POLICY BRIEF: AFRICA AI STAKEHOLDER MEETING

Africa AI Stakeholder Meeting on Innovative Governance and Capacity Building

From Inclusivity to Implementation: Charting Africa's Sovereign AI Future

30th September - 1st October 2025

Accra, Ghana

Introduction

Held in Accra, Ghana in October 2025, the Africa AI Stakeholder Meeting on Innovative Governance and Capacity Building concluded with a powerful, unified mandate: ***Africa must move its AI governance agenda from rhetoric to measurable action.***

The consensus identified a significant opportunity: although Africa accounts for only 2.5% of the global AI market, AI could add up to $2.9 trillion to the continent's economy by 2030, equivalent to a three per cent (3%) increase in annual GDP growth, contingent upon the continent's willingness to proactively shape its own rules and resolve fundamental infrastructural deficits.[1] Stakeholders affirmed that responsible AI must be built on a foundation of capacity and inclusion. This requires a strategic shift in focus, moving away from importing governance models to leading and creating a hybrid framework that balances the need for global technological cooperation with the imperative to secure local economic value and digital autonomy. To achieve this, stakeholders are committed to scaling institutional capacity, embracing experimental regulation, and ensuring no group is excluded from the digital future.

The Africa AI Stakeholder Meeting on Innovative Governance and Capacity Building brought together policymakers, regulators, innovators, academics, civil society, and private-sector leaders from across the continent and beyond to discuss Africa's collective approach to AI governance and capacity development. Over 20 countries were represented, including Ghana, Rwanda, Nigeria, Cape Verde, Uganda, Kenya, Gambia, Togo, South Africa, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Botswana, Mauritius, and Senegal, as well as global partners from Norway, Germany, Brazil, and the United States.

Prior to the main meeting, two focused engagements were held to deepen practical understanding and cross-border collaboration:

- *The Regulators' Workshop - Practical AI Governance Training for Regulators convened regulators*, policymakers, ministry representatives, enforcement bodies, and implementation agencies to strengthen institutional capacity for AI oversight and responsible governance.
- *The Innovators' Roundtable on Catalysing Scalable Innovation and AI-driven Growth in Africa* brought together innovators, ecosystem builders, and entrepreneurs to explore pathways to scale AI solutions that address local challenges and unlock sustainable growth.

Africa has a unique opportunity to position itself as a leading region advancing a coordinated, region-wide agenda on regulatory innovation in the majority world. Achieving this will require the development of a shared, purpose-built agenda that enables meaningful collaboration and sustained collective action across jurisdictions.

This policy brief captures the collective insights and lessons that emerged from these stakeholder engagements.

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[1] GSMA, *AI for Africa: Use Cases Delivering Impact* 8 (London: GSMA, 2024), https://www.gsma.com/solutions-and-impact/connectivity-for-good/mobile-for-development/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/AI-for-Africa-Use-cases-delivering-impact.pdf.

I. Appraising the African AI Imperative

AI represents an unprecedented economic opportunity for Africa and there is significant political will to leverage the potential of AI to drive innovation and competitiveness to advance Africa's economies, industries, and societies.[2] To realize its full potential, the continent must adopt a forward-looking skills strategy and keep pace with rapid technological change.

A. The Call for Inclusion and Leadership

The opening session defined the continental mandate through the lens of inclusion and self-determination. The Founder and Executive Director of the Certa Foundation set the tone by warning that innovation and governance in Africa often move at different speeds, creating risks for citizens. She asserted, *"Inclusivity is not an add-on; it is the measure of whether AI will truly serve all of society,"* underscoring that when women, youth, and underrepresented groups are fully included in shaping technology, new perspectives and solutions emerge.

Rwanda's High Commissioner to Ghana, echoed this sentiment, noting that if African governments are to reap the benefits of AI, *"we must also be willing to govern it wisely, inclusively, and proactively,"* to ensure that the continent avoids "playing catch-up" once again. Stakeholders further stressed that strengthening AI literacy at the leadership level is essential to ensure that scaling efforts remain both inclusive and effective.

