



Netai Loice Magade
“Let us hold hands and
conquer African markets
together”



**U.S.–Africa
Business Summit:
Pre-Summit
Reception Sets the
Stage for December**



Ambassador Isaiah Kabira
Diaspora mobilisation:
Kenya is building an
economy beyond its
borders

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Marjorie Mayida,
*Managing Director at
Old Mutual Investment
Group of Zimbabwe*

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**Diversification
across sectors
& jurisdictions
is key**

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Principles of Great Investing

**Price Is What You Pay.
Value Is What You Get.**



By **Oliver Müller**,
Chief Investment Officer, Accresco
Investment Management

Markets change. Investment fashions come and go. Human nature changes rather less. In this new monthly column, Oliver Müller, Chief Investment Officer of Accresco Investment Management, a value-investing boutique based in Mauritius, explores the principles that have guided some of the world's best investors—and what they still must teach us today.

After more than three decades in financial markets, I have learned that the stories change much faster than human nature.

I began my career in banking in Germany in the early 1990s and moved into global equities in London in March 2000, just days before the Nasdaq reached the peak of the technology bubble. It was quite an introduction. Since then, I have watched that boom turn into a bust, lived through the global financial crisis from inside the markets, seen interest rates fall almost to zero and then rise again, and watched new technologies repeatedly convince investors that perhaps the old rules no longer applied.

The circumstances changed. The emotions did not: excitement, fear, impatience, envy, overconfidence and, every so often, genuine panic.

That is the idea behind this new monthly column.

Principles of Great Investing will not try to tell you where the market will be next month. I have been around long enough to be suspicious of anyone who claims to know. Nor will it be a collection of stock tips.

Instead, each month I want to take one investment principle, look at how some of the world's great investors have thought about it, and ask whether it still holds up in today's world.

Some of the names will be familiar: Warren Buffett, Benjamin Graham, Charlie Munger and Philip Fisher. Others may be less so. At times their ideas will complement one another. At other times they will clash. That is part of what makes them worth studying. Investing has never been a discipline in which all sensible people reach the same conclusion.

Nor do I see these investors as people to be copied. The more interesting question is what we can learn from the way they thought — and how that can help us think better for ourselves. That is really what I hope to do with this column. I would rather leave you each month with one good question than five confident predictions. Over time, I hope these pieces build into a collection of ideas worth returning to — especially when markets are noisy, investment fashions are tempting and it becomes harder to remember what really matters.

So where to begin? For me, the obvious place is Warren Buffett.

I first travelled to Omaha for Berkshire Hathaway's annual shareholder meeting almost a decade ago and have returned regularly since. Friends and colleagues sometimes call me a "Buffettologist", usually with a smile. I can live with the label. But my interest in Buffett has never been about collecting quotations or trying to copy Berkshire Hathaway. What fascinates me is how, over more than six decades, he has kept coming back to a relatively small number of principles and applied them with unusual consistency.

One of the principles Buffett returns to most often did not originate from him. It came from his teacher, Benjamin Graham. Writing to Berkshire shareholders after the financial crisis of 2008, Buffett recalled Graham's words: *"Price is what you pay; value is*

A valuation model does not remove uncertainty. At best, it helps us think about it more clearly.

what you get."

It sounds simple. In practice, it is anything but easy.

Price is the easy bit. Look up any listed share online and there it is, changing from one moment to the next. The quoted price is there for everyone to see. Value is different.

When we buy a share, we are buying a small piece of a business. What that business is worth depends on what it can earn and generate in cash over many years, how much capital it needs to do so, how strong its competitive position is, how wisely management reinvests, and what risks stand between today and those future cash flows.

None of that comes with the precision of two decimal places.

Buffett has long described intrinsic value as the present value of the cash that can be taken out of a business over its remaining life. But he is equally clear that intrinsic value is an estimate, not a precise number. Even he and his long-time partner, Charlie Munger, could look at the same business and arrive at somewhat different figures.

That is an important point. Valuation is not about finding the one correct number. It is about arriving at a sensible estimate of what a business might be worth.

In my own investment work, I prefer to think of value as a range rather than as a single number. A spreadsheet may happily tell us that a company is worth \$103.47 a share. The future is rarely that precise.

For a stable, predictable business, that range may be reasonably narrow. For a business whose future is harder to predict, it should be wider. A valuation model does not remove uncertainty. At best, it helps us think about it more clearly.

Value investing is sometimes reduced to buying stocks on low price-to-earnings ratios. But cheapness and value are not the same thing. A company trading at eight times earnings may be expensive if those earnings are disappearing. Another trading at twenty-five times earnings may prove attractive if it can reinvest at high returns and grow its cash flows for many years.

That is why I have never found the traditional distinction between "growth" and "value" particularly helpful. Buffett made much the same point in his 1992 shareholder letter when he described the two as *"joined at the hip."* Growth can add enormous value when a business is able to reinvest profitably. It can also destroy value when growth requires ever more capital for ever lower returns.

Quality matters because not all growth is created equal. A business with a durable competitive position, high returns on capital, sensible reinvestment and a strong balance sheet is more likely to turn growth into lasting value. But none of that makes price irrelevant. A wonderful company can still be a poor investment if the price already assumes a wonderful future.

This distinction becomes especially important when a powerful investment story captures investors' imagination. Artificial intelligence (AI) is the obvious example today. AI may indeed transform businesses, industries and entire economies, and create enormous value along the way. But an investor can be completely right about the technology and still earn a poor return from a particular share if too much of that future was already reflected in the price paid. The opposite can be equally misleading. A share that has fallen by 40% has not necessarily become a bargain. Sometimes the price is lower because the

A wonderful company can still be a poor investment if the price already assumes a wonderful future.

business itself is worth less.

The market is very good at giving us prices. It does so every second of the trading day. However, it does not tell us whether those prices are worth paying.

That part still requires judgement: understanding the business, thinking independently, accepting uncertainty and being prepared to reach a different conclusion from the crowd. Price and value will never line up neatly. Our estimate of value will never be exact. Investing does not offer certainty. It asks us to make decisions without it.

Which leaves us with another question. If value is an estimate, and if our estimate can be wrong, how much protection should we demand when committing our capital?

Benjamin Graham spent much of his career thinking about exactly that. His answer was the *margin of safety*.

Egypt and Nigeria roadshow puts investment flows in focus

More than 350 investors, business leaders and financial professionals attended Mauritius Finance forums in Cairo and Lagos on 7 and 10 September. The organisation is seeking new business for Mauritian financial firms in two major African markets where billions of dollars in investment are already structured through the island.



Investment links with Egypt and Nigeria have given Mauritius Finance a substantial starting point for its latest African roadshow. Its September forums offered Mauritian banks, fund managers and professional advisers direct access to companies and institutions looking to finance growth, structure investments and expand internationally. The organisation has reported opportunities arising from the meetings but has not announced any resulting transactions.

The development of the Mauritian financial sector necessarily requires an active presence in major African markets.

The Cairo forum took place on 7 September, followed by Lagos on 10 September. Together, the events attracted more than 350 investors, business leaders, financial institutions and private equity professionals. The Mauritian delegation included representatives of banks, management companies, fund administrators, fiduciary service providers and firms specialising in legal, tax, investment and wealth management services.

Figures released by Mauritius Finance show the scale and direction of existing

links. In 2025, the stock of Egyptian-origin investment routed through Mauritius stood at approximately \$1.3bn, while investment directed towards Egypt through Mauritian structures was about \$1.4bn. In Nigeria, Mauritius had facilitated an estimated \$3.4bn in investment stock. Nearly \$4bn in Nigerian capital had also been structured through the Mauritius International Financial Centre for investment in other emerging markets. The figures describe existing investment stocks, rather than capital raised during the roadshow.

“The development of the Mauritian financial sector necessarily requires an active presence in major African markets,” said Faraz Rojid, chief executive of Mauritius Finance. “Egypt and Nigeria alone account for a significant share of economic activity, private investment and capital mobilisation on the continent.”

In Cairo, discussions covered investment flows between Egypt and Mauritius, the regional expansion of Egyptian businesses and the use of Mauritius as an investment platform for Africa. Participants included Dr Sherif El Gabaly, chair of the African Committee of the Egyptian Businessmen’s Association and of the Egyptian parliament’s African Affairs Committee; Dr Basel Roshdy, secretary-general of the Egyptian Private Equity Association; and Dr Waleed El Zomor, head of the Africa department at Egyptian Commercial Services.

Egypt and Nigeria alone account for a significant share of economic activity, private investment and capital mobilisation on the continent.

The Lagos forum connected the delegation with representatives of banks, pension funds, financial institutions, private equity firms and large Nigerian companies. Among the participants were Seun Onayiga, co-founder and managing director of ACQ Managers and managing director and chief executive of ACQ Capital, and Obi Ibekwe, chief executive of EnterpriseNGR. According to Mauritius Finance, Ibekwe highlighted the complementary roles of Nigeria and Mauritius in Africa’s financial system.

Faraz Rojid said the Cairo and Lagos exchanges pointed to opportunities for Mauritian operators in cross-border investment, funds, wealth management and business services. The mission also strengthened relationships with the Egyptian Businessmen’s Association, the Egyptian Private Equity Association, EnterpriseNGR and AVCA – The African Private Capital Association.

ADB

“African Debt Makes Its Case to Global Investors”



Why Invest in African Debt?

Africa's domestic debt markets have expanded substantially over the past decade yet remain underrepresented in global fixed-income portfolios. As investors seek new sources of income and diversification, African debt is gaining recognition for its yield potential and exposure to some of the world's most dynamic economies.

Attractive Yields

A compelling case for African debt is the substantial yield premium available across several markets. Compared with a US 10-year Treasury yield of approximately 4.7%, selected local-currency 10-year government bonds offer substantially higher yields, ranging from 8.7% (6.2% in USD terms) in South Africa to 21.4% (7.5% in USD) in Egypt. Yields in Kenya and Nigeria stand at 13.3% (8.7% in USD) and 17.1% (7.4% in USD), respectively. These elevated yields can enhance portfolio returns and support allocation to markets where the investment outlook remains favourable.

At a time when fixed-income investors are increasingly concerned about the sustainability of fiscal deficits and debt burdens in developed economies, African sovereign bonds provide an alternative source of return. Amidst, improving liquidity and a wide continent's domestic debt markets are expanding, liquidity is improving and a broad range of maturities is becoming available. In 2024, real yields on African local-currency bonds averaged approximately 5%, among the highest globally and their strongest level in more than a decade as inflation moderated. Across key markets, real yields stood at 6.7% in Kenya, 6.5% in Egypt, 4.4% in South Africa and 1.7% in Nigeria.

Diversification Benefits

Diversification is central to effective portfolio construction. African debt provides exposure to economic drivers that differ from those of developed markets and many traditional emerging-market regions, including favourable demographics, urbanisation, domestic consumption, infrastructure investment, commodity exports and regional trade integration.

African local-currency bonds have generally exhibited low correlations with conventional fixed-income benchmarks, helping to reduce concentration risk and broaden return drivers. During the global bond sell-off from 2022 to 2024, yields in several African local-currency markets remained comparatively stable. Correlations with US Treasuries, broad emerging-market indices and other African markets were close to zero, providing differentiated return streams that may help moderate portfolio volatility over time.

Africa should not be viewed as a single market. Its economies are at different stages of development and have distinct policy frameworks, sector exposures and growth drivers. This diversity creates scope for active allocation across countries and market cycles.

Improving Economic Fundamentals

A growing number of African countries have adopted more orthodox monetary and fiscal policies, supported by structural reforms intended to strengthen economic resilience and attract foreign investment. Several central banks have reinforced inflation-targeting frameworks and improved policy credibility, while initiatives to deepen domestic capital markets are creating a more robust environment for debt investors.

If global inflation continues to ease and monetary conditions become more supportive, African local-currency debt

markets could benefit from a more favourable investment environment.

A Rapidly Growing Asset Class

Africa's domestic bond market has expanded significantly over the past decade, with local-currency debt outstanding now exceeding USD 800 billion. This growth reflects the continued development of domestic capital markets across the continent.

The expansion has increased market depth, broadened issuer participation and improved liquidity in several countries, making the asset class more relevant to institutional investors seeking scalable opportunities.

Improved Access for Investors

African debt markets have historically presented challenges related to transparency, liquidity and operational complexity. However, these barriers have diminished as professionally managed investment vehicles, benchmark indices and stronger market infrastructure have provided more diversified and efficient access.

Investors can now access the asset class through actively managed funds, exchange-traded funds (ETFs) and specialised fixed-income strategies. One such vehicle is the African Domestic Bond Fund (ADB), managed by MCB Investment Management Co. Ltd. The exchange-traded fund, listed in USD on the Stock Exchange of Mauritius and in BWP on the Botswana Stock Exchange, provides investors with exposure to the debt markets across some of Africa's most liquid countries through a single investment product. Launched with the African Development Bank as anchor investor and sponsor, it tracks the AfDB/AFMI Bloomberg® African Bond Index 25% Capped and offers diversified exposure

to local-currency sovereign bonds across ten African markets, namely South Africa, Morocco, Egypt, Nigeria, Kenya, Zambia, Namibia, Mauritius, Ghana and Botswana, through a transparent, liquid and cost-efficient structure.

The Opportunity Ahead

As global investors reassess traditional fixed-income allocations, African debt offers a distinctive combination of income potential, diversification, improving fundamentals and long-term structural growth.

Rather than replacing conventional bond exposures, African debt can serve as a complementary allocation within a diversified portfolio. It provides access to differentiated return drivers while enabling investors to participate in the continued development of the continent's financial markets.

Source for Data sources: Bloomberg; OECD, OCDE Africa Capital Markets Report 2025; MCB Investment Management Co. Ltd, MCBIM, as at 31 August 2026.)

Important information: This article is provided solely for informational purposes and does not constitute, and should not be relied upon as, investment advice or a recommendation to buy or sell any of the securities mentioned.

ADB is authorised as a collective investment scheme and further categorised as a global scheme by the Financial Services Commission of Mauritius. It is suitable only for the persons described in the prospectus. As with any investment in a collective investment scheme, returns are not guaranteed. The value of an investment may rise or fall, and investors may not recover their initial capital. In certain circumstances, an investor's right to redeem may be suspended.

MCB and ETG put electronic trade finance to work under Mauritian law

Trade documents that once had to travel by courier reached MCB in less than an hour. In a transaction announced in Port Louis on 18 September 2026, ETG created five electronic bills of exchange under Mauritian law and transferred them to the bank, using Enigio's technology with support from Digital Trade Works. Described by MCB as an African first, the deal puts Mauritius' legal framework for digital trade documents to work and points to a quicker route to financing cross-border trade.



MCB and ETG have completed what the bank describes as Africa's first electronic bill of exchange transaction under Mauritian law. The five bills reached MCB in less than an hour, replacing a paper process that would have required several days for documents to arrive by courier. For the bank, the transaction connects a change in the law with a working trade finance process.

Announced on 18 September, the transaction was carried out with technology provider Enigio and implementation partner Digital Trade Works. ETG issued the electronic bills of exchange and transferred them to MCB, which structured and financed the transaction. ETG created all five bills in under 30 minutes, according to the press release. The value and financing terms were not disclosed.

Mauritius has enacted legislation based on the UNCITRAL Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records, known as MLETR, giving legal recognition to electronic bills of exchange. MCB describes it as the first African jurisdiction to do so. The transaction is the first practical use of that framework for an electronic bill of exchange issued and managed through *Enigio's trace:original* technology.

A bill of exchange is an instrument used to formalise a payment obligation.

Handling its original electronically could remove the need to send paper documents between parties, provided the legal and operational requirements can be met. In this case, Mauritius' framework supplied the legal basis, while Enigio's technology created and managed the electronic originals.

"Technology does not transform trade on its own; people and partnerships do," said Arnaud Levasseur, MCB's executive vice-president for trade finance. He said the transaction with ETG moved the electronic bill of exchange *"from legal possibility to commercial reality"* and set a benchmark for Mauritius and Africa.

The project forms part of MCB's wider trade strategy. The bank has committed \$1bn over four years to advancing African trade and the continent's economic transformation. Arnaud Levasseur said the transaction showed how legal innovation, financing capacity and execution could make trade faster and more accessible. *"Africa is not merely adopting the future of trade; it is helping to build it,"* he said.

ETG's involvement gave the bank an established commercial partner for the first transaction. The group operates in 50 countries and has interests in agricultural inputs, chemicals, logistics, processing, food and food ingredients, energy, metals, technology and supply

chain optimization. MCB and ETG have worked together across a range of products, markets and other initiatives over several years.

That relationship helped the organisations move from a proposed process to a completed transaction, according to Perna Cheekhoore, MCB's vice-president for global and international corporates. *"That foundation of trust enabled both organisations to move decisively from concept to execution,"* she said.

Vinit Mishra, head of treasury at Nusrico, an ETG company, said the immediate saving in document transit time was substantial. *"Working with MCB, Enigio and Digital Trade Works, we transferred the electronic Bills of Exchange to MCB in under one hour rather than waiting several days for paper documents to arrive by courier,"* he said. ETG's aim, he added, is to make trade across Africa more efficient, secure and accessible.

The transaction required work across the participating organisations. At MCB, trade finance, legal, operations, technology and client coverage teams took part. Digital Trade Works supported implementation, while Enigio provided the means to issue and manage the digital originals. MCB says that a combination of legal recognition, technology and financing

could help reduce processing times, increase transparency, strengthen risk management and improve access to finance along complex international trade routes.

Petter Nylander, Enigio's chief executive, said the legal and technological elements had to work together. *"Mauritius' MLETR-based framework gave this eBoE the same legal standing as its paper equivalent, and our trace:original technology gave MCB and ETG the practical tool to issue and manage it electronically,"* he said.

Merisa Lee Gimpel, founder and managing director of Digital Trade Works, said the partners' coordination made the transaction possible. *"Digital trade only works when every party moves together,"* she said, describing the electronic bill of exchange as *"a blueprint rather than a one-off"*.

MCB now plans to work with clients, other financial institutions, technology providers and trade bodies to expand the use of electronic transferable records across African trade corridors. The bank sees scope to apply the legal framework more widely to trade documents and instruments, with the longer-term aim of creating connected digital processes from one end of a transaction to the other.

U.S.-Africa Business Summit: Pre-Summit Reception Sets the Stage for December

As the 2026 U.S.-Africa Business Summit draws close, the event's significance is becoming ever clearer. In a speech delivered at a pre-summit reception held on October 5, Florizelle Liser, President and CEO of the Corporate Council on Africa (CCA), stressed that the summit will be "a platform to forge deals, attract investment and build lasting U.S.-Africa commercial partnerships." In the same vein, Adil Ameer Meea, Minister of Industry, SME and Cooperatives, challenged local companies to secure concrete partnership proposals.



"We believe the United States, with its capital, its technology, its companies, and its values, can and should be a leading partner for Africa's growth. And we believe Africa can be one of the most important economic partners of the United States in this century. Mauritius wants to be at the heart of that partnership. Our ambition is to become the prime business partner of the United States in our region, and the trusted platform through which American companies invest into Africa with confidence."

From preference to partnership

Minister Ameer Meea also welcomed the recent extension of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) until December 31, 2028, while stressing that Mauritius' ambition must extend beyond preferential market access and "move from preference to partnership."

