



UNITED NATIONS  
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

Speech  
by  
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Director General

at  
Africa Industrialization Day 2019  
Wednesday, 20 November 2019,  
VIC, Vienna

Excellencies

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

I am honoured to welcome all of you to the 30th celebration of Africa Industrialization Day.

I am pleased that UNIDO is celebrating this year's Africa Industrialization Day in Vienna, jointly with the Office of the United Nations Secretary-General, the United Nations Economic Commission on Africa (UNECA), and the African Union Commission (AUC).

Our annual Africa Industrialization Day celebration represents a unique platform and opportunity for us to enhance international cooperation and foster dialogues on the pan-African industrialization agenda.

This year, the symposium is organized under the theme "Positioning African Industry to supply the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) Market" aligned with the theme of the African Union's Africa Industrialization Week in Addis Ababa.

Over the years, with UNIDO developing, operationalizing and leading the implementation of the Third Industrial Development Decade for Africa (IDDA III), we now have a vision that places Africa on a path towards inclusive and sustainable industrial development (ISID).

With our Member States welcoming our Programme for Country Partnership (PCP) as UNIDO's innovative and unique model for accelerating ISID, we have an established foundation to further support industrialization in Africa. With strong leadership of the

respective governments, we are making the PCP approach work for sustainable development to benefit all.

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The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) provides a platform and a new impetus to Continent's industrialization agenda through increased intra-African trade.

Once operational, the free trade area will cover a market of over 1.2 billion people, and is expected to generate a gross domestic product (GDP) to the tune of \$2.5 trillion. With 55 member States of the African Union, the AfCFTA will be the world's largest free trade area.

The AfCFTA is indeed a golden opportunity to make optimal use of the regional market, develop local and regional value chains to produce products according to international standards. Collective response is critical in order to strive in an internationally competitive environment.

By strengthening country specific and regional comparative advantages in terms of resources, information, knowledge, skills and institutions, Africa can emerge as a strong industrial power in the near future.

Regionally coordinated initiatives, supported by strong political will can help optimize usage of the continent's resources to create a strong infrastructural base and foster manufacturing. For example, the transboundary renewable energy potential stemming from sources such as hydro and solar in Africa is enormous and can lead to the development of value chains and fuel industrialization, trade and progress.

Regional cooperation within the framework of AfCFTA can exploit the huge reservoir of potential resources to create sustainable industrial development as an effective means of fostering transformative change towards greater manufacturing value added and regional integration.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution will play a major role. Digitization offers opportunities to African countries in terms of facilitation of trade and private sector investment to foster growth and create jobs.

In this regard, we need to strengthen the regional industrial innovation system when positioning African industry in the context of the AfCFTA. In an ideal industrial innovation system, institutions will generate new knowledge to be utilized by laboratories and commercialized by a dynamic private sector.

If such an effective innovation system could be created regionally by virtue of the AfCFTA, it would serve as the accelerator towards ISID.

Continuous improvement of products and production systems, maintaining price competitiveness, identification of niche products, exploiting comparative advantages and turning them into competitive advantage, re-training of workers while applying ICT and digital technologies are possible policy options.

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Africa is emerging as a continent of hope, opportunity and transformation. I am sure, the deliberations of distinguished participants and interactions during the symposium will highlight emerging opportunities for the positioning of African industry in the context of

the newly created AfCFTA. I thank our partners, especially the African Union Commission and UNECA for the good collaboration and thank you all for your attention.

Thank you.