B. The Paradox of Potential and Capacity

In a keynote address, the Director of Privacy Policy Africa, the Middle East, and Türkiye at Meta highlighted the critical paradox of Africa's potential, a theme sharply illustrated by the continent's contrasting realities. She noted that, despite Africa holding *"60% of the world's best solar resources,"* 600 million still lack reliable electricity.[3] Similarly, the continent hosts just 1% of global data centres, even as its booming fintech sector continues to grow. As stakeholders such as Npontu Technologies noted, these are not merely statistics; they represent the foundational constraints that will determine whether sovereignty remains an aspiration or becomes a reality. The aspiration for a sovereign AI future must be grounded in an honest assessment of the continent's current position.

These deep contrasts affirm that Africa is uniquely positioned to shape AI on its own terms, provided it converts these inherent advantages into real capacity by addressing foundational infrastructure challenges. This was framed not as a deficit, but as an "Innovation Imperative", a unique combination of urgent challenges that demand that Africa translates this difference into a strength. This is particularly important since, while other regions debate future risks, Africa faces real, immediate problems that AI can solve today.

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[2] Africa Declaration on Artificial Intelligence (Kigali: Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution Rwanda, 2 (Apr. 4, 2025), https://c4ir.rw/docs/Africa-Declaration-on-Artificial-Intelligence.pdf.

[3] International Energy Agency (IEA), World Energy Investment 2024: Africa, in World Energy Investment 2024 (Paris: IEA, 2024), https://www.iea.org/reports/world-energy-investment-2024/africa.

II. Strategic Pathways for Adaptive AI Governance

The meeting underscored the urgency of closing the policy-innovation gap, asserting that Africa cannot afford to replicate past patterns of technological dependence in which innovation outpaces governance. The guiding principles of the Africa Declaration on AI, signed in Kigali, Rwanda, include the adoption of innovative and responsible national AI policies and governance frameworks aligned with the African Union AI Continental Strategy.[4] The focus must be on enabling solutions rather than restricting them, particularly as the continent faces urgent existential risks that AI can help address. Adaptive governance can be the most desirable approach.

In the AI context, adaptive governance is an approach in which regulatory instruments, oversight practices, and policy frameworks evolve in tandem with the technologies they govern. Rather than relying on static rules designed for stable, predictable systems, adaptive governance builds regulatory architectures that are flexible, iterative, and responsive to rapid shifts in capabilities, risk profiles, and societal expectations. This model stands in contrast to traditional governance, which assumes slow-moving technologies and fixed regulatory conditions.

Three features make adaptive governance particularly important for AI systems:

1. **Continuous Feedback and Iterative Adjustment**: Adaptive governance relies on ongoing monitoring and revision to keep pace with rapidly evolving AI systems.
2. **Networked and Multi-Actor Governance**: Convening governments, industry, academia, and civil society enables shared oversight and collective learning.
3. **Flexible Normative Design and Adaptive Pathways**: Setting baseline standards while allowing regulatory approaches to evolve as technologies and risks change.[5]

Discussions focused on practical regulatory philosophies and strategies for managing risks while accelerating innovation, shifting from rigid models to adaptive frameworks. Stakeholders highlighted that streamlined governance, an enabling regulatory environment, and greater investment in local research and infrastructure are critical to building a competitive and thriving economy.

A. Capacity-First Governance and Urgency

The central consensus determined that Africa is *"late, but not losing out,"* as it has taken time to learn from the failures of others. Therefore, the focus must be on enabling solutions over restricting them. In particular, five key strands emerged:

- **Sovereignty Through Autonomy:** The call to lead requires African governments to chart their own journey, rejecting the passive role of "policy-takers." Thus, digital sovereignty is not merely a legal concept; it reflects the nation's capacity to govern itself and make independent decisions while securing economic and social value for its citizens. Speakers acknowledged the importance of data sharing but emphasized the need for regional technical safeguards, such as encryption, tiered access rights, and independent auditing, to be integrated into shared data platforms to maintain sovereignty and strengthen security and interoperability.