He reaffirmed Mauritius' interest in a bilateral trade agreement with the United States, highlighting the ongoing engagement with the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, and pointing towards the Transatlantic Cotton Partnership involving Mauritius, Lesotho and Kenya as an illustration of the type of two-way commercial relationship Mauritius wants to build.

A broader U.S.-Africa relationship

British Ramful, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, placed the summit within what he described as an evolving U.S.-Africa relationship, which "is moving beyond traditional development cooperation towards trade, investment, technology, artificial intelligence, maritime security and sustainable growth."

He highlighted Africa's potential as a single market of around 1.4 billion consumers, with a combined GDP exceeding USD 3.4 trillion. "The challenge is to translate this potential into concrete investment and commercial partnerships," added Minister Ramful, as he called for strong private-sector participation.

U.S. support for bankable projects

For his part, Craig Halbmaier, Chargé d'Affaires of the U.S. Embassy, announced strong U.S. government participation at the summit, including delegations from the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, the Export-Import Bank and the U.S. Trade and Development Agency.

"Their objective will be to help structure bankable projects and advance deals capable of generating jobs, skills and economic growth," he explained.

Speaking about the U.S.-Mauritius bilateral relationship, Craig Halbmaier pointed to several developments such as the extension of AGOA, Mauritius' engagement on reciprocal trade, cooperation with Amazon Web Services on AI and cloud computing, and the country's planned connection to Google's America-India Connect subsea cable.

The countdown to the 2026 U.S.-Africa Business Summit, which will take place on December 6-9 at the Swami Vivekananda International Conference Centre (SVICC), in Mauritius, has entered its decisive phase. On Monday, October 5, at the Mont Choisy Golf Clubhouse, the United States Embassy in Mauritius and the Corporate Council on Africa (CCA) hosted a pre-summit reception which brought together government officials, business leaders and private-sector representatives.

It provided a small sample of the more than 3,000 participants expected at the 2026 U.S.-Africa Business Summit, including the Prime Minister of Mauritius, African and U.S. government leaders, CEOs, investors and development finance institutions.

"A high point in our calendar"

Speaking at the pre-summit reception, Florizelle Liser, President and CEO of the Corporate Council on Africa (CCA), said that the relationship between the U.S., Africa and Mauritius is a privileged one. "We are exclusively focused on Africa, and we see the summit as a high point in our calendar. Mauritius and Africa are not our top priority. They are our only priority," she stated.

Highlighting Mauritius' strengths in financial services, digital innovation, tourism, logistics, sustainability, real estate, and the blue economy, she argued that "the opportunities Mauritius offers will be on full display during the Summit, and participants will see

firsthand why the country is so well-placed to serve as a gateway for business and investment between Africa, the United States, and beyond."

Florizelle Liser, who can call on the Corporate Council on Africa's 33-year experience of connecting, catalysing and amplifying U.S.-Africa business partnerships, expects tangible results to come from the December summit, as they have in the past. "The 2025 summit in Angola generated more than USD 4.2 billion in commercial agreements, providing a benchmark for the Mauritius 2026 edition," she stressed.

She therefore closed her remarks by urging Mauritius' companies to use the 2026 U.S.-Africa Business Summit to actively pursue partnerships, investment and commercial opportunities rather than merely showcase themselves.

"Come with projects, not brochures"

That message also echoed in the words of Adil Ameer Meea, the Mauritian Minister of Industry, SME and Cooperatives, who described the Summit as the biggest event in the country's history, and urged local companies to play a big part in it.

"Our American friends are opening the doors for our businesses to benefit from. My message to the Mauritian companies is simple: do not come to this summit only with brochures and business cards. Come with projects," urged the Minister.

Africa Credit Rating Agency Officially Launched

The launch of the Africa Credit Rating Agency (AfCRA) on Wednesday 7 October in Mauritius marks a bold attempt by the continent to reshape how its economies are assessed, priced and perceived by global capital markets. Backed by a continental drive for greater financial sovereignty, AfCRA does not seek preferential treatment for the continent, but a more accurate reading of African realities. For the agency to be a success, as speakers at the launching ceremony repeatedly stressed, it will need to “deliver independent, rigorous and sometimes uncomfortable assessments.”



The Africa Credit Rating Agency (AfCRA) promises to reshape the continent's credit-rating landscape from within. With its launch on Wednesday 7 October at the InterContinental Resort, in Mauritius, the assessment of African economies, companies and risks can now be done with an African perspective long missing from the work of credit rating agencies, including the “Big Three” of S&P Global Ratings, Moody's Ratings and Fitch Ratings.

The launch of AfCRA was the culmination of a process endorsed by African leaders in 2018 and supported by the African Union, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), Afreximbank, and other continental institutions. The event was therefore attended by high-level personalities, including the Acting President and Ministers of the Republic of Mauritius, the Prime Minister of Burundi, and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

Speakers repeatedly stressed that AfCRA is not about giving Africa favourable ratings. Rather, they argued, the ambition is to change how Africa's creditworthiness is assessed, how its risks are interpreted and, ultimately, how international investors view the continent.

Beyond technical credit assessments

For Dr Jyoti Jeetun, Minister of Financial Services and Economic Planning of Mauritius, the issue goes beyond technical credit assessments. “For too long, too much of Africa's economic story has been viewed through lenses designed elsewhere,” she said, arguing that existing frameworks do not always

capture Africa's specific realities.

“AfCRA is, in part, about ensuring that Africa's economic reality is accurately understood. The agency must earn the confidence of markets through the quality and independence of its work and ultimately achieve global credibility,” Minister Jeetun pointed out.

In her speech, she noted that African governments spend, on average, around seven times more on debt servicing than on infrastructure, while Mauritius itself expects to spend around Rs 30 billion on debt servicing this year.

“The cost of capital ultimately has a human cost,” she argued.

Accuracy is not enough

Speaking at the launching ceremony, Dr Sifiso Falala, Interim CEO of AfCRA, explained how the agency intends to proceed. “Our view is to examine whether ratings are, in fact, accurate or not,” she explained. As a rating can be technically and numerically accurate while still being irrelevant, she believes “the real challenge is determining which variables actually matter in predicting credit outcomes, and how those variables should be weighted.”

Dr Falala went on to place independence at the centre of the agency's credibility, arguing that it is “being structured as an independent private-sector entity, and will apply its methodologies without political interference.”

For AfCRA's Interim CEO, the fact that the agency will have its headquarters in Port Louis, Mauritius' capital, is a positive thing as it is “an exceptional environment” with robust financial-management systems and favourable credit-rating outcomes.

Africa should tell its own economic story

Marie-Antoinette Rose-Quatre, Chief Executive Officer of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), also spoke at the event. According to her, AfCRA carries a deeper political and institutional significance, as “it reflects the realisation that Africa could no longer postpone the institutions required to tell its own economic story with rigour and credibility.”

Adding that AfCRA is not merely designed to compete with existing agencies, she insisted that “its purpose is to provide assessments that are rigorously independent, materially unbiased, credible, and firmly rooted in Africa's true measure.”

An act of sovereignty

For his part, Nestor Ntahontuye, Prime Minister of Burundi, made it clear in his speech that he sees the launch of AfCRA as “an act of sovereignty and a concrete manifestation of Agenda 2063.”

“For a long time, African economies have suffered from a systemic bias as international agencies have sometimes applied criteria disconnected from African

realities,” argued the Prime Minister of Burundi, who added that “we do not demand negligence or favour. We demand a rigorous, independent, transparent evaluation.”

A major institutional milestone for Africa

Ritish Ramful, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade of Mauritius, similarly described AfCRA as a major institutional milestone for the continent.

“The global credit-rating business is dominated by Moody’s, S&P and Fitch. Dissatisfaction with their methodologies intensified during the COVID-19 crisis,” Minister Ramful stated. “We are here to provide the African perspective.”

For him, “the harder task begins today,” and the success of the agency will depend on Africans themselves and, above all, on the credibility it builds.

Financial sovereignty and global reform

Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC), described the launch as a “watershed moment” in Africa’s economic history. Like others, he argued that the continent’s financial architecture has often produced risk assessments that are “subjective, incomplete and disconnected from reality.”

“AfCRA must become an instrument of African financial sovereignty with four objectives: strengthening African expertise, improving understanding of African economies, objectively assessing risk and contributing to the development of capital markets,” he explained.

On a note of caution, Mahmoud Ali Youssouf warned that people should not expect an immediate transformation, as “a rating agency will certainly



not significantly reduce the cost of capital in the near future,” and broader reforms of global financial markets will need to be brought about for that to happen.

Rigorous assessments and transparent methodologies

Speaking at the launch, Dr Hanan Morsy, Deputy Executive Secretary and Chief Economist of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), placed the launch in a wider financing

context. Persistent African risk premiums, she noted, are estimated to cost the continent around USD 75 billion annually in excess interest payments.

“AfCRA can bring deeper understanding of African economies, data, and reforms into the ratings landscape. But its credibility must be earned through rigorous assessments, transparent methodologies and the willingness to deliver unwelcome news when evidence warrants it,” Dr Morsy stated.

She also warned that a rating agency that cannot downgrade will not be believed when it upgrades.



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**Diversification
across sectors
and jurisdictions
is key**”

Marjorie Mayida,
Managing Director at Old Mutual
Investment Group of Zimbabwe

Trade between Mauritius and Zimbabwe could extend well beyond the exchange of goods, with financial services and investment playing a greater role in bilateral ties. Speaking against the backdrop of the Mauritius–Zimbabwe Business Forum, organised in August by the Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce (ZNCC) and the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI), Marjorie Mayida argues that Mauritius could provide a platform for Zimbabwean capital seeking access to international markets. In turn, she sees opportunities for Mauritian investors in Zimbabwe’s mining, tourism, real estate and renewable energy sectors, alongside scope for private equity, infrastructure financing and skills transfer.

What specific investment opportunities do you see for Zimbabwean and Mauritian investors to collaborate, particularly in sectors where both countries have complementary strengths?

I see two sets of opportunities. The first one is around collaborating in financial solutions. For us, the Old Mutual Investment Group, we invest in all sectors of the economy. We are engaged in property development, renewable energy infrastructure, listed investments and even the private equity space.

We also have a commercial bank. So, there are opportunities around lines of credit, trade finance and normal banking.

The first opportunity, therefore, is to create financial solutions for Zimbabwean investors to invest offshore in or via Mauritius, and the other way around, positioning Mauritius as a conduit for global investment into Zimbabwe.

The second opportunity is skill transfer. Zimbabwe’s capital markets are not as deep as Mauritius which has a well-developed international financial service centres in the region. Zimbabwe’s international financial services sector is only a few months old.

There is an opportunity for investment managers and financial services players in Zimbabwe to learn from Mauritius, particularly in structuring products, investment vehicles and financial solutions.

So, I would say those are the two sets of opportunities I see.

Mauritius is positioning itself as a gateway to Africa. From Old Mutual Investment Group’s perspective, how could Mauritius serve as a platform for Zimbabwean capital and businesses seeking to access regional and international markets?

Yes, indeed, Mauritius is a financial hub in Africa, as I said earlier, because of the depth of its market and the fact that its regulatory environment and framework are quite advanced.

There are a number of advantages in Mauritius, such as its network of tax treaties and investor protection framework. These factors enable Mauritius to attract capital from global markets.

I strongly believe Zimbabwe can leverage these factors by channelling capital via Mauritius into Zimbabwe, or, even setting up investment vehicles here by taking advantage of the regulatory environment in order to deploy capital.

What makes Mauritius an attractive destination for Zimbabwean institutional investors?

I think that Mauritius is already an attractive destination. I do not know why we have not explored this channel before. The operating environment here is favourable and Zimbabwe itself is undergoing significant liberalisation of its investment and exchange-control regime.

In the past, regulators did not allow individual

investors to invest offshore. Now, we are seeing a lot of changes around the regulatory space in Zimbabwe where pension funds are allowed to invest 15% of their portfolios offshore. Individuals are also allowed to invest USD 50,000 per annum without exchange-control requirements.

So, I think that with that liberalisation in our country, Mauritius automatically becomes a destination of choice because of its favourable investment and regulatory environment.

Beyond trade, what practical mechanisms like joint ventures, private equity, investment funds, or co-investment platforms could emerge from this mission?

From an investment perspective, I have already talked to a number of Mauritian companies including asset managers, banks and management companies engaged in financial structuring.

One area of particular interest is private equity funds, including its financial structuring. Diaspora bonds and lines of credit are also on our list.

I have spoken to one local bank and I intend



to link it with our bank in Zimbabwe in order to explore lines of credit and trade finance as well.

These are the kinds of structures I believe can emerge from this engagement.

In practical terms, what will the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between Mauritius and Zimbabwe during the Mauritius-Zimbabwe Investment and Trade Mission on August 19 change for Mauritian and Zimbabwean companies seeking to do business in each other's markets?

I think it is an excellent initiative. It will raise awareness around what opportunities lie outside of Zimbabwe from a Zimbabwean perspective.

We also have the International Financial Services Centre in Zimbabwe, which is quite young. As an investment manager, I have already gained valuable information about what I can offer investors through the centre, including investors from outside Zimbabwe.

The MOU is therefore opening up the doors of multiple opportunities for both countries.

I am more than confident that we are going to progress towards signing some deals. The MOU also creates a platform for engaging with other jurisdictions and opening similar channels for collaboration, as we are actually doing with Mauritius.

How will you ensure that this MOU produces tangible outcomes rather than remaining simply an institutional agreement?

The MOU, like you said, is an institutional agreement. But we, as market players in Zimbabwe, have to make things happen. So, I must take it upon myself to follow through on all the engagements I have had. The ZNCC and MCCI will not do the work for us.

So, I have got a target and we want to create products here which we can offer to our clients.

Ultimately, I think, in terms of execution, it is less about those people who signed the MOU but more about us to making sure that the opportunities translate into actual business.

Which Zimbabwean products or services have the greatest potential to penetrate the Mauritian market?

Zimbabwe has got lots of opportunities across a wide range of sectors. From the engagements we had during the trade forum, I understand from the authorities in Mauritius that they are quite interested in the mining sector.

There are also opportunities in the tourism sector. Mauritius is a major tourist destination, but Zimbabwe equally has good tourism attractions, presenting opportunities for Mauritian investors to explore.

From where I sit, real estate is another significant opportunity.

Energy is also particularly important. Zimbabwe currently has a power deficit. We are producing about 1,500 megawatts, while our national requirement is 2,200 megawatts.



Old Mutual Investment Group is already a major player as an independent power producer. We are doing solar and hydropower projects, and I think there is an opportunity for Mauritian companies to come over to Zimbabwe to co-invest with investors like ourselves.

How important are regional frameworks such as SADC, COMESA and the AfCFTA in turning bilateral relationships like this one into actual business?

They are extremely important because they accelerate regional integration, promote intra-regional trade and create larger markets and incentives for businesses to invest across jurisdictions.

As far as Old Mutual Investment Group is concerned, we are an asset management company. We manage retail, corporate, and pension fund business. We are just trying to harness savings for investment. So, for you to attract the savings, you need to have products that appeal to investors.

For investment products, diversification is key. Diversification across sectors and also diversification across jurisdictions. For us, Mauritius is an ideal partner for diversifying our clients' investments outside Zimbabwe.

That is why this trade mission then becomes very critical. This is not simply about signing agreements; it is about creating the investment structures and products that can connect capital, businesses and opportunities across the two markets.

I strongly believe Zimbabwe can leverage these factors by channelling capital via Mauritius

“Let us hold hands and conquer African markets together”

Netai Loice Magade,
Director – Light Industry, Ministry of
Industry and Commerce of Zimbabwe

“Alone we whisper, but together we roar.” This message captures Zimbabwe’s ambition to strengthen economic ties with Mauritius, a prospect explored at the Mauritius–Zimbabwe Business Forum, held in August at the initiative of the Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce (ZNCC) and the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI). The forum featured presentations by the MCCI, Zimbabwe’s Ministry of Industry and Commerce, the Economic Development Board (EDB) and Mauritius’ Ministry of Financial Services and Economic Planning, highlighting opportunities in trade, investment and regional integration. In this interview, Netai Loice Magade explains how the two economies could leverage their complementary strengths, develop integrated value chains and jointly expand into African markets. She also identifies a major missing link: direct air connectivity, which she believes “could unlock the movement of people, goods and business between both markets”.

The Mauritius-Zimbabwe trade and investment mission comes at a time when both countries are looking to deepen intra-Africa trade. What concrete opportunities do you see for Mauritian companies to enter the Zimbabwean market and vice versa?

Indeed, at this point in time, as members of SADC, both Zimbabwe and Mauritius, we really agreed on the need for us not to look at our internal small markets, but to look at the broader, either regional market under SADC or the continental market under the AfCFTA. The best way to be able to do that is for us to synergise and collaborate, leveraging each others strengths.

Zimbabwe is very strong in raw materials and natural resource endowment. This provides a solid footing for the industrialisation agenda, which is one of Africa’s main priorities under Agenda 2063. Even within SADC, industrialisation is a very important theme.

So, that is the route that Zimbabwe has decided to take.



On the other hand, we have seen that Mauritius is very strong in financial services and logistics. Mauritius can actually serve as a gateway. We therefore have an opportunity to network, collaborate and internalise our value chains within the region, so that we do not have to compete to penetrate the African market. Instead, we collaborate and partner to penetrate that market as a team. We go there as a team. We have the raw materials, while Mauritius has the finances, technologies and logistics. We can then evaluate where each country has a comparative advantage and leverage each other’s strengths.

Mauritius has a comparative advantage as a gateway to the broader global market, as well as in finance and logistics. Zimbabwe has resources, while human capital is also one of our strengths. We simply need to leverage one another and partner to penetrate this very important market.

What is particularly important is that we should not be penetrating markets by exporting raw materials in the way we traditionally did to Europe and elsewhere, only to import processed products made from our own raw materials at a higher price.

We are saying: let us add value on our continent as partners. We need to agree on where each country has a comparative advantage, focus on that, help one another and penetrate markets as partners.

There is an African saying: “Alone we whisper, but together we roar.” On your own, you can go some way, but together, you go very far.

What are the main trade barriers currently limiting bilateral commerce between Mauritius and Zimbabwe, particularly in terms of customs, standards, regulations, and market access, and what can both governments do to remove them?

Trade barriers these days are increasingly about non-tariff barriers. Given that we belong to SADC and the AfCFTA, we have already agreed on tariff reductions. In many areas, tariffs are therefore no longer the main barrier to trade. The issue is non-tariff barriers which certainly needs to be addressed.

Logistics, particularly trade logistics, is another major challenge. This is what has inhibited Africa from trading more effectively within itself.

If you look at the European Union, they trade significantly among themselves. East Asia, including China, also has very high levels of intra-regional trade. In Africa, however, intra-African trade remains below 20%.

This is why we really need to put our act together, increase our efforts and overcome these non-tariff barriers.

People have realised that they cannot continue to use tariffs as the main barrier, but restrictions now take different forms through non-tariff measures. This is an area that we need to tackle collectively.



“a journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.”

services, capital and logistics capabilities, we can jointly penetrate markets.

Let me mention that one of the many issues that has really affected intra-Africa trade is trade logistics. It is very expensive. If I am not mistaken, the statistic I used to have been that around 18% of the cost of intra-African trade is attributable to transportation.

We really ought to be able to open our borders and smoothen the flow of traffic.

