

RECOMMENDATION 14 OF 20

CONTINENTAL

Act within 1 year · by 3 May 2027 Dialogue

Agree one African position on how the UN's AI fund is run

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IN BRIEF

- The UN has proposed a Global Fund for artificial intelligence (AI) of about \$3 billion, but no government has pledged money and its rules are still open.
- The AU Commission should draft one African position on who sits on the fund's board, how it buys, and who can apply.
- Gabon and Senegal, whose ministers co-chaired talks at the first UN meeting on governing AI, should lead the drafting.

Why this matters

The Secretary-General's report of 11 September 2026 proposes about \$3 billion over two to four years. The money would pay for computing power, energy, internet links, data and public digital systems. The report names the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria as a model. It leaves the fund's rules to be settled during the current session of the General Assembly. Whoever arrives with a draft will shape those rules.

Africa has seats in this process and no agreed position. Ministers from Gabon and Senegal co-chaired two of the four working groups at the first Global Dialogue in Geneva in July 2026. Yet the AU's priorities for the Assembly did not mention AI, and Tunisia abstained on the vote to set up the UN's scientific panel on AI. Only 17 African countries have national AI strategies.

The fund's design will decide where its money lands. Only 5% of African AI practitioners have the computing power they need. If the fund buys through open global tenders, its money will follow the 99% of data-centre capacity outside Africa. Africa holds 0.6%. A rule that favours joint buying by region, with machines housed in developing regions, would bring the money to Africa.

Sources for this section (9)

- [UN: the proposed Global Fund for AI](#)
- [UN: co-chairs' summary of the first Global Dialogue](#)
- [UNRIC: the vote on the scientific panel](#)
- [OECD: national AI strategies in Africa](#)
- [UNDP: only 5% of African AI talent has enough computing power](#)
- [Africa Data Centres Association: Africa's 0.6% share](#)
- [AU: African ministers declare AI a strategic priority, May 2025](#)
- [AU: ICT ministers adopt the Continental AI Strategy, June 2024](#)
- [Amani Africa: countries suspended from the AU](#)

Four levels of action

1 What Africa asks of the world

Africa asks for three things. It wants seats on the fund's board in line with need. It wants buying rules that favour joint regional purchases and machines housed in developing regions. It wants every grant published and checked by independent evaluators.

WHO	UN member states negotiating the fund
WHEN	Assembly talks during the current session, then the second Global Dialogue on AI Governance, New York, 3 and 4 May 2027

2 What the African Union does

The AU Commission drafts a common position with Smart Africa, the alliance of African governments for digital development. Africa's ministers of information and communications technology (ICT) endorse it. It builds on the AU's Continental AI Strategy of 2024 and the statement on AI that African ministers agreed in Addis Ababa in May 2025.

WHO	The AU Commission, with Smart Africa
WHEN	Draft by February 2027; tabled by March 2027

3 What regional groups do

Africa's four main regional communities collect comments from their members. These are the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central

African States, the East African Community and the Southern African Development Community. This lets countries without an AI strategy shape the text. Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger are suspended from AU activities and cannot join the drafting. As UN members, they can still co-sponsor the text in New York.

WHO

ECOWAS, the Economic Community of Central African States, the East African Community and the Southern African Development Community; the African Group in New York

WHEN

Comments by January 2027



Which country goes first, and why

Gabon and Senegal go first. Their ministers co-chaired the working groups on AI opportunities and on closing gaps in AI at the first Dialogue. They already know the negotiators and the texts.

WHO

The digital ministries of Gabon and Senegal

WHEN

In the Assembly talks by March 2027, and at the Dialogue on 3 and 4 May 2027

Before another country can do this

- ☒ A named official for AI in the digital ministry.
- ☒ A diplomat at the New York mission who covers digital issues.
- ☒ A national AI strategy or policy, or a commitment to adopt one.
- ☒ Willingness to put terms agreed at the UN ahead of separate deals with firms.

What does not carry over from the first country

- The co-chair seats of Gabon and Senegal, and the contacts that came with them.
- Gabon's campaign for a seat on the governing council of the International Telecommunication Union, the UN's telecoms agency, decided in Doha in November 2026.

Who else is ready

COUNTRY	WHY	SOURCE
Rwanda	It hosted the April 2025 summit in Kigali where 49 countries endorsed the Africa Declaration on AI and a \$60 billion Africa AI Fund was launched.	Source
Kenya	Its National AI Strategy of March 2025 names cloud and AI infrastructure as a priority.	Source
Nigeria	It spoke for the African Group on the 2023 tax resolution, the model for this campaign.	Source

Has this worked before?