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[4] Africa Declaration on Artificial Intelligence (Kigali: Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution Rwanda, 2 (Apr. 4, 2025), https://c4ir.rw/docs/Africa-Declaration-on-Artificial-Intelligence.pdf

[5] Reuel, A., & Undheim, T. A. Generative AI Needs Adaptive Governance (June 6, 2024), https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2406.04554

- **Iterative Regulation:** A broad consensus affirmed that capacity building must be integrated into regulation, enabling iteration and agility while avoiding rigid laws detached from local realities. The urgency is driven by the speed of change: ChatGPT, a leading generative AI tool, reached 100 million users in three months, far outpacing mobile technology (16 years).[6] This rapid adoption renders reactive regulation and policymaking approaches obsolete. Therefore, regulators must develop a strong foundational understanding and prioritize context-specific capacity building. Additionally, the Director of Government Affairs, West Africa, Microsoft, stressed that *"responsible AI cannot exist without intentional capacity building."* Proactive training ensures that when regulations are eventually drafted, they are informed by technical feasibility and grounded in reality, not just legal theory.

- **Job Evolution vs. Displacement**: The dialogue challenged the binary view of AI job displacement, emphasizing the "grey area" of job evolution. For instance, AI may not directly replace lawyers, but lawyers trained in AI who can produce documents faster will outcompete traditional practitioners. An evolution starkly contrasted by the persistence of decades-old practices in some business districts. Policy efforts must focus on identifying jobs that require skill upgrades to leverage AI, ensuring the labour market adapts proactively.

- **Intentional Upskilling**: Private sector partners highlighted successful models, emphasizing that *"responsible AI cannot exist without intentional capacity building."* Acknowledging the urgency of preparing the workforce for a future where AI serves as the new general-purpose technology, stakeholders pointed to general upskilling programs, such as training over 690,000 people in Nigeria since 2021, designed to bring learners to a common baseline.[7]

- **Enablement over Restriction**: Speakers emphasized that the AU Continental AI Strategy is designed to promote enablement rather than restriction. A key insight was that Africa must prioritize policy approaches that *"enable this faster while mitigating risks"* rather than asking *"How can we control this better?"* This philosophy demands a proportional, risk-based approach that enables innovators to solve urgent local problems while establishing clear boundaries to protect rights.

- **Leveraging Partnerships:** To chart a sovereign AI future while leveraging partnerships effectively, Npontu Technologies proposed that African governments and institutions should negotiate from collective strength, noting that individual countries and institutions lack bargaining power against global technology giants. Regional blocs must pool resources, standardise ethics frameworks, and negotiate collectively. The African Union's Continental AI Strategy provides a foundation, but implementation requires coordinated action across member states.

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[6] World Bank, Digital Progress and Trends Report 2025 (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2025), https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/d2ac1ea9-b70e-4080-b5de-8b31098e992f/content

[7] Debbie Badham, *During the AI Tour in Lagos, Microsoft Deepens its Commiment to Advance Digital Skills in Nigeria EMEA*, (Feb. 24, 2025), https://news.microsoft.com/source/emea/features/during-the-ai-tour-in-lagos-microsoft-deepens-its-commitment-to-advancing-digital-skills-in-nigeria.

B. Technology-Informed Governance and Regulatory Blueprint

The meeting underscored that, given the speed and systemic nature of AI, governance cannot be purely reactive or legalistic; it must be informed by technology architecture and universal safety principles, including Microsoft's Responsible AI Principles. These include Fairness, Reliability & Safety; Privacy & Security; Inclusiveness; Transparency; and Accountability.

- Stakeholders reflected on Microsoft's five-point blueprint for governing AI:

    a. Implement and build upon government-led AI safety standards.
    b. Require safety brakes for AI systems that control critical infrastructure.
    c. Develop a broader legal and regulatory framework based on the technology architecture itself.
    d. Promote transparency and ensure academic and public access to foster trust.
    e. Pursue new public-private partnerships to leverage AI as an effective tool to address societal challenges.

