

High-Level Forum Africa – Europe
“Taking cooperation to the digital age”

Vienna, Austria, December 18, 2018

Austria holds the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second half of 2018. True to the conclusions of the European Council on June 28, 2018, Europe needs to take the extent and the quality of its cooperation with Africa to a new level, moving beyond focusing on migration as a common challenge. Austria wants to contribute to this aim.

President Kagame of Rwanda is the Chairman of the African Union for 2018. As an advocate for the advancement of an African single digital market, he has emphasized that a pathway to prosperity for all Africans, especially young people can only be achieved by infusing African economies with technology, collaborating with Africa’s private sector.

Therefore President Kagame and Chancellor Kurz have decided to call for a High-Level Forum to provide a space for European and African leaders, together with CEOs of major global companies, innovation champions and start-ups and other stakeholders to reflect and act on what needs to be done to deepen the relationship in all its aspects with a specific focus on taking our cooperation to the digital age, and to secure prosperity and competitiveness on both continents.

The High-Level Forum will promote **innovation and digitalization** as important enablers for our future development, so that everyone can benefit from the ongoing digital transformation. It aims at assessing how current partnerships between Africa and Europe contribute to this goal, complementing the ongoing implementation of the joint declaration of the 2017 Abidjan Summit of the African Union and the European Union, which inter alia highlighted the importance of unlocking the potential of the digital economy for Africa and Europe. It also aims at contributing to the Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs announced by President Juncker in his recent State of the Union speech.

The High-Level Forum will highlight the untapped potential for deepening the partnership in technology exchange and trade and their importance for economic growth, creating employment opportunities, building resilient societies and fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals. In order to harness this potential, political will is crucial for shaping the necessary conditions for investment and innovation.

The forum will take place on December 18, 2018. Together with President Kagame, Chancellor Kurz will open the Forum at the Austria Center Vienna. During the high level segment, leaders and CEOs will be invited to share their vision on the current state and future cooperation between Africa and Europe regarding innovation and digitalization.

This will be followed by three parallel round tables, focused on key themes linked to innovation for the digital age in Africa. Proposed themes are

- Education and skills to create jobs for the 21st Century
- Agriculture 4.0.
- Financial Technology (FinTec)

In the afternoon, parallel roundtables will cover topics like successful private financing of start-ups, the role of technology in improving health outcomes, access to sustainable energy for all, smart urbanization – mega cities, as well other relevant topics.

The Forum will be accompanied by an innovation fair, where young entrepreneurs and innovators will present their concepts and solutions for the digital age. A lot of innovation is happening both in Africa and in Europe, many creative start-ups are providing solutions for different emerging challenges, and this will be an opportunity to showcase them.

Participants will consist of European and African heads of state and government accompanied by relevant ministers, CEOs of highly agile and innovative European and African companies, representatives of start-ups and innovative enterprises, investors, as well as development partners, both bilateral and multilateral, including the United Nations and the International Financial Institutions and representatives of the civil society.