In November 2023 the African Group, speaking through Nigeria, tabled a resolution to start UN talks on a framework for international tax cooperation. It passed by 125 votes to 48, against the opposition of most rich countries. Africa arrived with a text and a coalition, and it set the agenda. [Source](#)

AU: the General Assembly adopts the tax resolution by 125 votes

First steps

- 1** **AFRICAN UNION** the AU Commission brings together a drafting group of digital ministries, led by Gabon and Senegal, by the end of November 2026.
- 2** **REGIONAL GROUPS** the regional communities return members' comments on a two-page draft by January 2027, and the final text reaches all African missions in New York by February 2027.
- 3** **GABON AND SENEGAL** they present the position in the Assembly's talks on the fund by March 2027, and at the Dialogue on 3 and 4 May 2027.

Who acts, and with what

WHO LEADS	The AU Commission, with Gabon and Senegal as the first countries and the African Group in New York
INSTRUMENT	A common African position tabled in the Assembly's talks and at the May 2027 Dialogue
HOW PROGRESS IS CHECKED	The position tabled with the support of most African states, and at least one African proposal in the fund's rules
SIGNAL TO CHANGE COURSE	Africa arrives in May 2027 without a position
WHAT STANDS IN THE WAY	Many ministries have few AI policy experts. The United States opposes the UN's work on AI, so the fund may start small. Some governments prefer separate deals with firms.
COST AND MONEY	Drafting needs meetings and expert time, which have not been costed. The fund itself is proposed at about \$3 billion over two to four years, and no pledges have been announced.

Who else contributes

WHO	CONTRIBUTION
Gabon and Senegal	Lead the drafting, drawing on their time as co-chairs
The African Group in New York	Negotiate the text and build support
Smart Africa	Link the position to joint buying of cloud and computing power
African AI researchers	Advise on needs for computing power and skills
Data protection authorities	Set the data safeguards the fund should require

What each audience can do

AU and regional bodies

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Bring ministers together and agree the position

WHAT YOU GAIN

A stronger voice in global rules on AI

Governments

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Nominate experts to the drafting group

WHAT YOU GAIN

A say over where AI money goes

Researchers and media

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Supply evidence on gaps in computing power and skills

WHAT YOU GAIN

Research needs reflected in the fund's rules

Philanthropy

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Pay for the drafting group's research and meetings

WHAT YOU GAIN

An early say in a new public fund

NGOs and civil society

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Push for published grants and independent evaluation

WHAT YOU GAIN

A fund that answers to the people it serves

The briefings behind this

Sector · Strong inference

AI and technology

The UN has set up new bodies on artificial intelligence and funded none of them, while Africa's real limits are electricity and buyers who will commit to paying.

[Open the briefing](#)

Sector · Observed

The UN and diplomacy

The UN is shrinking because its largest members do not pay, and Africa entered the one big decision of the year, the choice of the next Secretary-General, divided and with its own candidates trailing.

[Open the briefing](#)

Words used on this page

The Global Fund

An international fund that pays for HIV, tuberculosis and malaria programmes. It raises money from governments and private donors every three years. [Health briefing](#) · [Glossary](#) · [Source: theglobalfund.org](#)

African Union Commission

The African Union's secretariat. It prepares decisions for heads of state and carries them out. [Glossary](#)

Penholder

The Security Council member that leads the drafting and negotiation of decisions on a given crisis. France, the United Kingdom and the United States hold most of these roles. [Our recommendation on this](#) · [Politics and governance briefing](#) · [Glossary](#) · [Source: securitycouncilreport.org](#)

UN Secretary-General

The head of the UN's staff and its main public voice. The Security Council recommends a candidate and the General Assembly appoints them, usually for five years. António Guterres's term ends on 31 December 2026. [The UN and diplomacy briefing](#) · [Glossary](#)

UN General Assembly

The meeting of all 193 UN member states, each with one vote. It meets every year from September. It can make statements, elect members of other bodies and approve the UN budget, but most of what it says does not bind governments. [Glossary](#) · [Source: un.org](#)

UN AI panel and Global Dialogue

Two UN processes on AI agreed in 2025: a scientific panel that reports on AI's risks and uses, and a yearly meeting of governments on how to govern it. A proposed UN fund would pay for AI skills in poorer countries. [AI and technology briefing](#) · [Glossary](#) · [Source: un.org](#)

African Union (AU)

The organisation of 55 African states, based in Addis Ababa. Its heads of state meet each February. It can suspend members after a coup. [Glossary](#) · [Source: au.int](#)

Smart Africa

An alliance of African governments to put digital technology at the centre of development. It began with seven countries, and all AU heads of state endorsed its founding manifesto in January 2014. [Our recommendation on this](#) · [AI and technology briefing](#) · [Glossary](#) · [Source: smartafrica.org](#)

ECOWAS

The Economic Community of West African States. Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger left it in January 2025. [Politics and governance briefing](#) · [Glossary](#)

East African Community

A bloc of eastern and central African states, including Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. [Glossary](#)

The African Group at the UN

The 54 African member states working together as one of the UN's five regional groups. The groups put forward candidates for elections to UN bodies. The African Group itself has no vote on the Security Council. [Our recommendation on this](#) · [The UN and diplomacy briefing](#) · [Glossary](#) · [Source: un.org](#)