- **Multistakeholder and Risk-Based Approach:** Effective governance requires a multistakeholder approach to reveal policy blind spots. Regulation must adopt a proportionate, risk-based approach, avoid blanket restrictions, and leverage existing legal measures rather than rely on single, rigid AI laws that cannot promote safe, secure, and inclusive innovation. The cross-domain sessions demonstrated that AI governance is not a one-size-fits-all solution, as AI's impacts often transcend traditional boundaries, necessitating a coordinated approach across multiple regulatory bodies (e.g., Data Protection, Competition, and Standards Authorities).

C. Pragmatic Digital Sovereignty and Resilience

The discussion moved beyond simple infrastructure control, emphasizing that sovereignty must be practical, resilient, and focused on value retention.

- **Nuanced Sovereignty:** Attendees appreciated the nuanced conversations about what "sovereignty," "resilience," and "localization" truly mean, acknowledging that there are "no single paths forward" and no easy solutions. The consensus reinforced that unique African contexts and priorities need bespoke, relevant solutions.

- **Hybrid Strategy and Value Retention:** Stakeholders urged governments to adopt a hybrid strategy that uses data classification and sovereign cloud solutions to maximize the efficiency of public cloud services without isolating Africa from its critical role in creating economic value and participating meaningfully in the global economy. The core question posed was: *"The person creating the data should be the one to receive the value. Where is the value from?"* underscoring that sovereignty must secure economic value for African citizens.

- **Building Foundational Capacity**: The focus on digital sovereignty and technological resilience requires immediate action to build, fund, and strengthen national capacities, including investments in connectivity, data centres, and energy generation to support local talent and datasets.

Stakeholders stressed that data should be treated as a strategic asset, with investment directed toward building trusted repositories and equitable data-sharing frameworks that safeguard communities. This approach decouples sovereignty from mandatory physical localization, promoting resilience and regional interoperability.

- **Data Embassies and Hubs:** To address the severe lack of local data centres and computing power, working groups proposed Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) centered on alternative infrastructure models, including shared regional hubs and data embassies; defined as data centers in foreign jurisdictions under the full legal sovereignty of the originating country, secured through binding international agreements.[8] Drawing inspiration from the success of Estonia's pioneering 2017 data embassy in Luxembourg,[9] stakeholders discussed the role of regional data embassies in encouraging countries to share financial and operational resources to invest in shared data infrastructure.

III. Advancing Implementation: Learning, Collaboration, and Action

The focus shifted to how institutions can translate policy theory into practical, actionable steps on the ground, particularly within regulatory bodies.

A. Operational Oversight: DPAs on the Frontline

African Data Protection Authorities (DPAs) play a crucial role in setting the baseline for AI governance, often serving as de facto regulators for AI and digital transformation in the absence of dedicated laws. Speakers noted the convergence of AI and data governance, underscoring the need for cross-sector coordination to ensure privacy is embedded as a foundational design principle rather than a secondary consideration.

- **Proactive Compliance and Experimentation:** African Data Protection Authorities (DPAs) are charting their own journeys in AI regulation. Some DPAs are actively fulfilling their role by requiring Data Protection Impact Assessments and the deployment of technical and organisational measures before technology deployment. It also encourages experimentation by allowing innovators to demonstrate their work directly to the DPA. Togo DPA shared that they conduct awareness programs and practical demonstrations to ensure that principles are not merely documented on paper but translated into real practice.

- **Targeted Oversight and Collaboration:** The Cape Verde DPA shared its specialized approach of conducting impact evaluations when Automated Decision-Making (ADM) involves sensitive data in the healthcare sector, a focus backed by dedicated training. The Nigerian DPA is actively collaborating with other national agencies, including the National Human Rights Commission, to integrate human rights considerations into its work.

- **Addressing Complexity:** Authorities acknowledged the profound technical challenge of operationalising the right to deletion on trained AI systems, recognizing that data's influence is embedded in the model's parameters.