The Secretary-General of the AfCFTA, Wamkele Mene, has pointed out that for a product to travel through perhaps three African countries, the number of stops that cargo goes through is incredible. There is so much bureaucracy, and at each point, a cost is added.

So, we need to smooth the flow of trade traffic across the continent so that we can become competitive.

As a representative of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce of Zimbabwe, how will you ensure that the MOU that has been signed produces tangible outcomes rather than remaining simply an institutional agreement?

It is true that a signed MOU can simply gather dust in a drawer. But I think the onus is on us, as the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, to ensure, through ZNCC, that there is concerted follow-up so that we know where we stand in terms of implementing the MOUs that have been signed.

What we normally do back home is when we have a meeting and when we sign these MOUs, we come up with an implementation matrix setting out what each side is expected to do within agreed timelines. We then meet at an agreed point to evaluate or review whether we have managed to meet those targets.

It is important to agree on an implementation framework, and then you keep tracking. That is the only way people can be accountable.

You have mentioned that logistics are very expensive. What about air connectivity - is it an issue as well?

It is an issue and a pertinent one too that really needs to be addressed. A direct air connection is one of the most practical things that can be done. It would not only encourage the movement of people, but also the movement of goods in both directions. It is something that will be raised in due course.

As the Chinese say, “a journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.” We start with what we have done today, but as we go along, these are some of the areas that need to be looked into.

To improve this, it would be good if we could have a direct flight connection. With time, this will have to be looked at, and the onus will be on the respective transport ministries to take that step further.

What we are doing today is setting the tone.

Zimbabwe has strong potential in sectors such as manufacturing, agri-processing and value addition, while Mauritius offers expertise in finance, logistics, services, and investment facilitation, as you mentioned. So, which sectors do you believe offer the greatest potential for joint ventures and investment partnerships?

Excellent question. As both sides have indicated in our presentations, one area with significant potential is value addition in the cotton-to-clothing sector. You start with cotton, move up the value chain through ginning, spinning and weaving, and then into garment manufacturing. I think this is one area where we can really make it.

Mauritius has decades of experience in garment manufacturing. Although I was told that many companies have since relocated to Madagascar and to other countries. But I am sure the expertise is embedded in the DNA of this economy. This is what we are looking for. We are currently developing our own cotton-to-clothing development plan.

Sugar is another area. We have just launched our sugar development plan. Instead of being known as a country that produces a large quantity of sugar for export, we want to move in another direction, towards derivatives and innovative products.

We are talking about ethanol, molasses and other products. Molasses sugar, for instance, is a niche product and can command a higher value. We are therefore looking at how best to diversify and move beyond sugar itself.

We also have challenges with yields and increasing productivity. We need to increase the amount of sugar cane and sugar produced per hectare. Once we do that, we want it to form the basis of agro-industrial value addition. Also, we want secondary industries to be created around these sectors so that we create jobs internally within our two countries.

We should be able to integrate our sugar value chain and our cotton value chain. At the end of the day, we create jobs in Zimbabwe and Mauritius and generate exports, maximising export proceeds.

If you export sugar, it is different from exporting a high-value, branded and quality product such as the premium molasses sugar we are talking about. That is the approach we are taking.

We do not want Zimbabwe to be known simply as the breadbasket of anyone. We used to be the breadbasket of Africa. Now, we want to be known as the agro-industrial hub of Africa.

We have the agricultural raw materials. Let us convert them, develop industries around them and add value so that Zimbabwe becomes a hub for innovation and new products. That way, we

maximise exports and create jobs.

You spoke about the frameworks such as SADC, COMESA and AfCFTA. According to you, how important are regional frameworks in turning bilateral relationships like this one into actual business?

They are important. They form what I would call the stepping stone because, for one thing, they give us common ground. We are already committed to certain norms of doing business. We subscribe to rules and regulations under these frameworks.

Based on that, nobody has to reinvent the wheel. We simply bilateralise what we have at the regional level and make the business relationship and economic collaboration more intimate.

It is unlike taking somebody from South America, for example, who has their own way of doing things culturally, and then trying to establish a relationship. The road becomes longer because there is much more to do before reaching a point of convergence.

With SADC member states, COMESA member states and, indeed, under the AfCFTA, we have already converged. When we signed these agreements, we had already established that convergence. All we are now doing is bringing it from the regional level down to the operational level.

What will this MOU, according to you, change in practical terms for a Mauritian or Zimbabwean company wanting to do business in other markets?

The way we discussed this issue is that we are not focusing only on the Zimbabwean or Mauritian market. These are relatively small markets. What we are saying is that: let us partner so that we can actually do business in other markets.

We will identify the requirements of those markets and then ask: if this market requires XYZ, what can Zimbabwe bring to the table? What can Mauritius bring? How do we synergise and partner to penetrate that market?

We can literally hold hands and penetrate a given market together.

What it takes is for us to understand the role of our national trade promotion organisation, ZimTrade, which undertakes market profiling. It goes into a market without necessarily having prior knowledge of it, to assess whether there is potential for trade between Zimbabwean companies and that market. It starts by understanding and learning from scratch.

With Zimbabwe's natural resource endowment as our comparative advantage, and Mauritius' financial

Josephine Takundwa,
President of Zimbabwe
National Chamber of
Commerce (ZNCC)

“We can leverage Mauritius-India relationship to strengthen Zimbabwe-India ties”

Zimbabwe is seeking to reduce its dependence on raw commodity exports by investing in value addition, manufacturing and agro-processing. This ambition was among the themes discussed at the Mauritius–Zimbabwe Business Forum, held in Mauritius in August at the initiative of the Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce (ZNCC) and the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI). The forum featured presentations by the MCCI, Zimbabwe’s Ministry of Industry and Commerce, the Economic Development Board (EDB) and Mauritius’ Ministry of Financial Services and Economic Planning, examining trade, investment and regional opportunities. For ZNCC President Josephine Takundwa, Zimbabwe is on a “very deliberate path” to extract greater economic value from its natural resources, particularly lithium and platinum, while developing its agricultural and industrial sectors. In this interview, she explains why Mauritius could serve not only as a trading partner but also as a gateway to India, Asia and wider African investment, supporting Zimbabwe’s efforts to move up the value chain and gain access to international markets.

Zimbabwe has traditionally depended heavily on commodities, particularly on minerals and tobacco, for export earnings. How central is export diversification to your external trade strategy today?

Like for any other economy, export diversification is key, especially, in expanding regional trade. And, for Zimbabwe, we are actually now on a very deliberate path into value addition and mineral beneficiation so that we can actually realise greater value out of what resources we have as a country.

So, basically, we are moving from the commodity trading perspective towards value-added trading.

Can you give us an example of what you mean by value-added trading?

I will give you a key example: something which is happening on the ground right now, and this is, with regards to lithium, the mineral itself. The very lithium that is used in the batteries for mobile phones and for renewable energy.

So, Zimbabwe has got the second largest deposits of lithium in the world. In prior years, we were exporting just raw concentrates of the lithium. But recently a law was passed to say that, we will no longer export raw commodity lithium as it must be value-added and processed first.

In that sense, Zimbabwe received a USD 400 million investment to start processing lithium into lithium sulphate which is just one step away from the actual lithium that goes into batteries. So, this is one area where we have made significant strides towards value addition.

Given the amount of lithium that we have in Zimbabwe, there is definitely room for more investment in the lithium industry.

Is Zimbabwe’s objective simply to export more, or is there a strategy fundamentally about changing the composition of exports from raw commodities towards higher-value manufactured product?

Yes, let me also add in the same direction, platinum as well. We are also moving into value addition in platinum. So, we want to reduce as much as possible just the export of raw materials. We want to process it first and then we export. For the obvious reason, of course, that it will contribute much more to our economy.

Zimbabwe is simultaneously part of SADC, COMESA and the African Continental Free

Trade Area (AfCFTA). How do you intend to use these overlapping trade frameworks to expand the country’s export footprint across Africa?

To start with, I think it is a matter of looking at each of the three different agreements and blocs, and then take the best that each one has to offer and then probably work with that.

I am sure you are aware that the AfCFTA is working towards a single market for Africa. So, if you are looking at a single market for Africa, it then means all these other SADC, COMESA, ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) and all other blocs, they will need to then integrate and probably fall under AfCFTA and then we move forward with a single market.

So, based on the AfCFTA, this potentially gives Zimbabwean companies access to a continental market of more than a billion consumers.

What is preventing Zimbabwean businesses from exploiting that opportunity more aggressively?

I will say the challenges that Zimbabwe is facing are very much the same as the challenges that every other African country is facing. And, the main one being logistics. You know, right now, it is easier for Zimbabwe to send its macadamia nuts to China than to send those same nuts to Mauritius or to Ethiopia. So, the issue of logistics, that is definitely the key challenge.

On the other hand, there needs to be some final and finer dialogue around the tariffs that will then be levied amongst the countries. It concerns trade,

We are always looking for opportunities that can leverage trade between Zimbabwe and Mauritius, as well as with other countries, including India.



“We are inviting Mauritian businesses to come and invest in Zimbabwe”

Mauritius has extensive financial investment and business links with India, Asia and Africa. Could Zimbabwe use Mauritius more deliberately as a platform for attracting foreign investment into Zimbabwean industries and structuring cross-border African investment?

Yes. We are always looking for opportunities that can leverage trade between Zimbabwe and Mauritius, as well as with other countries, including India.

So, it is a possibility that we can leverage on Mauritius-India relationship to strengthen the Zimbabwe-India relationship. That is something that we are open to.

What is Zimbabwe ultimately trying to become within African trade – a principal supplier of commodities, a regional manufacturing base, an agro-processing hub or an integrated export economy capable of competing globally?

Zimbabwe was once known as being the breadbasket of Africa in terms of agricultural production. So, definitely, being an agro-processing hub is one of the things that we would like to be. But we would also want to be a major player in the manufacturing sector that can distribute across the continent. So, the aspect of commodities is out. We definitely need to look beyond the commodities.

You mentioned in your opening speech that Mauritius is a natural partner and we are discussing joint ventures, technology transfer and investment facilitation. Can you give us some examples of initiatives that have already materialised with the Mauritian government?

I do know that there are ongoing dialogues, especially because there was a delegation from Mauritius that came to Zimbabwe in February 2026 and they had interactions with Zimbabwean industry.

There were some partnerships and synergies that were established at that time, and I understand these are being pursued even right now.

You also said that Zimbabwe is open for business. What is Zimbabwe offering Mauritian businesses?

We are inviting Mauritian businesses to come and invest in Zimbabwe as the opportunities in mining and especially in agriculture are very good.

So, our offering to Mauritian businesses is: come and let us partner around the resources that Zimbabwe has, with particular mention, of course, to lithium.

the classification of goods and standards as well, because standards are not yet quite clear as well on some of the products.

But I will say that the major challenge is that of logistics particularly because Zimbabwe is landlocked. We have access to Durban and Beira, but logistics remains a major concern.

Zimbabwe has spoken increasingly about exploring non-traditional export markets. Beyond Southern Africa, which regions or countries are now priorities in your external trade strategy? Is it the Middle East, Asia, Europe or elsewhere?

Currently, Zimbabwe is servicing markets in Europe and Asia, with particularly quite some good discussions with countries like China. And well, these are the traditional markets that companies and people naturally seek to enter. But, let me say that, what should be of importance right now, is the regional markets.

So let us push for the trade in the regional markets and then we move outwards.

How important is economic diplomacy to that strategy? I mean, are Zimbabwean embassies now expected to operate almost as commercial platforms in identifying buyers, investors and opportunities for Zimbabwe?

Let me say that, economic diplomacy is quite key. And, it is important to have international trade falling especially under the auspices of government in a country. And, to that extent, that is when you need the foreign economic diplomacy coming through.

So, it is important to leverage on economic diplomacy, especially if it can be done through government agencies.

Where does Mauritius fit into the Zimbabwean strategy?

There is a good fit between Zimbabwe and Mauritius.

We have two options, the route by air which must be explored to see if it is possible to have air freight. And then, obviously through Beira or the other seaports where we can have our logistics going through those ports.

So, definitely for business between Zimbabwe and Mauritius, the logistics should not be a problem at all.

For a landlocked country like Zimbabwe, logistics can significantly affect export competitiveness. How important are regional corridors, particularly access through Mozambique and the Indian Ocean, to Zimbabwe's trade strategy? The Beira Corridor, for example, remains a strategically important route connecting Zimbabwean exporters to international shipping.

Yes, those are absolutely important. We are lucky that the Beira Corridor is very accessible. It is not far. We also have access to the port of Namibia that we can make use of, and then we also have the port of Durban as well. So, there are three ports essentially that can service Zimbabwe. Given this set of facts, we should be able to make trade logistics so much easier.

Dhanraj Garbou,
Managing Director of
DistiMau Ltd

“The DTA needs to be signed urgently to facilitate Mauritius-Zimbabwe business”

The Mauritius-Zimbabwe Business Forum, held in Mauritius in August at the initiative of the Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce (ZNCC) and the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI), highlighted opportunities for stronger trade and investment ties. For IT specialist Dhanraj Garbou, however, unlocking this potential requires greater institutional and financial support, the conclusion of the Double Taxation Agreement (DTA), and improved air and digital connectivity. Drawing on more than two decades of experience in IT, including 13 years across Africa, he also sees AI infrastructure and high-tech services as promising areas for investment.



Mauritian businesses often look towards Africa for expansion, but actual investment can remain cautious. What would encourage more Mauritian companies, such as yours, to invest in Zimbabwe?

So, first of all, to invest in Zimbabwe, we need the financial capacity and the right backing. Entrepreneurs need support from banks in Mauritius, as well as from government, to give them the confidence to expand into markets such as Zimbabwe.

Secondly, we need to address taxation issues. The Double Taxation Agreement (DTA) needs to be signed urgently. There is a genuine need to regulate this area, and I believe the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will do the needful.

We also need better connectivity, both Internet connectivity and airline connectivity. These are essential if we want to facilitate business between Mauritius and Zimbabwe.

From our side, DistiMau Ltd is a value-added distributor in the technology space. My competencies are in vendor management, and I have spent 13 years in Africa and around 20 to 25 years in the IT industry, including working with multinational companies. So, we understand the African market and the requirements of doing business there.

In what way is the DTA important for your business?

The DTA is extremely important because of withholding tax. I have dealt with withholding tax across Africa, and many people do not fully understand how it works because the tax is retained at source.

For example, if I sell to Zimbabwe, automatically 15% of my margin is retained at source. They will issue me a certificate and then, I will have to go through a process to recover or account for that amount. This is where we need the backing of government and a clear mechanism. Otherwise, a significant portion of our profit can effectively be tied up in the process.

We also need to protect our Mauritian entrepreneurs. Foreign investors can certainly bring value, but if we do not protect and support our SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) and Mauritian companies, it will be difficult to build sustainable businesses abroad.

The important point is that there are already concrete opportunities in Zimbabwe. We are already doing business there and we are not new to the Zimbabwean market. What we want now is to strengthen and improve that partnership.

I think this is a very good initiative. There are already solid business opportunities between the two countries particularly under the DTA. There is clearly business to be done.

According to business operators, logistics and freight remain major impediments to doing business between Mauritius and the African continent. What is your assessment of the situation?

Logistics and freight between Mauritius and Zimbabwe are very costly. In Mauritius, logistics costs can be particularly high, while freight charges continue to increase significantly.

We have developed our own logistics solution. We have a warehouse in the Netherlands, which enables us to ship equipment into Africa more efficiently. This logistics operation is managed through our global headquarters in Prague, in the Czech Republic.

Globally, we are an EMEA distributor, covering Europe, the Middle East and Africa. For DistiMau, however, our business is primarily focused on Africa, with South Africa being a particularly important market, of course.

Beyond financial services, where do you see opportunities for Mauritian expertise in technology?

We need to look beyond financial services and develop high-tech industries. That means ensuring that our university students, young people and those coming out of our polytechnics acquire highly specialised skills.

But this cannot be achieved only on paper or in the classroom. Young people need practical exposure to technology vendors and the industry itself.

In Mauritius, we are talking a lot about AI and software development. That is positive, but we need to ensure that students and young professionals are properly exposed to the technologies and platforms that are actually being used by the industry.

Today, everything is about AI. But AI requires the right skills, infrastructure and practical experience.

Do you see potential for your company to develop AI-related business opportunities in Zimbabwe?

Absolutely. I have been using AI-related technologies for several years. I was working with Microsoft Copilot and similar tools well before the current AI wave became prominent in Mauritius. During COVID, we were already using these technologies.

When I was working with Dell, the company had a partnership with Microsoft, and Microsoft was investing heavily in AI infrastructure. For me, AI can be an opportunity; it can be a boom, but it can also become a bubble. We need to understand both sides.

What we mean by AI infrastructure is the hardware, GPU servers and platforms required to run AI applications. This is very costly. You can already see the impact on the market, with prices of laptops, personal computers, servers and storage are increasing because the major technology companies are consuming huge quantities of SSDs (solid-state drives) and NVMe (Non-Volatile Memory Express) storage for AI processing.

For example, if you build what we can call an 'AI factory', you need significant infrastructure. This is where I see an opportunity for the African market. We can propose services and invest in the technology infrastructure required by African businesses and institutions.

Interestingly, the return on investment on this infrastructure has changed considerably. Previously, when you invested in GPU (graphics processing unit) servers and similar infrastructure, you could be looking at a six-year return-on-investment period. Today, that can be closer to two years, partly because of developments in semiconductors and the rapid evolution of AI technologies. We now have Claude AI, AI-powered databases, AI development and coding tools, and many applications that can be extremely useful. However, there are also risks. If AI falls into the wrong hands, it can be harmful. It can be used to threaten people or facilitate crime including attempts to compromise databases.

Therefore, while AI offers enormous opportunities, we also need strong cybersecurity and governance. So far, in my experience, we have not seen AI being used to hack banking or government databases. We are also seeing AI companies being established

outside Europe and the United States, partly to navigate or bypass certain regulatory environments. In my view, we need to be particularly careful with powerful AI systems such as Anthropic's Claude and other emerging models. We all want AI to be developed and deployed ethically, securely and responsibly.

How would you assess the B2B Matchmaking Session with the Zimbabwean delegates - do you see any real potential for business in Zimbabwe?

Yes, concretely. And I want to be very honest about this. First of all, I would like to thank the MCCI (Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry) for the initiative. This is one of the most valuable initiatives I have seen in Mauritius over the years. I am engaged in the IT industry with extensive experience in Africa, particularly in vendor management. I have often had to go outside Mauritius to develop these kinds of business relationships. So, bringing potential partners together through a structured B2B matchmaking session is very positive.

At DistiMau, we definitely see potential in Zimbabwe. But potential needs to be assessed against certain criteria. We need to look at the market, the regulatory environment, taxation, financing, logistics and the ability to operate sustainably.

For us, Zimbabwe is not an unknown market. We are already there. The objective now is to deepen the relationship, identify the right partners and develop concrete business opportunities. That is why initiatives such as this are important. They can move the relationship between Mauritius and Zimbabwe from discussion to actual business.

DistiMau at a glance

DistiMau Ltd is an emerging Value-Added Distributor (VAD) headquartered in Mauritius, strategically positioned to serve technology partners and vendors across Africa. Established over the past two years, the company has rapidly developed a strong regional presence, supported by a leadership team with more than 10 years of proved experience in technology distribution across Africa, Europe, the Middle East and other EMEA markets.

