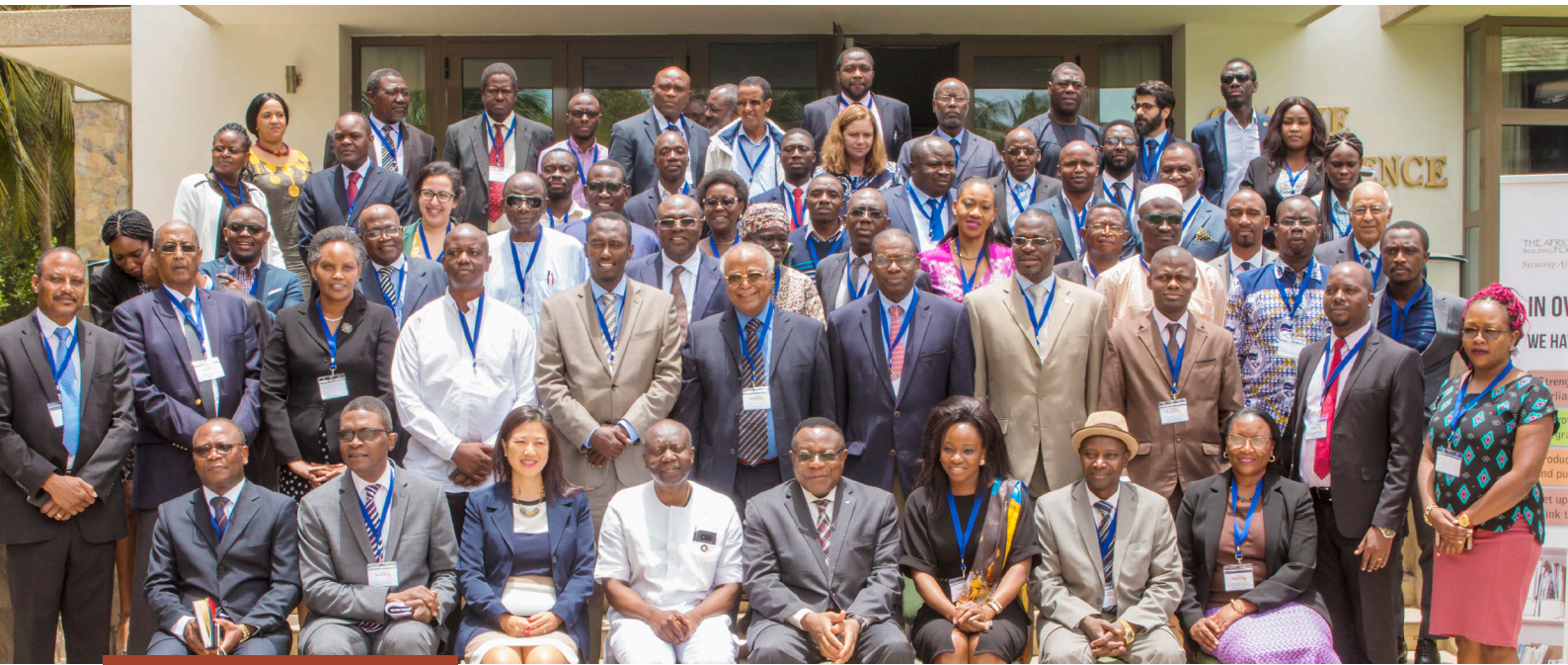




THE AFRICAN CAPACITY BUILDING FOUNDATION | FONDATION POUR LE RENFORCEMENT DES CAPACITES EN AFRIQUE

# The 5<sup>th</sup> Africa Think Tank Summit

5<sup>me</sup> SOMMET DES THINK TANKS D'AFRIQUE | 5-7 April, 2018



## **WANTED: Visionary & Transformative Leadership to Tackle Youth Unemployment**

The 5th Africa Think Tank Summit opened in Accra, Ghana, on 5 April with a call on African leaders to provide “a visionary and transformative leadership” if African countries want to successfully tackle the youth unemployment issues on the continent.

Making the call at the opening ceremony, Prof Emmanuel Nnadozie, the Executive Secretary of ACBF, described the current distressing youth unemployment on the continent as a bomb ready to

explode, and urged African countries to show more interest in business leadership and youth leadership as the youth and private sector are the engine of Africa’s socio-economic transformation.