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[8] See Generally, Matinou, S. F., I. Acquah, R. Oloyede, A. J. Kabatsi, P. Mitra, and C. Tucker, *Beyond Borders: Exploring Data Embassies as a Strategy for Digital Sovereignty in Africa,* Version 3 APSA Preprints (Aug. 5, 2025), https://preprints.apsanet.org/engage/apsa/article-details/6890b12c23be8e43d6b625fa.

[9] See Generally, Matinou, S. F., I. Acquah, R. Oloyede, A. J. Kabatsi, P. Mitra, and C. Tucker, *Beyond Borders: Exploring Data Embassies as a Strategy for Digital Sovereignty in Africa*, Version 3 APSA Preprints (Aug. 5, 2025), https://preprints.apsanet.org/engage/apsa/article-details/6890b12c23be8e43d6b625fa.

While acknowledging the difficulty of holding those responsible accountable, especially when AI "hallucinates", authorities stressed that accountability must remain central. This unique role makes peer knowledge exchange and sharing among DPAs the most critical tool for addressing shared challenges and ensuring a harmonized, robust approach across the continent.

B. Experimental Governance and The Societal Purpose of AI

The meeting concluded that two practical pillars, experimental regulation and core infrastructure, are the primary barriers to realizing AI's potential.

- **Embrace Experimental Regulation and Learning:** The discussion on regulatory learning and experimentation clarified that not every African country will need a regulatory sandbox. However, experimental models remain an effective tool for *"learning while doing" and "understanding AI nuances for each country's regulatory journey."* The challenge is to ensure that lessons from these experiments do not remain isolated within individual jurisdictions.

What Africa requires is a broader conception of regulatory learning that extends beyond countries learning from their own pilots: it must also encompass the systematic absorption of lessons, ideas, and insights generated by others.[10] Translating multiple national experiments into shared regional knowledge is essential to avoiding duplication, strengthening institutional capabilities, and ensuring that regulatory practices evolve to reflect Africa's diverse contexts and priorities. This is precisely where academic and research centers can serve as a critical regulatory learning infrastructure.

The speakers noted that shared innovation hubs could foster regional collaboration, reduce duplication, and optimize available resources. Additionally, policy experimentation, such as sunset clauses, policy prototyping, and policy red teaming (a lower-cost alternative to sandboxes), is essential to prevent perpetual planning.[11] Participants emphasized that successful sandboxes require sustained commitment from senior stakeholders, clear exit reports, and shared data to avoid becoming a *"waste of opportunity."*

- **AI for Societal Purpose:** A strong theme that ran through every conversation was the call for technology that aligns with societal goals and purposes. This entails leveraging technology to solve public problems and improve people's lives, rather than focusing solely on its economic value. The openness to collaborating across borders, sectors, and disciplines was deeply inspiring, confirming that vibrant ecosystems that foster open, flexible innovation are key to governing AI equitably.

- **Addressing Pervasive Bias in African Datasets:** A significant challenge identified across working groups is the prevalence of bias in foreign datasets that fail to reflect Africa's rich linguistic, cultural, and demographic makeup.

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[10] Gasser, U., & Mayer-Schönberger, V. (2024). *On the shoulders of others: The importance of regulatory learning in the age of AI. Virginia Journal of Law & Technology,* 28(1), *https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e793709295d7b60295b2d29/t/678a8a5f088d4e6288ea4353/173713264.*

[11] Guio, A. (2024). *Regulatory sandboxes in developing economies: An innovative governance approach* (LC/TS.2024/59). Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/80496-regulatory-sandboxes-developing-economies-innovative-governance-approach.

This systemic issue necessitates Independent Data Auditing to ensure data collection methods and training sets cover all population facets. Crucially, the continent must actively promote the open-sourcing of African Datasets and foster the creation of local data repositories with reasonable pricing models to train culturally relevant AI models. Speakers also stressed the importance of embedding African languages and cultural contexts into AI systems. Finally, accessibility must be embedded from the product design inception stage, ensuring that AI solutions do not inadvertently reinforce existing digital divides or marginalize communities.