Dhanraj Garbou, Director of DistiMau Ltd, is a results-driven distribution leader and market strategist with over 10 years of experience across Africa and the wider EMEA region. As Director and Managing Director of DistiMau Ltd, he spearheads the company's growth strategy, focusing on building high-performance partner ecosystems, expanding vendor networks and accelerating market penetration.

Drawing on his extensive experience in emerging markets, Dhanraj Garbou positions DistiMau Ltd as a strategic bridge between global technology brands and African markets by helping vendors enter new business environments, scale their operations and build sustainable revenue streams across complex and fast-growing African markets.

Aadil Ameer Meea,
Minister of Industry, SME and Cooperatives

“We should not only think about regional trade; we must increasingly think about regional production”

Mauritius and Zimbabwe should use regional trade agreements to build cross-border value chains and compete beyond their domestic markets, the Minister of Industry, SMEs and Cooperatives of Mauritius, Aadil Ameer Meea, said. He was speaking at the Mauritius–Zimbabwe Business Forum, organised in August by the Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce (ZNCC) and the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI). He argued that SADC and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) could support joint production and investment in manufacturing, agro-processing, textiles, renewable energy, logistics, ICT and professional services.



Mauritius and Zimbabwe should move from dialogue to business and from bilateral cooperation towards integrated regional production, according to Industry, SMEs and Cooperatives Minister Aadil Ameer Meea.

Speaking at the Zimbabwe–Mauritius Business Forum at the Caudan Arts Centre, the minister said relations between countries may be built through diplomacy, but become meaningful when they lead to trade, partnerships, employment and

economic opportunities. *“Our aim should be clear: to move from dialogue to business, from potential to investment, and from bilateral cooperation to stronger regional and continental value chains,”* he said.

The forum brought together representatives of the two countries’ business communities to explore opportunities for greater trade and investment cooperation. The Minister said that Mauritius and Zimbabwe have different but complementary economic strengths.

Mauritius has developed expertise in financial services, investment structuring, tourism, logistics, ICT, manufacturing and internationally oriented services. Zimbabwe, meanwhile, has considerable natural resources, agricultural potential, industrial capabilities and human capital, as well as a strategic position in Southern Africa.

Combining these strengths, he argued, could create opportunities in agro-processing, manufacturing, tourism, renewable

energy, logistics, ICT and digital services, infrastructure and professional services.

The minister also welcomed closer institutional cooperation between the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce, saying such links should provide mechanisms through which business discussions can be translated into concrete projects.

Beyond bilateral trade

Aadil Ameer Meea said Mauritius could provide Zimbabwean businesses with access to finance, investment structuring, professional services, expertise and international networks. Zimbabwe, in turn, could provide Mauritian businesses with a base from which to strengthen their presence in Southern Africa. *“Investing in Zimbabwe should not be viewed only in terms of Zimbabwe. It can serve the wider regional market,”* he said.

Likewise, Zimbabwean companies could use Mauritius as a platform to access international capital, expertise, markets and business networks. With both countries members of SADC, the minister said an established framework already exists for deepening cooperation. But he argued that regional integration should now move to another level. *“We should not only think about regional trade; we must increasingly think about regional production.”*

For too long, he said, African countries have attempted to develop complete value chains individually. Yet competitiveness in the global economy increasingly depends on specialisation, scale and integration. Mauritius, Zimbabwe and other Southern African economies should therefore identify the stages of production in which each possesses a comparative advantage and build regional value chains around those strengths.

Textiles as a model

The textile and apparel industry illustrates how such a model could operate, according to the minister. Mauritius has several decades of experience in the sector and could increasingly position itself in capital-intensive, technology-intensive and higher-value activities, including spinning, fabric development, product design and technology. Other stages of production could be undertaken by regional partners, creating an integrated production chain in which different economies contribute according to their respective capabilities.

Where regional rules of origin and cumulation provisions allow it, Ameer Meea said, this

could result in products reflecting *“a genuine regional production chain”*. The principle could extend beyond textiles to agro-processing, pharmaceuticals, renewable energy, engineering, food production and other manufacturing activities.

“Instead of asking whether one country can produce everything from beginning to end, we should ask which part of the value chain each of us can best perform,” he said. Such integration, he argued, would create scale, improve productivity and strengthen competitiveness. *“That is how we transform SADC from simply being a regional market into a regional production platform capable of competing internationally.”*

A regional food basket

Agriculture and food security should form another pillar of this approach. Recent international disruptions have highlighted the vulnerability of economies that depend heavily on imports for essential goods. For a small economy such as Mauritius, the minister said, this issue is particularly important.

Zimbabwe’s agricultural potential, combined with Mauritius’s experience in services, investment, processing and market access, could create opportunities for cooperation in irrigation, climate-smart agriculture, agricultural technologies, logistics, processing, packaging and distribution.

“We should increasingly see SADC not simply as a market of consumers, but as a potential regional food basket,” he said. The objective should be to produce more of what the region consumes, reduce unnecessary dependence on imports, strengthen strategic resilience and create new opportunities for farmers and businesses.

Aadil Ameer Meea also called for more value to be added to African resources before they leave the continent. *“For too long, African countries have exported raw materials overseas and imported finished products at much higher prices,”* he said. *“We need to process more. We need to manufacture more. We need to package, transform and add value within Africa.”*

“What can Mauritius and Zimbabwe produce together for Africa?” The minister described the African Continental Free Trade Area as one of the major economic opportunities available to African economies.

But AfCFTA, he said, should be viewed as more than an instrument for reducing tariffs. It offers an opportunity to establish African value chains, enable companies to operate at greater scale and progressively create an integrated continental market.

That requires a change in the way bilateral

economic relationships are viewed. *“Instead of asking only what Mauritius export to Zimbabwe can or what can Zimbabwe export to Mauritius, we should increasingly ask: what can Mauritius and Zimbabwe produce together for Africa?”*

“This is the change of mindset that we need. Our partnership must be African in its outlook and global in its ambition.” The Minister nevertheless stressed that trade agreements and regional frameworks alone cannot generate economic activity. *“Regional frameworks can create opportunities, but they cannot create prosperity on their own. Businesses must use them,”* he said.

We should increasingly see SADC not simply as a market of consumers, but as a potential regional food basket.

The next step, according to the minister, is therefore to identify sectors, concrete projects and regulatory obstacles, while ensuring sustained follow-up between the two business communities. *“SADC provides us with a regional platform. AfCFTA gives us the continental horizon. Our chambers provide the bridge between our businesses, and our entrepreneurs and investors have the capacity to turn those opportunities into reality.”*

He said the Mauritian government was ready to work with Zimbabwe, the business chambers and the wider private sector to deepen the partnership. *“Let us move from potential to partnerships, from partnerships to investment, and from investment to shared prosperity.”*

“A Mauritian-Zimbabwean partnership does not have to serve Mauritius and Zimbabwe alone”

Trade between Mauritius and Zimbabwe remains modest, but opportunities for investment and industrial development extend well beyond their domestic markets. Addressing the Mauritius–Zimbabwe Business Forum, held on August 19 at the Caudan Arts Centre in Port Louis, Charles Harel, immediate past president of the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI), outlined how the two economies could develop regional value chains, mobilise capital and access wider African markets. He also called on their respective chambers of commerce to turn business contacts into concrete commercial projects.

Mauritius exported approximately US\$454,000 worth of goods to Zimbabwe in 2025, while imports from the southern African country reached around US\$1.5 million. These figures, presented by Charles Harel at the Mauritius–Zimbabwe Business Forum, illustrate the limited scale of bilateral merchandise trade.

For the MCCI's immediate past president, however, the commercial potential extends beyond existing trade flows.

Zimbabwe has considerable natural resources, a strong agricultural base, an expanding mining sector and industrial potential. Mauritius offers an established international financial centre, manufacturing and export capabilities, and financial, legal and professional expertise.

“Our two economies have different strengths, and that is precisely what creates the opportunity,” he told participants at the forum, organised at the initiative of the Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce (ZNCC) and the MCCI.

From commodity trade to regional value chains

Charles Harel identified several opportunities to expand bilateral merchandise trade. Mauritian businesses could increase exports of food products, sugar, packaging materials, detergents, paints, medical products and manufactured goods. Zimbabwe, meanwhile, could supply agricultural products, raw cotton, timber and precious materials.

He placed particular emphasis on the potential to develop regional production networks.

Cotton provides one example. Zimbabwe produces the raw material, while Mauritius has experience in textile manufacturing, apparel design, exports and international market access. Linking these capabilities could support a regional textile value chain.

Similar possibilities exist in sugar, maize, agriculture and food processing.

Renewable energy was another area of interest, with members of the Zimbabwean delegation seeking investment and financing for solar plants and data centres. Charles Harel also identified opportunities in ICT, cloud computing, healthcare, tourism, property development and professional services.

Mobilising capital through Mauritius

Mauritius' international financial centre could play an important role in supporting Zimbabwean investment projects.

Charles Harel pointed to the country's banking sector, fund administration services, legal expertise and international investment structures as resources available to businesses seeking capital and access

to investors.

These services could complement Zimbabwe's opportunities in manufacturing, agriculture, infrastructure and other productive sectors.

Financial institutions represented in the Zimbabwean delegation could also explore arrangements with Mauritian banks, fund managers, insurers and corporate-service providers.

The objective would be to facilitate investment structuring and financing, particularly for projects seeking to operate across several African markets.

SADC, COMESA and AfCFTA as platforms for expansion

Regional trade frameworks could provide access to markets beyond Mauritius and Zimbabwe.

Charles Harel referred to the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) as frameworks through which businesses could pursue wider commercial opportunities.

“A Mauritian-Zimbabwean partnership does not have to serve Mauritius and Zimbabwe alone,” he said.

He outlined a model in which products manufactured in Zimbabwe, with financing or investment structures arranged through Mauritius, could be marketed across Africa.

Such arrangements would link industrial production, financial services and regional distribution, creating opportunities for investment, employment and technology transfer.



Our Chambers can become the bridge between businesses in our two countries

From business forums to commercial projects

Charles Harel stressed that institutional engagement would be essential to translating these opportunities into business activity.

The Zimbabwean delegation included representatives of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, ZSE Holdings, the Victoria Falls International Financial Centre, financial institutions, investment managers and local authorities, alongside entrepreneurs from several sectors.

Their participation provided an opportunity to examine the financing, regulatory and institutional requirements of prospective investments.

He urged participants to pursue practical outcomes from the forum, including identifying distributors, exploring joint ventures, securing financing, finding technology partners and advancing investment proposals.

The MCCI and ZNCC, he argued, have a role in facilitating introductions, identifying commercial obstacles and supporting businesses as projects develop.

“Our Chambers can become the bridge between businesses in our two countries,” Charles Harel said.

For him, the measure of success would be the commercial ventures emerging from these discussions, rather than the number of contacts established during the event.

He concluded by challenging businesses to consider not only what Mauritius and Zimbabwe could sell to one another, but what they could build together and market across Africa and internationally.



Mauritius–Zimbabwe

Business leaders push for joint investment and wider African market access

With bilateral merchandise trade amounting to less than US\$2 million in 2025, Mauritius and Zimbabwe are seeking to shift their economic relationship towards joint investment, regional manufacturing and access to wider African markets. This ambition dominated the Mauritius–Zimbabwe Business Forum, held on August 19 at the Caudan Arts Centre in Port Louis, at the initiative of the Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce (ZNCC) and the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI). Bringing together policymakers, investors and business leaders, the forum identified opportunities in agro-processing, manufacturing, financial services, renewable energy and technology. But participants also pointed to obstacles holding back investment, including limited air connectivity, the need to finalise a Double Taxation Agreement and insufficient institutional support. With SADC, COMESA and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) offering access to larger markets, the challenge is now to turn commercial interest into investment projects and regional value chains.



Kenya-Canada Trade Mission

Diaspora mobilisation: Kenya is building an economy beyond its borders



Zaahirah Atchia |
Head of Canada-Africa desk

The conventional response to brain drain is to try to stop it. Kenya is beginning to ask a more strategic question: what if the movement of skilled workers abroad is not simply a loss, but an economic asset that can be deliberately managed, connected to global demand and converted into investment, skills and opportunity at home?

Its leadership is actively building an economic model and the institutions to act on it: an investment support office, a placement agency, and a skills-matching system linking global labour demand to domestic training institutions. Kenya spends over a quarter of its budget on education and graduates far more teachers, nurses and technicians than it can absorb. Ambassador Isaiya Kabira, Secretary for Diaspora Investment, Skills, Entrepreneurship and Labour Mobility, one of the most senior members of the Kenyan delegation on the Kenya-Canada Trade Mission held in Canada from 5 to 11 September, spoke to Bizweek Africa at the close of the mission about what Kenya is building, and what it wants from partners such as Canada.



Photos Credit: Willy

Bizweek Africa: Ambassador, thank you for joining us. We are speaking at the end of a week in which diaspora engagement, investment, skills transfer and labour mobility were front and centre. Before we get to the substance, what is your own reading of this moment?

Amb. Isaiah Kabira: First, I really want to appreciate the role of the Canadian Black Chamber of Commerce. They were really instrumental in organising this mission. We want to appreciate that there is so much you have achieved during this.

First and foremost is to appreciate the emerging centrality of Africa in Canada's relations with the rest of the world. We want to appreciate the Canadian government for its Africa strategy, which outlines the best ways to engage with Africa. This is a very important moment in global geopolitics and economics, because we are seeing that a lot of countries are trying to diversify their trade and investment partners.

As I did say in my earlier remarks, by 2050 the population of Africa will be 2.5 billion, and out of these, a billion will be in the middle class. Therefore, if you are not thinking about Africa, you are not thinking about the future. This portends a huge market that any forward-looking partner should be on the lookout for.

But what are we talking about? Not just numbers. We are seeing that the diaspora is going to be key to developing the relations between our countries and our continents, to be the facilitators, to be the conduits of generating more trade and investment. Our diaspora understand and have good knowledge of Canada. They also have very good knowledge of Africa, and in this case Kenya.

So we have learnt in the last few days that we need to make more use of our diaspora, we need to engage them more. And we also need to appreciate that the African diaspora is beyond that of Africa: the Caribbean and many other parts of the world. That presents good pointers to what we need to do. We know that Canada is ready to engage, our Kenyan diaspora is ready to engage, and the Kenyan government is ready to engage the government of Canada to see how best we can propel this relationship.

For readers meeting you for the first time, who is Ambassador Isaiah Kabira?

I am a trained journalist who was part of the foundation of Kenya's first African private television station called the Kenya Television Network, where I was a news producer, a business reporter and a news editor. I worked there for nearly ten years.

After that, I joined the government of our third President, President Mwai Kibaki, who I worked for as press secretary. I was in charge of his public communication strategy, and I was part of the link between the media and the State House, which is the seat of the Presidency.

From there I became High Commissioner of Kenya to Australia, where I served for about five years. When I was in Australia I really saw the importance of the diaspora, and I made sure that the Kenyan diaspora was well catered for. I defined my relations as High Commissioner through what I used to call TEAMS: tourism, health, agriculture, education, mining and security. Because at times you can't achieve everything, I boiled our partnership with Australia down to that.

From there I came back home to Nairobi, where I served in various capacities in the Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs. I served in charge of the International Conference Group. I served as Chief of Staff to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. And of course my current position, where I sit as Secretary in charge of Diaspora Investment, Skills, Entrepreneurship and Labour Mobility.

This is a bit of a mouthful, but really my responsibility is to try and encourage more Kenyans to invest back home. We do not see the Kenyan diaspora

just for their remittances. We see them as part of the development process of our country, and we are seeing growing interest from the Kenyan diaspora who want to invest back home.

We have created what we are calling the Diaspora Investment Support Office, so that we unfold the Kenya diaspora multi-platform. Part of my responsibility is to create diaspora-centric products that increase the level of diaspora direct investment. For the longest time we kept on talking about FDI, foreign direct investment. Now we are talking about diaspora direct investment.

But above all, as a State Department for Diaspora, our biggest responsibility is to ensure that the welfare of Kenyan people who work, study and live abroad is taken care of. We work very closely with our missions to ensure that our diaspora is taken good care of.

We do not see the Kenyan diaspora just for their remittances. We see them as part of the development process of our country.

When you say welfare, what does that mean in practice? Financial security? Integration?

Welfare is ensuring, one, the provision of consular services, whether it is issuance of passports or of identification cards, but also to ensure that their wellness is properly taken care of, and that we work very closely with our missions.

We work closely with them to ensure, for example, financial literacy. We help them in terms of managing expectations and helping them to integrate in the countries that adopt them. We normally like to offer what we call pre-departure orientation, where we talk to them about expectations in the country they are going to settle in. And then when they come to their country of adoption, we help them integrate with the Kenyan diaspora associations, so that they are engaged in best practices, that they obey the laws of that country.

But also where a Kenyan is being taken advantage of, whether it is in the contract that he signed, whether it is his welfare in his workplace, we are there. We are not policemen. We are just there for the Kenyan diaspora to know that they have a place, they have a recourse, they have somebody they can talk to in the event that they find themselves in circumstances that they are not familiar with.

How large is the Kenyan community in Canada?

Our approximation is plus or minus 30,000. And we are now seeing the next generation of Kenyans whose parents came here about twenty or thirty years ago.

And where are they concentrated?

They are in various provinces, of course. Ontario, I

think, has a big chunk of them. Vancouver is another city where we find a lot of Kenyans, and Ottawa, places around. They are scattered in many parts of Canada.

We are very, very proud about the contribution that they are making in our country and also the contribution they are making in Canada. We appreciate that a lot of them have brought needed skills here, whether it is in the health sector, hospitality, or the banking and finance world. But we also know that a lot of Kenyans like the Canadian education system. So a lot of students come here. Some find work here, others go back home to make the development back home wonderful.

This year you were also publicly identified as acting CEO of Kenya's diaspora placement agency. Is that correct?

Yes, it is a new agency. It is still under formation. The whole idea is to see how best we can place Kenyans abroad, to connect them to opportunities, and also to bring some order in the labour mobility space.

We are happy that this agency is playing its part in skill matching Kenyans, finding out what the world needs in terms of their skills. And we report this back to our training institutions, informing them about the projections of labour needs across the world, so that we know we are training students who are market ready.

What do you consider your most significant accomplishment in diaspora engagement so far?

We have in many ways narrowed the trust deficit. There was a time when there was a lot of suspicion between the government and Kenyans in the diaspora. I think we really achieved that. Many Kenyans are finding jobs abroad. We are also entering markets that Kenyans have not been to.

But above all is also to change the narrative. That is why we no longer talk about labour migration. We talk about labour mobility. I like to believe that labour and human mobility is as old as humanity. History tells us, and there is evidence about it, that in the 1960s we had teachers and nurses working in our hospitals, we had preachers coming from Scotland, from England, from the US, bringing the word of evangelism to Kenya. Now we are seeing reverse labour mobility. Kenyans are to be found in many parts of the world working in hospitals, from Australia to Europe to Canada and America and the Caribbean.

Regular and orderly labour and human mobility is good for humanity. Where there is a demand and where there is supply, we meet somewhere in between, because that is how humanity was meant to be. We were never meant to be people who stand still and never move. We were meant to be people on the move. So we must celebrate labour and human mobility that is orderly, that is legal, that lives up to the laws of the different parts of the world.