“Today, it is shown that most of the youth in Africa do not have stable economic opportunities,” Prof Nnadozie said. “An AfDB 2016 publication on ‘Jobs for Youth in Africa’ highlights that of Africa’s nearly 420 million youth aged 15-35, one-third are

unemployed and discouraged, while another one-third are vulnerably employed (informal, low productivity, low-wage).

“To maximize the demographic dividend, we will have to create high-productivity jobs at an average of about 18 million per year until 2035 to absorb the new entrants in the labor force.

Therefore a visionary and transformative leadership is a must if African countries want to successfully tackle the youth unemployment issues,” the head of ACBF said,

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**Prof. Emmanuel Nnadozie, ACBF Executive Secretary**

before asking rhetorically, “do we have the transformative leadership that will tackle youth unemployment?”

According to Prof Nnadozie, African countries have come to the realization that nothing can be achieved if the poor political leadership syndrome is not addressed.

“Transformative leadership is largely linked to the performance of any nation, as it translates into prudent public policy formulation and implementation, as well as good public service delivery, to meet the needs and aspirations of citizens,” the ACBF Executive Secretary argued, adding that: “Political leadership has generally been criticized as the key obstacle to Africa’s socio-economic development and democratic governance with not much contribution from bureaucratic, traditional, and corporate leadership.”

And because of the hugely important place leadership occupies in African development, Prof Nnadozie was very particular about the need for a more visionary and

transformative leadership that will bring more youth-targeted innovative and entrepreneurial programs into continental, regional, and national development plans.

“The youth are Africa’s biggest single asset but also its greatest challenge ever,” the ACBF Executive Secretary reminded the continent. “As indicated in a 2017 ACBF study on youth unemployment in Africa, the continent’s youth population is rapidly growing and expected to double to over 830 million, representing 29% of the total world youth by 2050.

“If properly harnessed, the increase in the youthful population could support increased productivity and stronger, more inclusive economic growth across the continent. But if not properly harnessed, it can become a time bomb, in fact it is already a bomb ready to explode.”

The situation, according to Prof Nnadozie, is unsustainable because about 10 million young Africans enter the labor market every year but less than 22% is absorbed by the African public

sector and less than 8% by the private sector due to either low or un-matching skill sets.

The remaining 70% become unemployed and pose a grave danger to national and societal stability.

Prof Nnadozie therefore called on African countries to create mechanisms to engage the youth in all policy and program design, planning, implementation, and evaluation concerning youth employment.

The countries should also establish tripartite partnerships (government, private sector, youth groups) and youth-to-youth specific partnerships for better exchange of innovative business ideas and possible creation of youth revolving funds.

Prof Nnadozie pledged ACBF’s continued support to the crafting of national policies and programmes that target the development of the required critical skills that the youth need to overcome the dire unemployment situation hampering their future.



## THE GREAT PARADOX

*... How Africa faces massive youth unemployment in the midst of serious shortages of key technical skills*

Ghana's Finance Minister, Honourable Ken Ofori-Atta, a member of the ACBF Board of Governors, has said given the important contribution that African think tanks make to the socio-economic transformation of the continent, they need to be trusted, utilized and supported.

Giving the keynote address at the opening of the 5th Africa Think Tank Summit in Accra, Ghana, on 5 April, Hon Ofori-Atta said as Africans continued to shape their own future and take their own destiny in their own hands, African governments should mainstream the use of local think tanks to deliver on the various agenda and development plans.

"Think tanks in Africa can and should make significant contributions to the

design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of innovative economic and social policies," the Finance Minister said.



H.E. Prof Victor Harison,  
Commissioner of Economic  
Affairs, AUC

"For instance," he continued, "in every country think tanks should be leading in advising on the adequate fiscal policies for long-term and inclusive economic growth, the required policies for financial sector regulations to prevent

crises yet conducive to promoting needed financial innovations, and the effective ways for public sector management."

Turning to youth unemployment, the theme for the 5th Think Tank Summit, Ghana's Finance Minister bemoaned the fact that while 10 to 12 million youth enter the workforce each year in Africa, only 3.1 million jobs are created, leaving vast numbers of youth unemployed.