IV. Insights from the Innovators' Roundtable

The role of innovators in realising the promise of AI cannot be overestimated. A parallel session, co-hosted by Certa Foundation and Npontu Technologies, in partnership with Innovation Spark, convened African innovators to explore the challenges and opportunities from their unique perspectives, with a focus on capital deployment, commercial viability, and pathways to scale homegrown AI innovations. The discussion noted that, although African tech startups are seeing significant investments ($4 billion in 2023), investments in AI still represent a minority of total tech investments. In addition, female African AI founders are disproportionately affected.[12]

Insights gleaned from the Innovators' Roundtable highlighted the following:

- **Investor confidence:** Innovators noted that many investors still struggle to understand how to operate in African markets. Investors do not just invest in projections; they invest in trust, which is built through transparency, "localized credibility", and predictable regulations.

- **Regulatory focus:** Innovators highlighted the need for better engagement with regulators and policymakers to streamline challenges that hinder their business mandates, including fragmented logistics, expensive and limited data, widespread illiteracy in rural areas (especially taking into account the myriad of local African languages and the prevalence of English-centric applications), and the failure to prioritize local solutions over imported US/European models.

- **Avoid AI washing:** There was also pushback on the perceived "AI washing": existing challenges should be assessed to determine whether AI or other digital tools can effectively augment or resolve the specific problem, rather than simply pushing AI technology.

- **The role of networks:** Innovators touted the importance of formal networks for AI, which enable them to share their work and challenges and foster a reciprocal circle where they can receive support and guidance beyond funding, including peer interaction and practical support with corporate governance, legal and regulatory compliance, and investment readiness.

- **Redefining scalability:** Innovators concluded that African innovators must redefine scalability beyond "expansion," ensuring a broader view that accounts for the breadth of scaling trust, product-market fit, and infrastructure before expanding into multiple geographies.

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[12] GSMA, AI for Africa: *Use Cases Delivering Impact, 63* (London: GSMA, July 2024), https://www.gsma.com/solutions-and-impact/connectivity-for-good/mobile-for-development/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/AI-for-Africa-Use-cases-delivering-impact.pdf.

- **Develop local talent and opportunities:** African innovators highlighted the need for support to build ventures and develop local talent that reflects the continent's aspirations. Npontu Technologies highlighted remote work opportunities, empowered by organisations such as Zindi, which produce global talent.[13] Building sustainable ventures ultimately strengthens African ecosystems by attracting local talent and accelerating knowledge transfer. Governments must partner with and empower these programmes, and create regulatory environments that enable their viability.

V. Policy Recommendations: Actionable Steps for Implementation

The reflections across the Accra events distilled the insights gained into clear, actionable goals for governments, regulators, the private sector, and development partners:

1. Prioritise Foundational Infrastructure and Talent

- **Investment Focus:** Commit to addressing the power infrastructure crisis, particularly through renewable energy initiatives, as this is one of the largest constraints on AI development and data center capacity.
- **Talent Pipeline:** Intentionally invest in STEM education, capacity building, the continent's education sector, African universities, and upskilling programs to create a globally competitive workforce.

2. Mandate Capacity Before Regulation

- **Supervisory Plans:** Regulators must move from high-level strategy to creating clear supervisory action plans for the most urgent AI use cases in priority sectors across their jurisdictions (e.g., agriculture, financial inclusion, health diagnostics).
- **Technical Expertise:** Formally mandate the use of Impact Assessments for high-risk AI systems and invest in the technical capacity required by regulators to perform algorithmic audits.

3. Formalise Cross-Sectoral and Peer Collaboration

- **Regional Cooperation and Policy Harmonisation:** Establish formal regional mechanisms and structures for peer knowledge exchange among DPAs and other key regulators to address shared technical and legal challenges rapidly. Regional collaboration is key to harmonizing AI regulation and accelerating digital transformation across Africa, strengthening the continent's digital economy and ensuring seamless scalability for businesses, particularly African AI Startups.