So let us appreciate one another. Let us know that some parts of the world have a young median age. In Kenya, our median age is about 19. We are graduating hundreds of thousands of fresh graduates from our institutions of higher learning and our TVETs and our biggest resource as a country is our human resource. We may not have the gold or the oil. That is why, as a country, we are spending 30 per cent of our budget on education, because we value and we see the importance of empowering our people through a good education that enables them and empowers them to be global citizens.

How do you balance that against the potential risk of brain drain?

Nowadays we no longer talk about brain drain. We talk about brain circulation, we talk about brain gain.

As I said, we are a very young population. In the medical sector alone they are graduating over 20,000 people in various facets of medicine, whether they are nurses, laboratory technicians, or people in different facets. And all this cannot be absorbed

within our country. So we have no fear at all. That is why I said we are investing 30 per cent of our budget on education.

We have a surplus pool of talent. We have no reason to worry about brain drain, because, for example, in Kenya we have nearly 300,000 people who are trained teachers who are not in employment. We have graduated about 700,000 teachers over the years. We have absorbed up to 400,000. But there are another 250,000 out there who can serve in various parts of the world.

Why did you personally decide it was important to be on this mission, and why Canada?

As I said, this is a time for strategic alliances. There are a lot of moving parts around the world. We know that Kenya is now a priority country, on top of the list of the countries that the government of Canada wants to engage in. This is not by accident.

Kenya is the heart of Africa. If you look at the map of Africa, we are literally the heart of Africa. We are well placed. We are the financial centre, the financial hub, the transport hub of eastern and central Africa. Once you are in Kenya, you are able to access a market of up to 400 million people who are in the eastern and central Africa region.

And we have had extremely good relations. Canada opened its mission in Kenya in 1965. Kenya opened its mission in Canada in 1978. Therefore we have long-standing, very cordial and respectful relations. So the only way to go in this relationship is up.

And you don't make connections just by talking to people on the telephone. Sometimes it is good to sit down with people, to see whom you are dealing with. People-to-people relations are very important in growing relations. Sometimes we underestimate that. But I can assure you that when you want to do trade and investment, when you want to do business, you want to see whom you are dealing with. This is not a trade on the stock exchange where you never see whom you are dealing with. People-to-people is what this relationship you are trying to create is anchored on. And this mission provided us that opportunity.

Now that the mission has concluded, how do you assess it against the objectives you arrived with?

What we have been encouraging members of our delegation and the people we meet is that it is very important to do follow-ups. It is nice to meet, get excited and agree that this is the way we should deal with this. We are telling our people: please make follow-ups on what you have done. Go back home, contact the people that you met. You have now zeroed in on one or two sectors that you find of interest.

So we feel that we have gained much in this mission. Our members, our delegation, have made very good and relevant contacts. And as I said, we have come here at the right time, during emerging situations and partnerships between countries.

We are happy with the mission, and especially to see the diaspora connection. Because when we go back to Kenya, we are leaving members of the diaspora who are well informed about our intentions, and we are going to be counting on them to make that connection when we go back home.

In a nutshell, what has actually changed? Is it the personal rapport, or is there something more concrete?

Well, this is just the end of the mission. I know that one or two deals have been signed in various sectors, but again, it is all about follow-ups. What we have put on paper, we must make sure of its implementation. So we are happy, and I am sure that you are going to be seeing a lot of movement.

We are hoping to have a reciprocal visit. This has been a Kenyan mission coming to Canada. We hope that early next year we are going to have a Canadian mission coming to Kenya, making new connections and building on what we have had this time.



Photos Credit: Willy

What kinds of private-sector players were in the Kenyan delegation?

There are people from varied industries, from agriculture to mining to the oil sector, and government representatives. We have people who want to trade in commodities, whether it is coffee or tea. We have people who want to bring a lot of products into this part of the world. We have others who want to take Canadian products, even if it is as simple as beauty products.

If you are not thinking about Africa, you are not thinking about the future.

We want to see more of our Kenyan coffee, Kenyan-branded coffee, Kenyan-branded tea. Because we know our coffee is here, our tea is here, but it is not branded as Kenyan, because it goes through other markets.

We are also hoping, and we are having discussions about the possibility of direct flights between Canada and Kenya. But we shall let our civil aviation authorities and the relevant airlines pick up that discussion.

You were exposed to Canadian capability across mining, critical minerals, agriculture, education, healthcare, technology and professional services, including at the Ontario Investment and Trade Centre in Toronto. Was there anything you saw that made you think Kenya needs more of it?

Definitely. Canada is a leader in mining. Canada is a leader in the area of oil extraction. Kenya is about to enter into that sector, with several important and critical minerals within our country. So definitely we can count on Canadian expertise to walk us through

this journey.

We have also seen the possibilities of a group coming here in the mining sector, just to learn and see how best we can transfer these skills and technology from Canada. So definitely there was a spark, just to see that you have been in this mining sector for over a hundred years. We are just beginning to enter this sector. So there is a lot we can learn from here.

Skills transfer cannot be a one-way street. What can Kenya share with Canada?

As you know, Kenya is an agricultural country. Kenya is one of the biggest coffee and tea producers in the world. As you saw during the presentation, we have over a thousand trained people in the mining sector. So we are going to be exchanging. We have very qualified people in the health sector who are already working in Canada, and we are happy to provide many more. So definitely we have lots of talent. That is why more and more Kenyans are coming to this part of the world, because they are coming here to bring their skills.

I mentioned the issue of laboratory technicians. I know there are regions in Canada in need of pharmacists, for example. The health sector, I think I have mentioned. We are very strong in hospitality. Tourism is one of our biggest sectors. We have also engaged in the training of mining engineers. We are very good in the construction sector. We have very many good drivers in Kenya, because we know that Canada is a great trucking country, and we are happy to offer that. Whether it is issues of plumbing, whether it is issues of ICT.

Not every Kenyan wants to work abroad. There are some who want to work digital jobs. We have very strong business process outsourcing, BPO, companies that are stationed in Kenya. So ICT is one of our biggest and strongest sectors, and we are happy to render our skills in that.

What would a genuinely balanced Canada-Kenya skills partnership look like? Are there enough structured exchanges today?

What we are working on definitely is the issue of mutual recognition of skills. Our counterpart organisations need to sit down and say, these are the skill sets that we are looking for, these are the standards we are looking for. If there is anything we need to do to tweak our syllabus, we are happy to do that.

We know that we have a very good education

system. But of course there are some areas that need a bit of tweaking. For example, you people drive on the right hand, as we do the left hand. So there are a lot of areas that we can definitely collaborate on. But the mutual recognition of skills is important.

Nowadays we no longer talk about brain drain. We talk about brain circulation, we talk about brain gain.

French is now the most widely taught foreign language in Kenya, with tens of thousands of learners. Is that fair to say?

Yes, definitely. We are a country that encourages people to learn a second language. Our main languages are Kiswahili and English, which are spoken widely in our country. But definitely French is one of those other languages that have really created a lot of interest, because we appreciate the influence that countries that speak French have over the global economy and geopolitics.

So definitely we have good institutes like the Alliance Française, which is sponsored by the government of France, and then of course many other emerging private sector players. But the beauty about all this is that nowadays even learning languages online is a possibility. Of course, people need to be attested.

Kenya is a destination, but you also position it as a gateway to the broader African market. Can you expand on that.

I think I did speak about it earlier, that through Kenya, as the financial and transportation hub of eastern and central Africa, you have access to 400 million people. We have lots of flights flying into Nairobi. For example, just from Nairobi alone, you can fly up to 47 destinations in Africa. I don't think there is any other country that has as many destinations to fly into Africa. So wherever you are coming from, you come to Kenya and you are able to connect to any part of the world.

We know air connectivity is important. But we also know that nowadays internet connectivity is a very critical part of doing business, so we have invested heavily in fibre optic cables around the country. We are really well positioned, from the centrality of Kenya.

We have also introduced something we are calling the nomad visa, where people can come and work in the comfort of Nairobi. If you are feeling that the temperatures around where you are are not very good, you are able to come and apply for a nomad visa and work from Kenya, coming from any part of the world. So we are fully aware about emerging opportunities in the digital area.

But there is no doubt that Kenya is a very multiracial nation. If you walk on the streets of Nairobi from one end of a strip to another, you will hear so many languages being spoken. As you know, we are the only country in the Southern Hemisphere that is home to a UN headquarters duty station.

We are the environmental capital of the world, as the headquarters of UNEP, the United Nations Environment Programme, and UN-Habitat. So we have thousands of people from all over the world working from Nairobi. We are not just a centre. We are an attraction to many people from every part of the world.

At the Diaspora Forum in Toronto on 5 September, what did you hear from Kenyans in Canada that stayed with you?

I think the importance of sharing information and opportunities available back home. The diaspora wants to be engaged more in terms of bringing to light the opportunities that are available back home. But more, they want to make a strong connection of traders and investors in Canada, so that they can hand-hold them and take them to Kenya. And also just the interest that the rest of the African diaspora has, to try and see how we can learn best from one another. It was a lovely day.

We also heard examples of Kenyans pooling capital collectively and investing it back home. But how do you persuade a Kenyan professional in Toronto with, say, 100,000 Canadian dollars that Kenya is the better destination for it today than property or securities here?

Well, definitely I salute the team, because pooling resources is very, very important. You mentioned the issue of 100 dollars. Our messaging to them is that 100 dollars to you per month may not mean much, but 100 dollars pooled together by 1,000 people translates to 100,000 dollars per month, which translates to 1.2 million dollars in a year and 6 million dollars in five years. There is a lot you can do with that kind of money.

But we also know that pooled investment comes through the trust that they create among themselves. We cannot force them to come together. But we are also telling them that you have had very successful social communities that come together during cultural days, during national events. Now we are telling them: you have created a friendship. A friendship means trust. Now work together, walk the journey of investments together.

We are happy, for example, for the High Commission to know who these people are dealing with. And we also know that a country like Canada has very stringent legislative rules before you get registered. There is traceability. So we know that through trust there is much they can do. Our work is just to open the right doors for them when they come and invest in Kenya, so that we know that they are dealing with the right professionals, they are dealing with the right people, so that they make the right investment decisions.

Why should a Kenyan abroad trust the investment environment in Kenya more today than ten years ago? What specifically has changed?

Because they are Kenyans. That is their home country. I know a lot of them. One day, they know that they will come back home.

And we have very good returns. You would be very surprised that some of our returns, whether in trust funds or in the bond market, are very good investments. Years ago inflation was an issue, but the government has been able to control that. We have been able to stabilize our foreign exchange. Our economy is very stable now. We are growing at a good rate. We are proud about that.

And we are also encouraging them to make philanthropic investments. Just giving a good hand to the school where you went, just having an opportunity to show gratitude to the dispensary where you were born. That is also an investment. It is emotionally fulfilling and it is just good for your well-being.

At the forum, some people raised concerns: fraudulent intermediaries, land disputes, opaque arrangements, administrative problems after capital has been committed. That is not unique to

Kenya, but what protections exist when things go wrong?

That is why we established the Diaspora Investment Support Office, to provide information to and to handle diaspora investors. Because some of this fraud happens when information is not fully backed. That is why I said earlier, we are trying to encourage them to work with professionals.

But like any other country, as you said, there will always be, once in a while, a bad egg that spoils the rest of the eggs. But we know that we also have very many good reports of people who have enjoyed good investments. Kenya has become a magnet for investments from various parts of the world.

And we have a proper judicial system that works to ensure that there is recourse. We are also very strong in the area of alternative dispute resolution, so that you don't spend too much time in court. So we are going to work with them through the Diaspora Investment Support Office.

Suppose I am not Kenyan – say, a Mauritian living in Toronto with 100,000 dollars that I want to put into Kenya. What is the legitimate government pathway?

There are many procedures. It would take a bit of time to give you the full procedures, but we have KenInvest, for example, where there are very clear procedures to follow, from registering a company to all the steps that you need to take. We have made registering companies much easier. You need to register with our Kenya Revenue Authority. You need to have one or two other licences. But we are trying to make that easier, so that those who want to make investments have an easier route.

You opened by acknowledging the Canadian Black Chamber of Commerce. Now that the trade mission has concluded, what role should organisations like that play?

It is really to continue engaging, to continue planning events together. But above all, sometimes the chambers need to have sessions, even if they are virtual, to ask what the outcomes were, what we need to do, what we need to do to ensure that there is implementation of the ideas that we had. So it is about engagement, it is about people-to-people, and it is just about people seeing positive outcomes from such events. And I think we have had those.

Given the current trade tensions between Canada and the United States, have you noticed any difference in how the two governments approach missions like this one?

I am a diplomat. I don't talk about other countries when I am talking about the missions. I am sure at some point Canada and the US will find a way of amicably settling any issues that there are.

We are here to really create a new and renewed partnership with Canada. I think every nation has its own way of operating. We have different agreements with different countries. For example, we have AGOA with the US, and we are looking forward to signing more agreements with more countries, so that we are able to have clear benchmarks of trade and investments.

Final question. If there was one thing you wanted every Kenyan living in Canada to understand about the government's relationship with them today, what would it be?

My message is that we value you, Kenyans who live in the diaspora. You are part of our development process. We see you as more than the remittances that you make to our country. We want to walk this journey with you. We see you as the catapult that will move Kenya-Canada relations to another, different level.

Please continue staying engaged. Please keep together all the time, and be your brother's and sister's keeper all the time.

Russia – Africa Summit: The Architecture of Friendship



By H.E. Mrs. Irada Zeynalova

*Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of
the Russian Federation to the Republic of Mauritius*

Mauritius certainly has its own style, its own vision and its own path. And hopefully my team and I are a part of it. We even decided to make a booklet with a very simple name – the Book of Friendship – about everything we have seen and done here. We tried to contribute to the Mauritian diversity, which consists of a small jigsaw puzzle – where the blue ocean is neighboring to the high-tech glass buildings, where the memory of incredible historic discoveries is part of the incredible people life stories. And where the island in the middle of the Indian Ocean is a part of big global politics and big global game. This Book of Friendship describes our love story with a part of big African family, the family that will reunite in Moscow at the end of October for the Russia-Africa Summit.

And SSR's quote is what the whole world is to understand about all African nations. Each and every one of them is unique. Every one of them has fought for its happiness, dignity and recognition. And each and every one of them has the experience of engaging with their friends and foes – and those who once believed themselves to be masters. We understand that during the decades of independence this experience has been revised and become a part of national identity and national spirit. And now all Africa – and Mauritius as well – must reshape its place in global structure.

As every African nation, Mauritius makes its steps to the future, to progress and prosperity, hopes for its own African miracle and creates its own vision of the future. Mauritius fully understands that miracle is impossible without breakthrough projects, investments, security and friendship between neighbours. That miracle doesn't emerge overnight and even over a decade, but it is possible if there is a dream about happiness and a will to win.

«Although Mauritius has drawn its cultural inspiration from Africa, Asia and Europe, yet it has succeeded to a remarkable degree in evolving a distinct Mauritian way of life» - Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam

That is why it is essential to find common ground on the African continent altogether, to meet, talk and understand – how to create a new architecture of a global positioning. And Africans already have this experience – starting from Accra, 1958. They met there for the first time, face to face, real people with real African-only ups and downs. And there they understood for the first

time that despite all their differences, their dreams and their dreads were alike. They found out that for some of them this trip to Accra was easy – but for others it was almost a secret mission

because of the colonizers who controlled the routes. On the one hand, Congolese risked their lives to participate because they coveted freedom. On the other – Sudanese had already won in their fight for independence and came from a sovereign state. And Ethiopians, who had never been colonised, represented fully independent country. That is why the meeting in



The Russia-Africa Summit and Economic Forum, Sochi, Russia, October 23-24, 2019.

Russia's intention to help and to cooperate with the African nations didn't come out of the blue – **we have never been colonisers, but have always been friends** trying to give the best we have and to help those in need at any cost.

We are the first state to declare equality and respect for human beings as its main value, we preserve this as the main value of our unique multinational and multi-confessional state. This is our strength and we stand ready to support anyone who dares it the same way we do.

Russia has always treated African states with equality and respect, and has always open-heartedly supported their efforts to develop and maintain their sovereignty. It is significant for us that respected and independent nations are responding to our call at this historic moment.

The fact that the Russian President Vladimir Putin welcomes this conference and considers it as an important tool for realisation of the priorities of modern politics, proves that. Russia is interested in the ongoing processes of developing our friendship.

Yes, we do remember the years of the collapse of the colonial system, the years of the Cold War and the years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Those were the days when we were taught that the world had become simple and unipolar, but the world is not simple at all. Now we are all old and strong enough to declare that the world is complex, multipolar, multicolour and we insist on it.

BRICS is the new platform that has already proved this, offering respectful and fair dialogue to everyone who intends to build this new multipolar world alongside with us. We insist that **everyone chooses their own path of development and decides what their country will be like.** This is our

1958 started an exchange of ideas, experience of fights for freedom and dreams for future miracles.

That is why it's essential now for all of them to be in Moscow for the Third Russia-Africa Summit, to talk about economy, investments, risks, culture, climate change and sustainable development. All of them know that Russia has always been supporting Africa by all means and continues to do so by building dams, plants, hospitals, and power stations, by bringing up doctors, teachers, and agronomists, as well as by providing medicine, vaccine, free education, food and technology. All of that stimulates economic growth and forms the basis of sovereignty and national security. Africa knows that Russia has never looked down on Africans, we are friends and we have always been friends. We have always been just people who live on the same planet, people who can and will develop the happiness of our future generations. Russia offers progress, modernisation, experience, scientific knowledge and investment that will contribute to mutually beneficial projects. We fully understand that these projects won't be possible without security guarantees for the continent where peace is very fragile and, thus, coveted for the last 50 years.

And Africa fully understands that most of its wars were unleashed by those who wanted to appropriate its rich natural and human resources, trade routes and geographic advantages. Africans quote this in a very simple way: so far, the poorest people live on the richest continent. It is true – but must be gone with the wind of changes.

African nations clearly see that securing national resources, national industry and national environment protection system is essential for ensuring their freedom and independence. Neocolonialism still has different masks but it is the same nature in its core. Africa can't afford to be victimized once again by a new masters and to depend on anybody else. Even if it will be hidden under very colorful promises and impressive words. That is why today Russia is a reliable partner that has always been supporting new-born African sovereign nations and is now ready to work together for the mutual benefit.

formula of the new globalisation that offers a place for everyone who wants to live in this new world.

Today's movement towards each other – Russia and the countries of the Global South – is a historical choice, a historical necessity and our common chance to make the planet a better place for the future generations.

Sochi shall be the place where we will examine the projects of development, agreements, and contracts that will become the first step of the long-way road of our joint future. The two previous summits have shown that we are interested in each other not just in words, but in deeds and we shall go through this path together, even if it is a difficult path to go. Together we shall succeed by establishing a joint foundation of security and sovereignty in all means: in food, energy, pharmaceuticals and in infrastructure.

This is what forms the sovereignty that African nations fought for in the 20th century. Allowing someone to build a neocolonial system means to give up something what the brave men and women of the past sacrificed their lives for, the price they paid for that

cause. They have paid such an incredibly high price that forgetting this sacrifice today means betraying their very memory and the goal they fought for.

