



South Centre Statement at AI for Africa Conference

30 September 2025

The South Centre congratulates the South African G20 Presidency, UNESCO, the African Union and other supporting institutions for successfully organizing the AI for Africa Conference.

The South Centre strongly supports the AI for Africa Initiative and commends the African Union's efforts in developing it. This Initiative is timely and important and reinforces the Continental AI Strategy, the AU Data Policy Framework, and the AfCFTA Protocol on Digital Trade.

We appreciate the Initiative's emphasis on coherence across legal, ethical, and technical domains. The South Centre's recent mapping study of Africa's digital governance architecture reaches a similar conclusion. While Africa has made substantial progress in building a layered digital rulebook, ensuring coherence across national strategies, AU frameworks, and AfCFTA disciplines will be essential to avoid fragmentation and policy misalignment.

The development and adoption of AI becomes even more urgent in a global context where control over the world's data and compute remains concentrated in the hands of a few actors. The risk is that the digital divide deepens, leaving African countries without their own digital industries, and dependent on external platforms, tools, and models. The voice of the Global South is therefore critical in shaping global AI governance frameworks, grounded in equity, inclusion, and structural transformation.

To support implementation, we recommend enhancing regulatory readiness, common standards that align with continental goals, and coordinated policymaking among African countries.

Finally, as new financing mechanisms such as the AI for Africa Fund are explored, the South Centre stands ready to offer legal and policy support to ensure they uphold public interest principles, equitable benefit-sharing, and data sovereignty.

The South Centre remains committed to working alongside Africa's institutions and partners to ensure that AI supports inclusive development and advances Africa's voice in global rulemaking.