- **Inter-Agency Governance:** Institutionalise cooperation between national and regional agencies (e.g., DPAs, competition bodies, human rights commissions) to ensure a holistic, multi-layered regulatory approach to AI.

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[13] Cisco, *AI and the Workforce in Africa: Realizing the Region's Potential Through Public and Private Sector Collaboration,* 10-11 (with Carnegie Mellon University Africa, 2025), https://newsroom.cisco.com/c/dam/r/newsroom/pdfs/Cisco-CMU-Whitepaper_AI-and-the-Workforce-in-Africa.pdf.

4. Adopt Experimental Governance Models and Learning Approaches

- **Adaptive Tools:** Regulators should move beyond delayed reaction by employing adaptive and experimental models, such as policy prototyping, innovation hubs, regulatory sandboxes, and other small-scale pilots, that enable safe testing and co-creation of rules with innovators and developers, while accelerating the implementation of these pilots.

- **Learning Culture:** Foster a culture of learning and adaptation, ensuring that experimental programs generate public data and reports that feed back into improved policy and regulatory standards. Expanding the platform and regulatory learning infrastructure is a shared objective for governments and multiple stakeholders, including research centers and academic institutions.

5. Institutionalise Inclusion and Value Retention

- **Exclusion is Non-Negotiable:** Governing AI responsibly means excluding no group in the design, development, and deployment of AI systems. This must be a verifiable metric, not just a principle. Embedding African languages and cultural contexts into AI systems is essential to ensure their relevance, inclusivity, and effectiveness.

- **Value Alignment:** Ensure digital sovereignty strategies focus on securing economic value for African citizens and maximizing the benefits of locally generated data. Stakeholders emphasized that National strategies should set clear guidelines on where training data is sourced, how it is managed, and who has access to it. Such measures will help protect citizens, reinforce data sovereignty, and strengthen the credibility of AI system outputs.

6. Enhance regional coordination and collaboration

- **Regional coordination:** leverage existing bodies, such as the Network of African Data Protection Authorities, to build a robust, continent-wide network of regulators, data protection authorities (DPAs), innovators, and AI professionals to enhance coordination, reduce duplication, and create opportunities for best-practice sharing.

- **Knowledge Sharing Commission:** Regulators should actively share their insights and lessons learned publicly to combat knowledge fragmentation. This proactive sharing is necessary to prevent situations in which institutions discover that others are already working on similar initiatives in isolation.

- **Establish NoC Africa Regional Hub:** Multiple stakeholders expressed support for the idea of the Global Network of Internet and Society Centers (NoC) creating an African Regional Hub within its network, dedicated to advancing African priorities in AI and digital governance, strengthening regional collaboration, fostering African-led research capable of shaping global digital policy, and increasing collaboration and coordination with other hubs around the world. This could help amplify the region’s voice and the perspectives of its authorities in global AI governance discussions.

7. Proactively engage Innovators

- **Build synergies with Regulators:** Develop platforms that enable constructive engagement between Innovators and Regulators, ensuring regulations empower AI Innovators to address critical challenges that hinder local growth, scaling, and innovation to ensure they are empowered to contribute meaningfully to Africa's socio-economic growth, creation of dignified jobs and solving some of the continent's most pressing needs in critical sectors such as agriculture, health, education and finance.

- **Leverage academia-private-sector expertise:** Given the rapidly changing nature of technology, build strong partnerships with academia and the private sector to ensure diverse perspectives inform policymaking, and promote formal and informal peer-learning networks to enhance AI readiness.

Conclusion and Forward Commitments

The Africa AI Stakeholder Meeting successfully galvanized a broad coalition of stakeholders around a shared, action-oriented vision. The path forward is defined by local relevance, institutional capacity, and a clear rejection of dependency. The core commitment is to shift the conversation from following global trends to leading them, with a focus on enablement and building bridges.