"Consequently, we see hundreds of thousands of young people leaving the continent." Hon Ofori-Atta said. "Migration and related challenges are indeed caused by discontent with the social situation and a lack of decent job opportunities.

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# Participants at the Summit





## 5th Africa Think Tank Summit Tackles Youth Unemployment

The Africa Think Tank Summit, a creation of the ACBF, brings together annually more than 40 think tanks across the continent, most of them created and supported by the ACBF, to discuss and proffer solutions to pertinent issues affecting African development.

The Summit has since become an important platform for sharing knowledge and good practices while defining solutions to ensure that African think tanks play their role in supporting the continent's socio-economic transformation.

The theme for this year's Summit is "Tackling Africa's youth unemployment challenge: innovative solutions from think tanks".

The aim is to inform decision makers and solution-seekers on how think tanks can and will support the fight against youth unemployment by paying special attention to dimensions around transformative leadership development, and providing a conducive environment for a thriving private sector, and the development of critical

skills required by the labor market.

Since the first Summit was held in Pretoria, South Africa, in 2014 attended by 50 participants, it has grown today to over 200 participants including not only think tanks but also policymakers, academics, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the youth.

In the past four years, the Summit has resulted in building capacities and has come up with policy recommendations on issues related to industrialization in Africa as well as on partnerships for the sustainability of the think tanks themselves.

No wonder the Summit has attracted enormous support from a great cadre of ACBF partners, namely, the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank (AfDB), the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency, and the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA).

This year, because of the

importance the Summit has accreted over the past four years, more partners have come forward to support it. The new partners include the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Think Tank Initiative (TTI), the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Regional Network of Agricultural Policy Research Institutes (ReNAPRI), and the Alliance for African Partnership.

"We are hopeful that through the African Think Tank Network, housed at ACBF, we will continue to promote think-tanking," said Prof Emmanuel Nnadozie, the Executive Secretary of ACBF, in his welcoming remarks. "In fact, our gathering today gives me comfort that going forward, all African governments and key continental bodies and development partners will give more support to these strategic institutions given their role in shaping policy and public life."

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## The Great Paradox *Continued from Page 3*

“Overall, the World Employment Social Outlook 2018 shows that the share of people willing to move abroad remained the highest in sub-Saharan Africa, at 32.1% in 2016 (against 30% in Latin America). While African governments are under pressure to resolve the youth unemployment challenges given its criticality, think tanks should also be under the same as per their mandate and function.”

Hon Ofori-Atta therefore called on all development partners (starting with African governments and private sector) to support ACBF in its efforts to coordinate the building of human and institutional capacities, including the efforts for tackling youth unemployment challenges (which includes coordinating a critical skills development program) based on its extensive 27 years’ experience.

Before Hon Ofori-Atta took the podium, the ACBF Executive Secretary, Prof Emmanuel Nnadozie had spoken about “the great paradox” facing the African continent whereby while there is a high and troubling youth unemployment right across the continent, leading to the formation of Associations of Unemployed University Graduates in some African countries, the continent is yet grappling with serious shortages of key technical skills.

“To put this in proper context,” Prof Nnadozie said, “an ACBF study on the capacity requirements for the implementation of the first 10 years of Agenda 2063 indicates that Africa currently has only around 55,000 engineers but needs an estimated 4.3 million engineers, hence [the continent] needs to produce over 300,000 each year until 2023.

“The continent currently has only around 21,000 geologists but needs an estimated 174,000 geologists, meaning we need to produce 19,000 each year until 2023. The continent currently only has around 82,000 agricultural scientists but needs an estimated 152,000, so it needs to produce over 8,000 each year

until 2023. The question is then why are the young people unemployed?”

The Head of ACBF therefore called for clear action plans to support think tanks to be sustainable so that they can provide effective contribution to the implementation of the AU Agenda 2063 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), while supporting African countries by providing home-grown solutions to the continent’s development plans.

“We at ACBF are committed to making African think tanks strategic intellectual partners and reliable institutions in the provision of home-grown solutions to youth unemployment challenges for Africa’s socio-economic transformation,” Prof Nnadozie promised.

“I hence call upon all continental key stakeholders and African governments to provide the necessary political and financial support toward ACBF (which is the African Union’s Specialized Agency for Capacity Development) and the African Union Commission (especially its Human Resources, Science and Technology Commission) to coordinate and work with the think tanks on the proposed initiatives and strategies aimed at tackling youth unemployment in Africa.”