When I walk through the streets of Mauritian cities, drop by cultural centres and music halls, small shops by the broadwalk talk to the people in the street, it comes to my mind that **Mauritius, the small island, has achieved its fundamental goal: it has become the small model for this new, colourful, very diverse and multicultural world.**

Everyone who comes here with good intentions will find their place in this peaceful coexistence of all nations and religions. It appears to be as a drop of water, which, as it is, allows you to imagine and to understand what a huge, deep, different by many means, ocean is. It is a matter of great importance – the fact that Mauritius will play a significant role in shaping our future and contributing to our conference in Sochi. We have things to discuss together, things that will let us start the new future, the new way forward.

The Sergey Lazo large landing ship crosses the Indian Ocean to help the population of Mauritius affected by Cyclone Gervaise, 1975.



And Russia also has dreadful experience of fighting against those who want to rip off and squeeze our brains and resources. We are grateful to African nations for their support now and ready to support each and every of them.

Hence, the Third Russia-Africa Summit is a meeting of friends, an experience exchange, a discussion of vision of the future that we are to create.

Mauritius has its own purpose for attending this Summit. It has a lot to tell about the dream and reality – in its sustainable development projects, its experience of multinationalism and coexistence, and its preserving of traditional values. And at the same time Mauritius is no stranger to the problems common for all African countries – resilience as a fight for sovereignty and decolonization, fight against climate change, brain drain, energy and technology dependence. And once this big African family comes to Moscow for a chance not just to see its old friends but a chance to discuss something global – a trust, a willingness, and at the end – huge mutual investments for the mutual prosperity.

On October, 28-29, the big African family will talk about its achievements and needs, problems and solutions on the neutral and friendly territory – in Moscow. And at the same time everyone will have an opportunity to see cutting-edge technologies, make new friends, find new projects and new investors, and immerse inspiration from novel ideas. It is time for everyone to understand that united Africa is the big player at an enormous, super-connected and constantly changing world. The world where can't be too many friends and too much experience.

Thus, 'The Book of Friendship' made for this big event is about Russia's feeling of Mauritius and its vision of our joint cooperation. It is about everything that connects us through the ocean and everything that can be done to make our common dreams come true. This vision of our joint future will be on the agenda of the Russia-Africa Summit in Moscow on October 28-29. And we hope that the results of this meeting between the united African family and its long-term friend Russia will become a new chapter of our Book of Friendship – and not just for Russia and Mauritius.

Madagascar and Mauritius set sights on becoming Indian Ocean dental hubs

- The Indian Ocean Dental Congress (IODC) will take place in Antananarivo on October 30 and 31.

With artificial intelligence, technology and changing business models reshaping dentistry, professionals from across the region are gathering in Antananarivo to explore how greater regional cooperation could strengthen the sector.



For Mauritius, its international business hub status could connect dentistry with regional investment, professional services and global markets.

Between Madagascar and Mauritius, the Indian Ocean has traditionally been more bridge than barrier. Now, dental professionals on both islands are looking to turn that proximity into a platform for deeper cooperation and potentially establish the two countries as regional centres for dentistry, training and innovation. That ambition will come under the spotlight at the Indian Ocean Dental Congress (IODC),

scheduled to take place in Antananarivo on October 30 and 31, 2026.

Dr Nadia Rabedasy, president of the Malagasy Dental Association and one of the driving forces behind the congress, believes the region has an opportunity to build a stronger and more connected dental ecosystem. *“For Madagascar and Mauritius, the ocean has never been a border, but a link,”* she says. *“Today, this bond can take on a new form, centred on a shared smile.”*

The inaugural congress, organised by the Malagasy Dental Association in collaboration with the National Order of Odonto-Stomatologists, will be held under the theme *“Smile Tomorrow”*. According to Dr Rabedasy, the objective extends beyond bringing dentists together for a conventional professional conference. The organisers want to create a regional platform capable of encouraging

cooperation, exposing practitioners to new technologies and strengthening the position of Madagascar and the wider Indian Ocean region in medicine, research and professional training.

“This regional platform needs you,” Dr Rabedasy says, addressing her Mauritian counterparts.

The scale of the event reflects that regional ambition. Organisers expect more than 300 international participants, 40 exhibition stands and more than 20 international speakers at the CCI Ivato in Antananarivo.

At its core, the IODC is a continuing professional education congress, with more than 40 conferences, lectures and workshops planned over the two-day programme.

But the event is also designed to bring together the commercial and professional sides of the dental industry.

Exhibitors from several countries are expected to showcase products, equipment, services, technologies and innovations across the dental value chain. Networking spaces will operate throughout the congress, alongside a dedicated networking evening intended to encourage relationships between practitioners, businesses, researchers and other industry stakeholders.

For Dr Rabedasy, that combination is central to the event's purpose. *"It is a unique opportunity to access knowledge, expertise, innovation and professional networking all in one place,"* she says.

The congress will allow professionals to update their clinical knowledge, examine emerging techniques and technologies, exchange experiences with colleagues from other markets and establish links with international companies operating in the sector.

That regional dimension could prove particularly significant for smaller and emerging dental markets, where access to specialist training, technology and international networks can be more limited.

The question of which country could emerge as the region's principal dental hub may be less important than whether both can develop complementary roles. Dr Rabedasy argues that the answer should be both.

Rather than viewing Madagascar and Mauritius as competitors, she believes the two countries have the potential to develop into complementary centres for dental services, professional education, research, innovation and business.

AI could improve efficiency, support clinical decisions and analyse complex medical and dental data.

The proposition comes at a time when healthcare systems across Africa and the Indian Ocean are confronting rapid technological change while attempting to improve access to quality care.

For Mauritius, its position as an established international business and services centre could provide opportunities to connect the dental sector with regional investment, professional services and international markets. Madagascar, meanwhile, offers a large domestic market and a potentially important geographical and professional bridge between the Indian Ocean, mainland Africa and other international markets.

The challenge, however, will be converting geographical proximity into meaningful institutional cooperation. Few developments illustrate the speed of change in dentistry more clearly than artificial intelligence. For Dr Rabedasy, AI is no longer a distant prospect. It is already influencing everyday professional practice.

"We are already using it in our daily professional practice," she says, pointing to applications ranging from diagnosis and treatment planning to imaging, administrative processes and patient management. The IODC will devote several sessions to artificial intelligence, with specialists examining how the technology is changing the profession and how it can be integrated responsibly into dental practice.

The discussion reflects a broader transformation taking place across healthcare. AI has the potential

to improve efficiency, assist clinical decision-making and analyse increasingly sophisticated medical and dental data. At the same time, its growing use raises questions about professional responsibility, patient trust, data protection, accuracy and the continuing role of human judgement.

For dentists, therefore, technological adoption cannot simply be a question of purchasing new systems. It requires continuous professional education and a willingness to understand how those systems affect clinical practice. Technology is only one part of the challenge.

Modern dental practices increasingly operate as businesses as well as healthcare providers. Dentists may be clinicians, employers, investors and managers at the same time. Dr Rabedasy sees this convergence as one of the profession's defining challenges in 2026.

"One of the main challenges for dentists today is finding the right balance between professional competence, continuous learning, technological evolution and business leadership," she says.

A dentist must maintain clinical competence while keeping pace with new technologies. But where practitioners own or manage their practices, they must also understand leadership, financial management, organisation, human resources and business strategy.

"The challenge in 2026 is therefore not only to remain an excellent clinician," she says, *"but also to stay continuously informed, adapt to technological change and successfully lead a modern dental practice."*

That shift in expectations is likely to become increasingly important as dentistry becomes more technology-driven and internationally connected.

The IODC's organisers are positioning the congress as more than a two-day professional gathering. The broader objective is to create connections that continue after the conference ends.

The programme will be supported by partners including telecommunications company YAS, the Malagasy Dental Association and Nexacom, which is responsible for overall coordination.

For Mauritian dental professionals, the event is also an opportunity to look beyond the traditional boundaries of their domestic market.

For Malagasy professionals, it offers an avenue to strengthen links with Mauritius and other international markets.

And for both countries, the larger question is whether the Indian Ocean can develop its own interconnected dental ecosystem rather than relying primarily on established centres elsewhere. Dr Rabedasy believes the potential exists.

"Madagascar and Mauritius both have the potential to become dental hubs," she says. *"The objective should not be to ask which country will become the hub, but how both countries can work together to build one."*

That may ultimately be the most important message behind the *"Smile Tomorrow"* theme: in a profession being reshaped by technology and changing business models, the future of dentistry may depend as much on collaboration as it does on innovation.

And in the Indian Ocean, the first step towards that future may simply be to start working more closely together, she stresses.

**ABOUT
DR NADIA RABEDASY**



Dr Nadia Rabedasy, a dental surgeon and graduate of the Faculty of Dental Surgery at Paris VII, is currently vice-president of the Order of Dentists and president of the Malagasy Dental Association (ADM). She ran a private practice for 10 years in Lyon, France, and for 20 years in Antananarivo, Madagascar. She is a driving force behind the Indian Ocean Dental Congress (IODC) — the first dental congress of this scale ever organised in the region. Hosted in Madagascar, the congress is co-organised by the Malagasy Dental Association and the National Order of Odonto-Stomatologists.

Diamonds are not forever

- Lab-grown alternatives threaten Africa’s diamond economies

The global diamond industry is undergoing a structural transformation as laboratory-grown stones gain market share and natural diamond prices continue to decline. A report by CareEdge Global, titled “Diamonds are not forever”, warns that the consequences extend well beyond jewellery retailers and mining companies. For African producers, particularly Botswana, falling diamond revenues are becoming a growing source of economic and sovereign risk.

The diamond industry, long associated with rarity, luxury and enduring value, is confronting a fundamental change in its economic model. Advances in technology have made it possible to manufacture diamonds that are chemically and physically identical to natural stones, but available at a fraction of their price. The implications are increasingly visible in international trade, production volumes and the public finances of countries dependent on diamond exports.

According to a report published on August 11, 2026, by CareEdge Global, laboratory-grown diamonds are expected to account for 20–25% of global diamond sales by volume this year, compared with virtually no market presence in 2015. Their share could increase to 30–40% by 2030.

The transition is taking place against a difficult backdrop for the traditional diamond industry. Natural diamond prices have fallen by nearly half since their March 2022 peak, while global rough diamond production declined below 100 million carats in 2025 for the first time in more than two decades.

For Africa, which accounts for more than half of global rough diamond production, the implications are particularly significant. CareEdge Global identifies Botswana as facing high sovereign risk from the industry’s transformation, South Africa as moderately exposed and Tanzania as facing relatively limited risks.

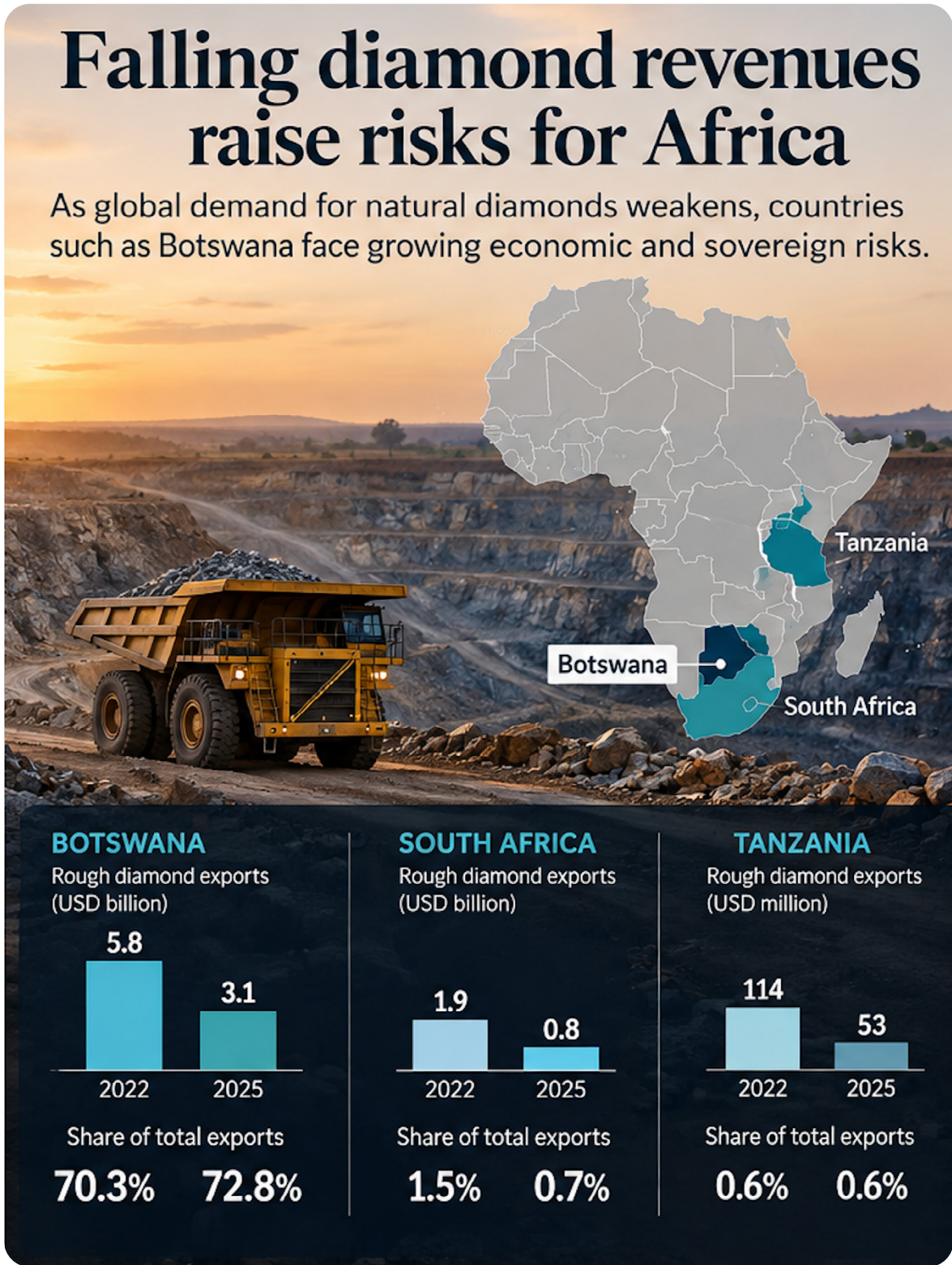
The report suggests that the challenge for diamond-producing countries is no longer simply managing fluctuations in commodity prices. It is adapting to a market in which the traditional foundations of demand for natural diamonds are being challenged.

A technological shift changes the economics of diamonds

Natural diamonds are formed deep within the Earth’s mantle over billions of years. Their geological scarcity has historically supported their commercial value, reinforced by marketing campaigns that established diamonds as symbols of permanence, prestige and personal commitment. Laboratory-grown diamonds challenge this model.

Produced using high-pressure, high-temperature (HPHT) or chemical vapour deposition (CVD) technology, these stones possess essentially the same chemical and physical characteristics as mined diamonds. Their production, however, takes weeks rather than geological timescales. More importantly, manufacturing capacity can be expanded in response to market demand, removing much of the geological constraint that governs natural diamond supply.

This distinction is increasingly important for consumers. While natural diamonds continue to command higher prices, laboratory-grown alternatives offer similar visual characteristics



at substantially lower cost. CareEdge Global illustrates the difference through a comparison of two one-carat round diamonds with equivalent specifications: excellent cut, G colour and VS2 clarity.

As of August 3, 2026, the laboratory-grown diamond was priced at USD 270, compared with USD 4,279 for the natural equivalent, according to pricing data from StoneAlgo cited in the report. The natural stone was therefore priced at almost 16 times the laboratory-grown alternative.

The substantial price difference is changing purchasing decisions, particularly among

younger consumers. Millennials and Generation Z increasingly place importance on affordability, transparency and sustainability considerations when choosing jewellery. The report identifies these preferences as important factors behind the growing acceptance of laboratory-grown diamonds, especially in entry-level and mid-market jewellery.

But the competitive advantage is not confined to consumer prices. The economics of jewellery retailing have also changed. As manufacturing technology improves and wholesale prices decline, retailers can acquire laboratory-grown

stones at increasingly low costs. Because wholesale prices have fallen faster than retail prices, retailers have retained opportunities to earn attractive margins, even while offering consumers significantly cheaper products.

This creates a commercial incentive to promote laboratory-grown diamonds, increasing their visibility in jewellery stores and accelerating their adoption. The industry therefore faces pressure from both sides: consumers are attracted by lower prices, while retailers have financial reasons to expand their laboratory-grown offerings.

Natural diamond prices have lost nearly half their value

The consequences for the traditional diamond industry are increasingly reflected in market indicators. According to CareEdge Global, the IDEX Diamond Index reached a peak of 158.4 in March 2022 before declining to approximately 82.5 by mid-2026. This represents a fall of 47.9%.

Although diamond prices have experienced cyclical fluctuations in the past, the sustained decline raises questions about the industry's ability to recover to earlier valuations. CareEdge Global attributes the weakness to several interconnected factors, including softer consumer demand, increased price sensitivity, elevated inventories and competition from laboratory-grown diamonds.

The report also points to wider economic conditions. Higher living costs, interest rates and uncertainty in major consumer markets have reduced discretionary spending on luxury products. These cyclical pressures have intensified the structural challenge created by laboratory-grown alternatives.

Mining companies have responded by reducing production in an attempt to stabilise supply and prices. Global rough diamond output fell to 98.8 million carats in 2025, according to Kimberley Process statistics cited by CareEdge Global. The decline is particularly significant because global production had remained above 100 million carats for most of the preceding decade.

However, reduced output has not been sufficient to restore pricing strength, suggesting that the difficulties facing the sector cannot be explained solely by temporary imbalances between supply and demand.

Global diamond exports contract sharply

The deterioration is equally visible in international trade. According to the report, global rough diamond exports reached approximately USD 50 billion between 2017 and 2018. Following the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, exports recovered to around USD 47 billion in 2021 and 2022. That recovery proved short-lived.

By 2025, rough diamond exports had fallen to USD 25.3 billion, approximately half their pre-pandemic peak. The contraction is even more pronounced when rough, cut and polished diamonds are considered together. Global exports in this broader category reached USD 126.6 billion in 2022 before declining to USD 52.3 billion in 2025.

The figures indicate that the industry's difficulties are not confined to mining operations. Diamond cutting, polishing, trading and distribution activities have also been affected by weakening demand and declining valuations.

This matters because the global diamond industry operates through an extensive international supply chain. Producing countries supply rough stones, which are subsequently traded, sorted, valued, cut and polished in specialised centres

Same diamond. A different price.

Laboratory-grown diamonds are chemically and physically identical to natural diamonds, but cost a fraction of the price.

Lab-grown diamond
USD 270
1 carat, excellent cut,
G colour, VS2 clarity

Lower price

Greater supply

Natural diamond
USD 4,279
1 carat, excellent cut,
G colour, VS2 clarity

Same chemical and physical properties

Growing consumer acceptance

before reaching jewellery manufacturers and retailers.

India plays a leading role in processing, alongside centres in Israel, China and Thailand. Major trading hubs include Dubai, Antwerp and Hong Kong. The United States, China, India, Japan, Germany and the United Kingdom represent important consumer markets.

Weakness in final consumer demand therefore affects economic activity across several countries, including those that do not mine diamonds themselves.

