



## Africa Leads High-Level Roundtable

*Strengthening African Leadership and Coordination in a Changing Development Cooperation Landscape*

29 April 2026 | Nairobi, Kenya

The global development cooperation landscape is shifting in ways that are becoming harder to ignore. Official Development Assistance (ODA), once treated as a relatively dependable source of financing, is tightening further, becoming less predictable, and increasingly shaped by geopolitical priorities. Recent data shows a sharp drop in aid flows, with Africa among the most affected. This is not just a bad year—it signals a deeper structural shift in how development finance is being allocated.

These trends are unfolding against a backdrop of escalating global crises, including ongoing conflict and instability in the Middle East, which are placing additional pressure on donor priorities and fiscal space. As resources are redirected toward conflict response, humanitarian assistance, energy security, and strategic geopolitical interests, development financing for long-term growth and poverty reduction is being deprioritised. The result is a more constrained and competitive financing environment for African countries.

Across the continent, the effects are already visible. Grant financing is shrinking, support for core development programmes is under pressure, and planning has become more uncertain. At the same time, aid is being redirected in ways that raise difficult questions about whether poverty reduction and sustainable development remain the main drivers of the system.

These pressures are not new in isolation. For years, development cooperation has been marked by fragmentation and weak alignment with national priorities. A large share of resources continues to sit outside country systems, limiting accountability, raising costs, and doing little to strengthen domestic institutions. Many African countries are still working within a system that does not fully reflect their own priorities or ways of working.

What is different now is the pace and direction of change. Africa is facing tighter external financing at the same time that the system itself is shifting. The question is no longer just how to



cope with less aid, but whether the model that has shaped development cooperation for decades is still working—and, if not, what comes next.

It is in this context that Reality of Aid Africa is convening the Africa Leads High-Level Roundtable, in collaboration with AUDA/NEPAD. The timing is deliberate. There is a need to pause, take stock, and think more strategically about how Africa responds. The roundtable brings together a small group of policymakers, institutional leaders, and practitioners to do exactly that—compare perspectives, test ideas, and begin to shape a more coordinated response.

### **Objectives of the Roundtable**

1. Take stock of the changing development cooperation landscape and geopolitics, and what this means in practice for African countries.
2. Clarify Africa’s strategic direction in light of these shifts, including the role of domestic resources, regional approaches, and external financing.
3. Strengthen collective leadership and coordination by identifying how existing efforts can connect and reinforce each other.
4. Shape the role of Africa Leads as a platform to support alignment, shared positioning, and more effective engagement globally.

The discussion will explore how Africa can move away from a model that leans heavily on external assistance toward one that builds more on domestic and regional resources. This is not about replacing one source of finance with another overnight. It is about being more deliberate in how different sources of finance are used, and where ODA still has a role to play—particularly in strengthening systems, supporting vulnerable populations, and unlocking investment.

Coordination will be a central theme. There is no shortage of platforms, initiatives, or forums across the continent. The challenge is that they do not always connect in ways that build a clear and consistent African position. Strengthening those connections—between governments, regional bodies, and other actors—will be key to improving both coherence and influence.

There is also a need to think more carefully about how Africa engages globally. As development cooperation becomes more political, it matters where energy is invested and how engagement is approached. Being present is no longer enough; the question is how to engage in ways that shape outcomes and reflect African priorities.



The meeting itself is designed to be practical and open. It will rely on short framing inputs, followed by discussion and small group exchanges. The focus is on honest conversation rather than formal statements, and on drawing out perspectives that can inform next steps.

The aim is not to produce a communiqué, but to come away with a clearer sense of direction—what matters most, where there is alignment, and what should happen next.

Africa Leads is intended to support this process as a light, flexible platform that connects and strengthens ongoing efforts. It is not about creating another layer of coordination. Rather, it works alongside existing initiatives—helping to align them where useful, while also contributing to the development of African-driven analysis, ideas, and narratives. A key part of its role is to support knowledge that reflects African priorities and realities, and to ensure that this informs both continental discussions and global engagement.

This roundtable is an early step in that process. It brings together a small group of actors at a moment when the questions are becoming clearer, even if the answers are not yet settled. The task now is to begin shaping a response that is more deliberate, more connected, and more firmly grounded in Africa's own priorities