**Ms Thato Kgatlhanye, CEO & Founder,  
Rethaka (South Africa)**



## Private Sector Key To Creating Employment For African Youths - University Don

A larger and more productive private sector is a necessity if Africa is to create adequate jobs for the younger generation, a university don said.

At the 5th Africa Think Tank summit in Accra, Prof. Chinedum Nwajiuba, Vice Chancellor of the Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike in Nigeria, said a larger and more productive private sector is critical in order to guarantee sustainable employment for millions of Africans.

Two-thirds of under-employed or unemployed young people in developing and transition countries into which Africa belongs account for 90 percent of the world's population of young people. The reasons for this include absence of enough jobs and lack of access to the labor market due to their lack of qualifications, work experience and networks, he said.

To solve the problem, he called on African think tanks to act as an intermediary in ensuring that the private sector adequately participates in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and programs for youth employment.

The private sector can also play an important role in raising-awareness, generating and disseminating information, and mobilizing support around youth employment issues, Prof.

Nwajiuba said. They can also help in identifying the training and general skills required by private sector and facilitating their inclusion in the education and training system. Still, think tanks could be relevant by:

- Organizing demand-driven training programs in core youth-sensitive sub-sectors. These include ICT, entertainment, hospitality, incorporating tourism, hotels and restaurants, and agriculture for first-time job seekers who lack on-the-job training.
- Advocating for economic environment that is business-friendly to enhance job expansion by the private sector.
- Ensuring the inclusion of the private sector in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes for youth employment.
- Ensure that employment projects are multi-sectoral, and that economic opportunities are also expanded to rural youth.
- Systematically overhauling the outdated human resources systems, structures, and processes in the private sector that favour experienced workers without provision for first-time job seekers who lack on-the-job training.

Continuing, Prof Nnadozie said ACBF's independent evaluation conducted in 2013 had shown that think tanks and policy institutes had helped improve African countries' performance in macroeconomic management and entrenching evidence-based policy-making and evaluation.

More importantly, the Executive Secretary said, think tanks, despite their high achievements so far, will need to examine questions such as:

- (a) How can African governments incentivize the private sector to create more jobs and for young Africans to be entrepreneurial?
- (b) What can continental bodies and regional economic communities do to support efforts at individual country levels?
- (c) What are the lessons learned and good practices available in Africa and beyond?
- (d) How do we ensure that the youth programs are well designed, successfully implemented and properly evaluated?
- (e) What are the roles of the development partners, private sector, and other stakeholders in creating jobs for the youth?

The Executive Secretary reiterated ACBF's commitment to making African think tanks strategic intellectual partners and reliable institutions in the provision of home-grown solutions to youth unemployment, and for Africa's socio economic transformation.



Mr. Enrique Mendizabal,  
Director & Founder, On  
Think Tanks (UK & Peru)

# Think Tanks Can Be Part of the Solution To Unemployment

## - Onthinktank.org Founder

African think tanks can be part of the solution to the continent's unemployment problem through collaboration with various interest groups, founder of a leading platform on think tanks, Enrique Mendizabal, said.

Mendizabal, Director of onthinktanks.org, a website which focuses on think tanks worldwide, gave the advice at the 5th Africa think tank summit in Accra.

He counseled with the institutions to work with other organizations and not just only think tanks, in arriving at solutions to the employment issues.

Speaking on what think tanks on the continent need to do to help alleviate youth

unemployment, he advised them to build solutions either by themselves or in partnership with other bodies.

They need to rethink their communications because "what they are planning to do now might not work any longer," he said. He cited the example of Chile where legislation was removed soon after it was introduced following wide criticisms.

Real jobs could be created through new technologies as they offer young people opportunities to work formally, he said. In addition, he urged think tanks to play a role in addressing youth unemployment, driven both by pragmatic and oral arguments. Another option is to reach out to the youth

themselves as a support base, not just as an object of study.

Similarly, studies on the young people should be carried out individually and not as a single group.

Other recommendations made include:

1. Make long term commitment on youth unemployment
2. Develop and nurture partnerships and alliances (build strength in numbers, not just arguments)
3. Build consensus with the youths
4. Encourage a national conversation or dialogue about the problems and the solutions proposed