Africa produces more than half of the world's rough diamonds

The implications of this transformation are especially important for Africa. According to Kimberley Process data presented in the report, African producers including Botswana, Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia accounted collectively for 53.7% of global rough diamond production in 2025.

Russia remained the world's largest individual producer, with approximately 31.5 million carats, representing nearly one-third of global production. Africa's substantial share of output makes the continent particularly exposed to changes in international demand for natural diamonds.

However, the economic consequences vary considerably between countries. Production volumes alone do not determine the value of a country's diamond industry. The quality and average price of extracted stones also play important roles.

Namibia and Lesotho, for example, recorded average diamond values exceeding USD 330 per carat, according to the report. Botswana's average value stood at approximately USD 128 per carat, substantially higher than that of some other major producers. The Democratic Republic of Congo and Zimbabwe, by contrast, generally produce lower-value stones.

These differences influence export earnings and the ability of producing countries to generate income from their mineral resources. But the more decisive factor in assessing sovereign risk is the degree to which national economies and government finances depend on diamonds.

Botswana: A diamond-dependent economy faces growing sovereign risk

Botswana emerges as the most vulnerable of the three African economies examined in detail by CareEdge Global. The country has historically relied heavily on diamond mining to generate export earnings, government revenue and economic activity.

Although Botswana accounted for approximately 12.3% of global rough diamond exports in both 2022 and 2025, the value of those exports declined substantially. Rough diamond exports fell from USD 5.8 billion in 2022 to USD 3.1 billion in 2025.

The contraction has had significant consequences for the wider economy. In 2022, rough diamond exports were equivalent to 28.7% of Botswana's gross domestic product. By 2025, that contribution had fallen to 16%. Government mineral revenues also declined sharply, from 13.3% of GDP to 3%, representing a substantial reduction in an important source of public financing.

Yet Botswana's dependence on diamonds has not diminished in proportion to the fall in export revenues. In fact, rough diamonds accounted for 72.8% of total exports in 2025, compared with 70.3% in 2022.

This apparent contradiction illustrates the country's vulnerability: diamond earnings have declined, but the economy remains overwhelmingly dependent on the sector.

For the government, the implications extend beyond mining-sector profitability. Lower diamond export earnings can weaken the country's external position, while reduced mineral revenues constrain the resources available to finance public expenditure.

If the weakness in natural diamond demand persists, Botswana could face prolonged pressure on economic growth and public finances. CareEdge Global therefore assesses the country's exposure to the emergence of laboratory-grown diamonds as high.

The report also highlights a broader policy challenge: Botswana must diversify its sources of income and expand value-added activities if it is to reduce its vulnerability to changes in the global diamond market.

South Africa: A more diversified economy limits the impact

South Africa also faces declining diamond exports, but its broader economic structure provides a degree of protection. Rough diamond exports fell from USD 1.9 billion in 2022 to USD 800 million in 2025. Over the same period, South Africa's share of global rough diamond exports declined from 3.9% to 3.3%.

However, diamonds account for a relatively small proportion of the country's total exports and GDP. In 2025, rough diamond exports represented 0.7% of total exports and just 0.2% of GDP, compared with 1.5% and 0.5%, respectively, in 2022. Diamond-related government revenues are also relatively limited.

As a result, while weaker demand may affect mining companies, employment and export earnings within the sector, the broader macroeconomic consequences are expected to remain contained.

CareEdge Global assigns South Africa a moderate exposure to the rise of laboratory-grown diamonds. The distinction with Botswana demonstrates the importance of economic diversification in determining how countries absorb shocks to individual export industries.

Tanzania: Limited exposure to the global downturn

Tanzania presents a different picture. Although the country produces natural diamonds, the sector accounts for only a small share of its economy.

Rough diamond exports declined from USD

114 million in 2022 to USD 53 million in 2025. However, Tanzania represented just 0.2% of global rough diamond exports in 2025. Diamonds accounted for 0.6% of the country's total exports and approximately 0.1% of GDP.

Consequently, even a prolonged downturn in natural diamond demand is unlikely to create major risks for Tanzania's overall economic growth, fiscal position or external balances.

CareEdge Global assesses Tanzania's exposure as low. The comparison between Botswana, South Africa and Tanzania illustrates how the same global industry transformation can have markedly different economic consequences depending on the importance of diamonds to national income and public finances.

A redistribution of value across the global diamond industry

Beyond the immediate decline in prices and exports, the report identifies a broader reconfiguration of the diamond industry's international value chain.

Traditionally, diamond-producing countries have generated revenues through the extraction and export of rough stones. Additional value is created through sorting, cutting, polishing, jewellery manufacturing and retail distribution.

The emergence of laboratory-grown diamonds changes this economic structure by introducing an alternative source of supply that does not depend on mineral deposits.

Countries and businesses with the technological capabilities, manufacturing infrastructure and commercial networks to participate in this emerging segment may be better positioned to adapt. By contrast, economies dependent on the extraction of natural diamonds face a more difficult transition.

CareEdge Global considers that trading hubs capable of adjusting to changing market conditions may prove more resilient than countries whose export earnings and fiscal revenues remain closely tied to natural diamond production.

This does not necessarily mean that natural diamonds will disappear from the jewellery market. Their geological origin, rarity and established position in the luxury segment continue to differentiate them from manufactured alternatives.

However, the rapid expansion of laboratory-grown diamonds raises questions about the extent to which natural stones can continue to command substantial price premiums, particularly in more price-sensitive market segments.

The report indicates that the industry must respond to a lasting change in consumer preferences rather than assume that demand will return automatically as economic conditions improve.

Diversification becomes an economic imperative

For African diamond-producing countries, the most important implication may be the need to reduce dependence on a single commodity. The experience of Botswana demonstrates how falling export prices can rapidly translate into weaker government revenues and greater macroeconomic vulnerability.

Countries with diversified export bases, such as South Africa and Tanzania, are better positioned to absorb the same industry downturn. CareEdge Global consequently identifies economic diversification, greater value addition and strategic adaptation as essential responses to the changing

diamond market. The report also suggests that countries participating in the broader diamond value chain, rather than relying exclusively on extraction, may have more opportunities to adjust to the industry's transformation.

Nevertheless, developing processing capabilities alone may not fully protect producing economies if demand for natural diamonds continues to weaken. The longer-term challenge is to develop alternative sources of export earnings, investment and economic growth.

For policymakers, this requires distinguishing between temporary market weakness and a structural change in the industry. Production cuts and inventory adjustments may help stabilise prices in the short term. They cannot, on their own, reverse the technological advances and consumer preferences driving the growth of laboratory-grown diamonds.

The end of an established economic model?

The findings of CareEdge Global's report point to a transformation that reaches beyond the traditional boundaries of the luxury goods industry.

For consumers, laboratory-grown diamonds have made diamond jewellery more accessible. For retailers, lower acquisition costs have created new commercial opportunities. For producers of natural diamonds, however, the same developments are undermining established sources of demand and revenue.

The consequences are particularly important for countries that have built substantial parts of their economies around diamond extraction. Botswana's experience provides a clear illustration of the risks. Despite maintaining a significant position in the global diamond market, the country has experienced a sharp reduction in export earnings and mineral revenues.

South Africa and Tanzania, with lower economic dependence on diamonds, face more limited macroeconomic exposure. The divergence highlights an important distinction: the size of a country's mineral resources does not necessarily determine its resilience when global demand changes.

The future of the natural diamond industry will depend partly on its ability to maintain a distinct position in the luxury market, even as laboratory-grown alternatives become more affordable and widely available.

For producing economies, the challenge is more immediate. They must adapt their economic strategies to a market in which the value of natural diamonds can no longer be taken for granted.

The report's central warning is that the transition is structural, not merely cyclical. For the countries most dependent on diamonds, economic resilience will increasingly depend on their capacity to generate growth and government revenues beyond the mining sector.

Report credits and sources:
This article is based on Diamonds are not forever, a sovereign research report published by CareEdge Global IFSC Limited on August 11, 2026. The report draws on data from the Kimberley Process Rough Diamond Statistics, IMF Article IV reports, ITC Trade Map, IDEX Diamond Index, Paul Zimnisky Diamond Analytics, Edahn Golan Diamond Research & Data, the Bank of Botswana and StoneAlgo.

The CareEdge Global personnel credited in the report are Rajani Sinha, Chief Economist; Kiran Kavala, Senior Director; Sanroy Seechurn, Senior Manager; Girisha Algoo, Senior Analyst; and Mradul Mishra, Media Relations. The report lists these individuals as contacts.

Investment

Standard Chartered convenes leaders to explore Mauritius' role as a super connector to Africa



Standard Chartered Mauritius hosted a high-level roundtable at Hennessy Park Hotel on Friday, 29 August, bringing together senior representatives from government, regulatory bodies, diplomatic missions, financial institutions, professional services firms and the private sector to consider how Mauritius can strengthen its position as a super connector and trusted investment platform for Africa.

The event featured Dalu Ajene, CEO & Head of Coverage, Corporate & Investment Banking, Standard Chartered, Africa, as the keynote speaker and was opened by Abrar Anwar, CEO, Standard Chartered Mauritius.

Held under the theme “Mauritius: The Super Connector to Africa,” the discussion examined the country’s role in mobilising global capital for Africa’s growth. Participants considered how its strengths in governance, regulatory certainty, professional expertise and international connectivity could attract investment and enable cross-border capital flows.

Participants also discussed Africa’s funding needs and Mauritius’ potential to move beyond a traditional gateway role by supporting capital formation and investment structuring across the continent.

Dalu Ajene, CEO & Head of Coverage, Corporate & Investment Banking, Standard Chartered Africa, said:

“Africa’s opportunity is significant, but capital needs more than opportunity; it needs trust. Trust is the bedrock of every successful economy and one of Mauritius’ greatest strengths. Through strong governance, respected legal frameworks and deep expertise, Mauritius has built the confidence investors seek when deploying capital. It is therefore well positioned not only as a gateway into Africa, but as a trusted platform where global capital can be mobilised and scaled to support the continent’s growth ambitions.”

Ajene added that Mauritius’ position at the intersection of Africa, the Middle East and Asia gives it the potential to become a stronger hub for capital and expertise. As Africa works to bridge its funding gap, credible financial centres will be critical to unlocking sustainable growth.

Abrar Anwar, CEO, Standard Chartered Mauritius, said:

“Mauritius has earned global recognition as a trusted, well-regulated international financial centre. Today’s discussion reinforced the opportunity to look beyond its traditional gateway role and connect global capital with African opportunity. By convening leaders from government, business, diplomatic missions and the financial community, we are fostering the partnerships and ideas that can support the next chapter of growth for Mauritius and Africa.”

The roundtable reflects Standard Chartered’s commitment to using its international network to connect clients, investors and institutions while advancing trade, investment and economic development across Africa.

Participants concluded that Mauritius’ combination of trust, stability, connectivity and institutional strength provides a solid foundation for the country to become a platform where capital is formed, mobilised and deployed at scale, translating confidence into investment and sustainable growth across Africa.

Minister Jyoti Jeetun attends 26th ESAAMLG Council of Ministers Meeting in Rwanda

Dr Jyoti Jeetun, Minister of Financial Services and Economic Planning, represented Mauritius at the 26th Council of Ministers Meeting of the Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group (ESAAMLG) in Kigali, Rwanda, held from 3 to 5 September. The meeting formed part of the ESAAMLG Annual Meetings, which bring together ministers and senior government representatives from 22

countries across Eastern and Southern Africa, alongside international partners including the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the African Development Bank.

The meetings took place at a particularly important time for Mauritius as the country continues to strengthen its position as a trusted, transparent and internationally respected financial centre and prepares for the Mutual Evaluation by ESAAMLG in 2027.

While the technical discussions focused on combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other forms of financial crime, the stakes for Mauritius go far beyond regulation. The credibility of Mauritius’ financial system is directly linked to investor confidence and the country’s reputation on the global stage.



For Minister Jeetun, participation at the Kigali meeting was therefore an opportunity to ensure that Mauritius remains actively engaged in shaping the regional and international agenda on financial integrity. *“For Mauritius, a strong and trusted financial system is not simply a regulatory issue. It is an economic imperative,”* Minister Jeetun said ahead of her departure. *“Our reputation has taken decades to build. We must continue to protect it through strong institutions, effective laws, international cooperation and a clear commitment to the highest global standards.”*

Africa looks to unlock a new wave of climate finance



Africa's carbon markets are moving into a new phase, with governments strengthening policy, investors looking for credible projects and growing attention on how the continent can unlock more climate finance. These opportunities will be at the centre of the Carbon Markets Africa Summit (CMAS) 2026, taking place from 13 to 15 October 2026 in Kigali, Rwanda. Policymakers, investors, carbon project developers, corporate buyers and market leaders from Africa and around the world will come together to explore how high-integrity carbon markets can support investment and sustainable development across the continent.

The summit comes as Article 6 implementation advances globally and African governments move from readiness to implementation. Across the continent, there are signs of increasing market activity. The African Union is rolling out the Africa Action Plan on Carbon Markets, while countries such as Ghana are developing Article 6 project pipelines and authorisation systems. AUDA-NEPAD's African Principles for Equity and Integrity in Carbon Markets are also putting greater focus on governance, transparency, community benefit-sharing and confidence in the market.

For Africa, the next challenge is turning this progress into transactions and investment. Buyers and investors are looking more closely at project quality, credible MRV, compliance readiness, transaction certainty and clear policy. Strong projects will need to connect with the right capital, buyers, standards, infrastructure and institutional support if the market is to grow.

Hosted by the Ministry of Environment of Rwanda, CMAS 2026 brings together leading public and private sector institutions involved in Africa's carbon markets. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the African Development Bank (AfDB) serve as host organisations, the Development Bank of

Southern Africa (DBSA) as host partner, and AUDA-NEPAD as strategic institutional partner.

Focus on key market questions

The growing network behind the 2026 summit reflects the range of expertise needed to build a functioning carbon market. New partners and contributors include GIZ, BeZero Carbon, Welthungerhilfe, FSD Africa, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Carbon Standards International. They join standards bodies, ratings agencies, financiers, governments and project developers working across the carbon market value chain.

The updated programme focuses on some of the questions the market is now grappling with. How do Article 6 and CORSIA move from policy into real transactions? What are buyers and investors prepared to fund? What makes a project bankable, insurable and verifiable? And how can Africa build the MRV and validation capacity it needs while maintaining market integrity?

These conversations will include contributions and technical insights from organisations including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the European Commission. More than 10 African governments and over 20 investors and financiers will also be represented, uniting those shaping policy, financing projects and developing the market.

Across three days, CMAS 2026 will feature high-level leadership discussions, investor and buyer roundtables, project showcases, technical workshops, solution labs and dedicated deal rooms.

Defining force

The programme will tackle Article 6 and CORSIA, voluntary demand and offtake realities, high-quality MRV and ratings, policy readiness, regional carbon market alignment and early-stage carbon finance. It will also explore global regulatory shifts, private capital de-risking, authorisation in practice, registry interoperability and how Africa can scale MRV and VVB capacity.

A UNEP-hosted Nature Deal Room will bring African governments, corporate buyers, investors, standards bodies and market intermediaries together to advance high-integrity nature-based carbon transactions.

"I genuinely think Africa could become the defining force in global carbon markets," says Shikha Sharma, Global Technical Lead – Offsets & Removals, SGS. "The continent has extraordinary natural assets. If Africa gets governance right, invests in local capabilities and keeps integrity at the centre, it won't just supply the market. It will influence how the market operates globally."

At CMAS 2026, market integrity will be closely linked to investment and implementation. Governments are strengthening policy frameworks, investors are looking for credible, scalable opportunities and buyers want greater confidence in the quality of the projects they support. Bringing these different parts of the market together will be important if more climate finance is to reach African projects.

Collaboration is critical

"For UNDP, the true value of carbon markets lies in what they make possible: finance for national priorities, decent jobs, resilient livelihoods, and sustainable development. The task before us in Kigali is to build markets that are credible, investable, and designed to deliver real value for African countries and communities," said Fatmata Lovetta Sesay, Resident Representative, UNDP Rwanda.

Looking ahead, Emmanuelle Nicholls, Portfolio Director, says collaboration will be critical to unlocking Africa's growing carbon market opportunity.

"Africa's carbon markets are entering a defining period as governments strengthen policy frameworks and investor confidence grows. This presents a significant opportunity to unlock climate finance, attract investment and deliver lasting economic, environmental and social value. Realising that opportunity will require collaboration across governments, investors, project developers and the private sector."

Analysis

South Africa's \$122bn energy pitch to China: A new playbook for African energy?



South Africa is seeking Chinese investment in a R2.2 trillion (\$122 billion) energy programme aimed at expanding electricity supply and rebuilding its industrial base. The plan targets 105GW of new generation capacity and 14,500km of transmission lines by 2039 as the country moves beyond years of crippling load shedding. Pretoria is also seeking Chinese companies to manufacture transformers, batteries, solar equipment, cables and other energy infrastructure locally. The strategy could reduce import dependence, create jobs and position South Africa as a major African hub for clean-energy manufacturing.

South Africa has been courting Chinese investment for a R2.2 trillion (roughly \$122 billion) programme under its Integrated Resource Plan 2025, targeting 105 GW of new generation and 14,500 km of transmission by 2039. Minister Kgosientsho Ramokgopa pitched the plan to Chinese investors in Beijing this month. The mission produced “advance interest” from six equipment manufacturers, the government says, but no signed financing, and whether Chinese participation arrives as equity or as debt remains an open, consequential question.

From railways to factories

For two decades, China's African investment strategy centred on single, discrete assets funded through sovereign loans from state banks with Kenya's Nairobi-Mombasa Standard Gauge Railway and Ethiopia's Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway among the best-

known examples. That model has retreated in aggregate: overall Chinese lending to Africa fell from a \$28.8 billion peak in 2016 to \$2.1 billion in 2024, with fossil fuel and generation projects losing funding entirely that year, according to Boston University's Global Development Policy Center. Whether South Africa's pitch breaks from the old pattern, though, is not yet settled. Coverage of the Beijing conference has flagged an unresolved debt question: Eskom already carries roughly three-quarters of the state's guarantee exposure to state-owned companies. Meanwhile, the traditional “contractor-linked” model, in which a Chinese loan is tied to a Chinese-built asset, tends to import equipment and labour rather than build local capacity. Whether new capital arrives as equity in independent projects or as fresh debt against Eskom will determine which era of Chinese investment this actually belongs to.

A South African exception

Whether a manufacturing-led model travels is doubtful, at least in the short term. South Africa is not a blank industrial canvas. Its decades-old automotive manufacturing sector, already home to several global carmakers, gives it logistics, skilled labour and industrial policy experience most African peers cannot match. Fifteen years of REIPPPP, the programme that runs competitive bidding rounds for private generation, have added local content policy machinery and a real, if contested, manufacturing base: ARTsolar and JinkoSolar both operate module plants, and JA Solar agreed to expand local production only last year. A newer vehicle, the Independent Transmission Project Programme, has prequalified seven consortia for its first 1,164 km round, with proposals due later this year. Whether Chinese firms feature among them is the first real test of how far this partnership extends beyond generation and into the grid. Most other African markets lack this scaffolding: the offtake structures, the skilled workforce, and above all the demand volume

needed to justify a factory rather than a container of imported panels. Morocco and Egypt, both with established automotive and heavy industry sectors, look like the more plausible next candidates.

