



Session 4

Africa's Moment: Seeking Greater Continental Integration Amid Persistent Challenges

The Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is the world's largest global free trade area bringing together countries in the continent and establishing a common market for goods and services. Being one of the key projects of the African Union's 'Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want' AfCFTA is expected to turn the continent into a global economic powerhouse by providing an important opportunity to promote investment as well as inclusive economic growth. With Africa continuing to transform at a rapid speed, plans like these highlight the commitment to an integrated, prosperous Africa led by Africans themselves. Moreover, the continent aims to become interconnected not only regionally but also globally.

However, despite the ambition, severe challenges continue to hinder the prospect of progress and development. Cross-cutting issues such as climate change, demographic expansion, urbanisation and migration combined with armed conflicts and violence are major impediments that require the development and implementation of interlinked strategies. Taking the diverse and complex nature of African countries into consideration, this session will explore and analyse the future trajectory of the continent.

Discussion Themes

- **What are the potential benefits of AfCFTA in various areas from industrialisation to economic transformation as well as risks and challenges posed by the project?**
- **How can rapid demographic expansion and urbanisation be turned into an advantage and what are the key stumbling blocks in this regard?**
- **What are the possible prospects of the success of African Union's 'Silencing the Guns' initiative and how do global geopolitical realignments affect ongoing conflicts, in particular given the revival of great power competition on the continent?**
- **What kind of comparative advantage does Africa have in the field of energy and how does this play into various other areas from tackling climate change to ensuring food security?**