Developing Africa-wide innovation

KIGALI, Rwanda - Building robust ecosystems of innovation is on the agenda of the 2018 Africa Innovation Summit which opened today in Kigali.

Africa Innovation Summit.

The [Africa Innovation Summit](#) (AIS) will continue until 8 June 2018. AIS II will focus on innovative and disruptive solutions to the major challenges facing African countries, which include energy access, water, food insecurity, health systems, and governance.

As a platform for multi-stakeholder dialogue and actions, AIS II is Africa's only summit on innovation that seeks to foster action-driven dialogue between African innovators and stakeholders in Government, private sector, civil society and academia to ensure African solutions are concretely given the opportunity to scale in a measurable way.

"The challenge facing Africa is building robust ecosystems of innovation. I am happy that AIS is helping our countries build a culture of innovation as a way of life. It is a critical element of development and economic growth. In Rwanda, we will be launching a research and innovation fund to address the key needs of our country. Resolutions and recommendations from AIS will play a key role," said Prime Minister Edouard Ngirente, who opened the summit.

Simba Mhuriro, an innovator and speaker from Zimbabwe, challenged African governments to support innovators who are tackling Africa's major challenges: "To our leaders, 20 years from now, how will you explain it to us if most of us innovators

are employees instead of entrepreneurs driving Africa's development forward?"

He said, "Local innovations can only be local if the benefits are realised in Africa. Governments have to create regulations that allow financial institutions to fund African innovators at a large scale."

The summit will create a community of innovators that will not only meet to dialogue on solutions but also create ecosystems that will enable them to share ideologies beyond the summit.

Africa's top 50 innovators announced
24 May 2018

Dr Olugbenga Adesida, co-director of AIS, said, "The AIS puts African innovators front and centre. They are the people working daily to identify Africa's challenges and develop appropriate solutions to create the continent we all want to see in the future. They do this with very little local support. The basic fact is that Africa cannot outsource its development.

"We aim to change this by not only creating dialogue around the challenges and opportunities our innovators face, but also to foster concrete, multi-stakeholder action to support and scale their businesses. We will all be better off if African innovators are provided with conducive ecosystems to thrive."

From 600 applications from 44 countries, a selected group of 50 innovators will have a unique opportunity to engage stakeholders in discussing potential solutions to some of the blockages that are preventing solutions from going to scale.

Africa-wide initiative

AIS is an Africa-wide and home grown initiative aimed at harnessing the innovation potential of the continent. It aims to mobilise people with the 'power to act', including investors, innovators, policy makers, researchers and academics, the business community, the youth, as well as thought leaders and thinkers into a coalition for collective action to promote and build an enabling environment for innovation in Africa.

The goal is to engage as many people as possible in order to build a broad constituency in support of innovation in Africa. The AIS platform includes regular Summits to promote dialogue, facilitate exchange of best practices among stakeholders and African countries, showcase what is happening on the continent, and share lessons of experience.

The platform also includes engaging with African researchers and scholars to undertake case studies to tease out lessons of experience in order to facilitate learning by stakeholders.

The African Innovation Exhibit which is also part of the AIS provides a stage to showcase homegrown innovations and innovators on the continent, while the hackathons will challenge the people to come up with solutions to specific problems. The exhibitions and hackathons will allow stakeholders to seek ways to scale up potential solutions.

Each summit will build on the previous ones by deepening the dialogue, engaging a wider number of stakeholders, as well as focusing Africa's innovation potential to address the challenges facing the continent. The aims are to identify path breaking ideas and disruptive solutions to be developed and/scaled up in Africa as well as build a constituency to help address the fundamental challenges facing the continent.