What it means for the market

The implications of this plan go beyond manufacturing. Chinese EPCs are not a future prospect: PowerChina and its Sinohydro arm already lead South Africa's utility-scale solar construction, having built the 342 MW De Aar Central plant, the 100 MW Redstone CSP tower and the 123 MW Damlaagte project. Fresh capital is more likely to deepen that position than create it. Whether the market can absorb more competition is, in truth, the less pressing question: 105 GW to 2039 dwarfs anything South Africa has procured to date, and the binding constraints so far has been transmission capacity and project finance, not a shortage of demand for developer or EPC services.

The sharper question is compliance, and here the instinct that in-country manufacturing eases local content is largely right: South Africa's rules, set through the Department of Trade, Industry & Competition's Designated Local Production Programme, are based on where components are made, not on who owns the factory, so a Chinese-built plant counts the same as a South African one. JinkoSolar's Cape Town facility already does. The real risk for firms like ARTsolar, which is pursuing legal action over alleged non-compliance with local-content requirements in renewable-energy tenders, is competitive rather than regulatory: better-capitalised Chinese entrants could out-compete existing local manufacturers on price while still meeting the same content rules. The government's own framing is that this should deliver factories, not just pylons, but that depends on local content being written into contracts, not left to conference speeches.

[Source: African Solar Intelligence]

'Integrating Africa: From Threads to Hubs'

New report advocates shift from trade links to regional production hubs

A new World Bank report released on August 28 and titled 'Integrating Africa: From Threads to Hubs' finds that the continent's next major integration gains will come from making African markets work together—connecting production across borders, reducing trade and regulatory frictions, strengthening implementation of regional agreements, and delivering the infrastructure, services, and jobs that regional markets need.

Launched at an event co-hosted by the African Union Commission, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), and the World Bank Group, the report sets out a practical agenda for converting continental commitments into functioning markets and regional production hubs. It calls for interoperable customs, standards, payments, transport, energy, and digital systems, so firms can source, produce, finance, and sell across borders through predictable rules and procedures.

Integrating Africa estimates that deeper liberalization of transport, telecommunications, financial, and professional services could raise the trade in services within the African Continental Free Trade Agreement area (AfCFTA) by about 60–64% by 2035. It would also help countries trade more within the region and create more and better jobs. Currently, intra-regional trade represents roughly one-fifth of Sub-Saharan Africa's total exports. Increasing that share would boost value chains that are typically more diversified and more manufacturing-intensive than exports to global markets, which remain concentrated on commodities.

Many of the largest barriers to regional integration are within countries' own control. About 60% of estimated trade costs are unilateral or behind-the-border, reflecting customs delays, inefficient logistics, transport restrictions,



fragmented standards, services barriers, and weak infrastructure. This means governments can unlock a large share of the gains from integration through domestic reforms without waiting for new regional negotiations. Electronic single windows, risk-based inspections, more competitive freight markets, simpler rules of origin, stronger standard institutions, and more open transport, financial, and professional services can all reduce costs immediately.

To deliver tangible integration outcomes, the report organises its recommendations around four mutually reinforcing priorities: building regional value chains that connect production across borders; reducing trade and regulatory frictions; deepening, implementing, and enforcing regional trade agreements; and delivering regional public goods, including transport corridors, power markets, digital networks, and payment systems.

"Africa has a continental free trade agreement. The focus is now implementation," said Ndiame Diop, World Bank Vice President for Eastern and Southern Africa. "We are working with the AfCFTA Secretariat, other African

institutions, governments, and the private sector to connect 54 economies into an integrated continental market of 1.5 billion people, with regional production hubs that can attract investment and create jobs at scale."

"No institution can deliver Africa's integration agenda alone. The African Union Commission, UNECA, the World Bank Group, Member States, regional economic communities, and the private sector must work together to translate continental frameworks into practical investments and reforms that make regional integration work for businesses and citizens," said H.E. Amb. Selma Malika Haddadi, Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

The report calls for progress to be measured through outcomes that tangibly benefit people and firms: shorter border-crossing times, lower logistics costs, more reliable regional infrastructure, more non-tariff barriers resolved, more qualifications recognized across markets, greater private investment, and more firms participating in regional value chains.

Extract from the Report

Why Integration, and Why Now? A Development Rationale

African countries have become increasingly open to trade, but without experiencing the growth and structural transformation seen in other regions. International trade played a central role in the East Asian growth miracle (World Bank 1993), and subsequent expansions in preferential trade agreements globally helped usher in an era of global and regional value chains (World Bank 2020). Recent empirical studies reaffirm the trade-growth link, demonstrating that trade can support long-run growth, especially where accompanied by structural change and industrial upgrading. Yet Africa has not followed this pattern.

Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) exhibits a level of trade openness (with a ratio of trade to gross domestic product [GDP] of 55–60 percent) comparable to that of East Asia and Pacific (EAP). Unlike EAP, where openness translated into high and rising per capita income, SSA economies remain far below the global income–openness line. In 2015, both regions recorded similar trade-to-GDP ratios (56 percent), yet SSA's GDP per capita (\$1,635) was just 16 percent of EAP's. This decoupling between trade and income points to a fundamental structural

disconnect in Africa's trade integration model.

The problem lies not in how much Africa trades, but in what it trades and with whom. As figure 0.1b illustrates, SSA's exports to the rest of the world are heavily concentrated in primary commodities—fuels, metals, and raw agricultural goods. These sectors are low in complexity, have limited domestic linkages, and are exposed to price volatility. In contrast, EAP exports predominantly capital and consumer goods—products embedded in manufacturing- and technology-intensive value chains that create jobs, knowledge spillovers, and productivity growth. A different picture emerges when examining intra-African trade. As shown in figure 0.1c, SSA trades more manufactured goods, processed food, and capital goods with itself than with the rest of the world. The structure of intraregional trade more closely resembles that of EAP—characterized by higher-value products, stronger forward and backward linkages, and greater potential for industrial deepening. Yet this intra-African trade remains underdeveloped, accounting for just 15–17 percent of total exports.

Geography and scale jointly constrain Africa's path to industrial transformation, making regional integration a structural necessity rather than a policy choice. Sixteen of the continent's 55 countries are landlocked, and many others are geographically remote from major global trade routes, limiting their ability to participate in global value chains that

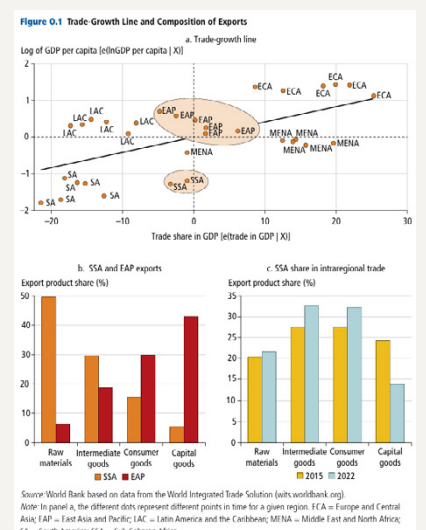
depend on high-frequency, just-in-time logistics. For these economies, regional markets are not substitutes for global markets—they are prerequisites for industrial development. More broadly, the case for integration in Africa is rooted in its fragmented economic geography.

With median GDP below \$15 billion and domestic markets smaller than many Asian cities, most African countries are simply too small, landlocked, or remote to achieve scale economies independently. National markets lack the density to support diversified production, industrial agglomeration, or modern service exports.

Regional integration addresses this structural limitation by pooling demand, lowering average production costs, and enabling the emergence of regional value chains. It does so particularly in sectors such as agro-processing, automotive components, and light manufacturing that would be otherwise subscale at the national level. Many countries are just one or two adjacency steps away from more complex products but remain trapped in low complexity equilibria because of capability gaps that are insurmountable without regional specialization. This evidence reframes the economic rationale for regional integration. It is not merely a textbook prescription for small markets.

Regional integration is a necessary strategy to realign trade with development goals. Integration expands market size, facilitates specialization, supports

production networks, and reduces unit costs through economies of scale. It helps overcome the spatial and infrastructural fragmentation that inhibits African firms from participating in complex, higher-value sectors. Crucially, integration can shift Africa's comparative advantage from static resource-based exports toward dynamic manufacturing and services. In short, Africa already trades the right things with itself—but not enough. The case for regional integration is thus a case for turning existing structural patterns into engines of transformation. It is a structural strategy to expand the feasible set of development trajectories under conditions of fragmentation, specialization traps, and institutional heterogeneity



Séance spéciale ciné-débat

L'Afrique en quête de ses chefs-d'œuvre

À qui appartiennent les œuvres africaines conservées dans les musées occidentaux ? Comment penser leur retour, leur transmission et leur place dans les récits historiques contemporains ? Alors que les questions de restitution des biens culturels occupent une place croissante dans les débats internationaux, l'Institut français de Maurice propose au public une soirée autour de ces enjeux, le mercredi 9 septembre 2026 à 18h30, avec la projection du documentaire « Restituer ? L'Afrique en quête de ses chefs-d'œuvre » de Nora Philippe, suivie d'un débat avec Vincent Négri, juriste et chercheur spécialiste du droit international du patrimoine culturel.

Coproduit par Arte et diffusé en 2021, le film retrace plus d'un siècle de pillages coloniaux, l'histoire de la constitution des collections des grands musées occidentaux et les combats menés par des États, des chercheurs et des communautés africaines pour le retour de leur patrimoine culturel. Depuis sa diffusion, le documentaire a été présenté dans de nombreuses institutions culturelles et universitaires à travers le monde, ainsi qu'à l'UNESCO et à l'Assemblée nationale française.

La projection sera suivie d'un échange avec Vincent Négri, juriste, chercheur à l'Institut des Sciences sociales du Politique (ENS Paris-Saclay) et expert

auprès de l'UNESCO, de l'UNIDROIT, de l'ICOM et de la CEDEAO. Il a notamment contribué à la rédaction de la partie juridique du rapport « Restitution du patrimoine culturel africain. Vers une nouvelle éthique relationnelle », remis en 2018 au président de la République française par Felwine Sarr et Bénédicte Savoy, qui a profondément renouvelé le débat sur les restitutions en France et à l'international.

Cette rencontre s'inscrit dans un contexte de forte actualité. En France, la loi du 9 mai 2026 sur la restitution des biens culturels issus d'appropriations illicites marque une nouvelle étape vers un cadre juridique plus pérenne, fondé sur l'expertise scientifique et la coopération entre États.

La venue de Vincent Négri à Maurice intervient dans le cadre du projet de préservation du patrimoine mauricien initié par l'ambassade de France à Maurice et mis en œuvre par Expertise France en partenariat avec le ministère mauricien des Arts et de la Culture. Sa mission s'inscrit plus particulièrement dans le cadre de la transformation du National Heritage Fund en National Heritage Authority, destinée à renforcer le cadre institutionnel et les pouvoirs de protection du patrimoine mauricien.

À Maurice, comme dans l'ensemble de l'océan Indien, ces questions entrent en résonance avec l'histoire des collections constituées durant la période coloniale et invitent à réfléchir à la manière dont les patrimoines circulent, se transmettent et se racontent aujourd'hui.



Un nouveau nom de prestige à l'AfrAsia Bank Mauritius Open

Le rayonnement international de l'AfrAsia Bank Mauritius Open se mesure déjà au prestige des joueurs qui y ont participé : vainqueurs de tournois majeurs, anciens numéros un mondiaux, figures emblématiques de la Presidents Cup et de la Ryder Cup. Un nouveau nom vient s'ajouter à ce palmarès, avec l'entrée dans ce cercle d'un caddie victorieux en tournoi majeur.

Ryan Fox, tenant du titre du British Open et son caddie Dean Smith avaient pris part ensemble à l'AfrAsia Bank Mauritius Open en 2016, aux prémices d'une collaboration qui allait se révéler particulièrement fructueuse et accompagner Fox jusqu'à la 24e place mondiale.

« L'AfrAsia Bank Mauritius Open 2016 correspondait vraiment au tout début de ma collaboration avec Ryan. C'était son premier séjour à Maurice et ce voyage a également beaucoup compté dans le coup de cœur que ma femme et moi avons eu pour l'île. Nous nous y sommes ensuite installés en 2023. C'est cette année-là que Louis Oosthuizen a remporté le tournoi et j'ai eu la chance d'être présent pour assister à sa victoire. C'était un moment particulier », confie Dean Smith.

Sa passion pour le golf et les liens qu'il entretient depuis plusieurs années avec Maurice lui offrent également un regard privilégié sur l'essor de la discipline dans l'île.

« Le golf à Maurice connaît un développement remarquable. Il occupe désormais une vraie place. Le golf junior progresse et lorsque je suis sur l'île et que je joue avec mes amis, je vois les zones d'entraînement remplies de jeunes golfeurs. Le climat exceptionnel de Maurice constitue évidemment un atout pour la pratique du golf. Et puis, l'île offre un choix remarquable de parcours, avec une belle diversité allant de parcours de resort particulièrement agréables jusqu'à des parcours de championnat. »



Dean Smith souligne également le rôle majeur joué dans cette évolution par l'AfrAsia Bank Mauritius Open, tournoi co-sanctionné par le DP World Tour et le Sunshine Tour, qui célèbre cette année sa 10e édition.

« Louis Oosthuizen, un vainqueur de tournoi majeur, a remporté le titre. Jayden Schaper s'y est également imposé et poursuit une progression remarquable. Il évoluera sur le PGA TOUR la saison prochaine. La compétition réunit des joueurs d'un niveau exceptionnel venus du monde entier. »

Air Mauritius accompagne cette dynamique en tant que compagnie aérienne officielle de l'AfrAsia Bank Mauritius Open.

« Au cours de la dernière décennie, Air Mauritius a joué un rôle déterminant dans le positionnement de Maurice parmi les destinations golfiques de premier plan. À travers des partenariats stratégiques avec des tournois et des avantages spécialement conçus pour ses passagers, la compagnie nationale continue de créer des passerelles entre le tourisme golfique international et l'hôtellerie haut de

gamme mauricienne, en sa qualité de compagnie aérienne officielle de l'AfrAsia Bank Mauritius Open », déclare Rana Ramdaursingh, directrice par intérim des ventes et du marketing d'Air Mauritius.

« Ce partenariat va bien au-delà du golf : il s'agit de faire rayonner Maurice à travers le monde. En tant que compagnie aérienne nationale, nous sommes aussi les ambassadeurs de notre pays. Chaque liaison que nous opérons, chaque passager que nous transportons et chaque événement international que nous soutenons contribue à accroître la visibilité de Maurice et à affirmer son statut de destination de choix. »

Doté de 1,5 million de dollars, l'AfrAsia Bank Mauritius Open se disputera du 10 au 13 décembre sur le parcours de Mont Choisy Le Golf. Un plateau d'exception se dessine déjà avec la présence du tenant du titre Jayden Schaper, de la révélation sud-africaine Casey Jarvis, qui s'est classé dans le Top 10 du British Open à Royal Birkdale cette année, de l'ancien vainqueur Antoine Rozner, ainsi que de Dean Burmester, multiple vainqueur sur le DP World Tour.

When Safety Has a Price Again: Rethinking Wealth for a New Rate Era

By Dr Chakshay Sharma and Dr Suresh Nanda

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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For investors, higher interest rates have changed the meaning of 'safe' investing. Cash and short-term, high-quality instruments can now generate meaningful income, while longer-term bonds can lose value as yields rise. The challenge is therefore no longer simply protecting wealth but deciding how much capital must be protected and how much can be put deliberately at risk to generate growth.

Global bond markets have just done something they have not since 2008. They have repriced risk so sharply that long-term yields are now at their highest levels in a generation, Japanese 10-year bonds are trading near levels last seen in 1996. The European Central Bank raised its deposit rate again on 10 September, to 2.5%. The reason is an energy shock out of the Gulf, which has pushed Eurozone inflation up to 3.3%. Yet the bank's own economists admit the underlying, non-energy picture is calmer. The US Federal Reserve has held its policy rate at 3.5-3.75% for five straight meetings. But its Chair now says openly that underlying inflation 'is not slowing'. A rising minority on the committee wants to tighten further, not cut. Add tanker attacks and drone strikes in the Gulf, oil pushing back above US\$100 a barrel and a genuine debate in Central Bank circles about the US Dollar's reliability as the world's reserve anchor, and the result is a macro backdrop that most private bankers under the age of 45 have simply never had to manage money through.

For high-net-worth and ultra-high-net-worth families, this story strikes at an assumption most portfolios have relied on for the past decade and a half: That government bonds are the 'safe' part of a portfolio, there to cushion the equity sleeve when markets fall. That assumption held up reasonably well through most of the post-2008 era of near-zero rates. But it has been tested hard over the past two years. When yields rise this fast, existing bond prices fall - sometimes sharply. The very instrument meant to protect capital during a crisis can itself become a source of loss, or worse, a shock. There is a genuine silver lining though, which did not exist for most of the 2010s: Short-duration, high-quality fixed income and cash-like instruments are now paying a real, attractive income again, for the first time in over a decade. In plain terms, this means instruments such as government treasury bills, top-rated short-term corporate bonds, money-market funds and fixed-term bank deposits: holdings that mature quickly, carry little risk of default and can be converted back into cash with minimal fuss.

This combination, rate risk in duration, but real income in safety is prompting a rethink. The question is not just what to invest in. It is how wealth itself should be structured. One approach gaining renewed attention among family offices is to stop treating the portfolio as a single blended mix and instead structure it deliberately in two tiers. Most of the capital, the bulk of a family's accumulated wealth, sits in a genuinely hyper-safe, income-producing core. This includes short-duration sovereign debt, high-grade money-market instruments and capital-protected structured instruments, whose principal is designed to be returned in full at maturity regardless of what markets do in between. The income this core throws off, together with a smaller, clearly ring-fenced sleeve of capital, is then free to be deployed into genuinely higher-risk, higher-conviction assets: growth equities, private markets, concentrated strategies as they become available at lucrative entry

levels from the long-term investment perspective. Here, the family genuinely develops a high-risk tolerance because the capital that must never be at risk is never touched.

How large should that risk-taking sleeve be? This is not simply an arithmetic question. Behavioural economics suggests the answer lies in knowing the client well beyond their balance sheet - their genuine appetite to watch a defined amount fall in value without abandoning the plan. Losses are typically felt roughly twice as intensely as equivalent gains. That is precisely why a family's stated risk tolerance and its actual behaviour under stress can diverge sharply. Sizing the sleeve well also means stress-testing it properly. The question is not just what could go wrong, but how severe the realistic, worst case could be - a discipline formalised in tools such as Conditional Value-at-Risk.

It is worth being explicit about what this buys you, compared with the simpler alternative of holding the entire portfolio in '100% safe' instruments. A fully safe portfolio does preserve nominal capital. But it caps the return at whatever that safe rate happens to be and it does nothing to protect against inflation eroding the real value of that capital over a decade or two, which matters enormously for wealth in the long run. This is, in effect, an early estate-planning decision. The capital ring-fenced in the safe core is what a family can commit today to pass on with confidence. The risk sleeve is where the growth needed to fund the next generation's ambitions is pursued - not merely to preserve the current generation's wealth, but to grow it for the next. The two-tier, capital-protected structure keeps the same non-negotiable floor: The core capital is never lost. At the same time, it deliberately takes risk with a defined amount that the family has decided in advance. The maximum potential loss is known on day one. The upside on the risk sleeve is not capped.

None of this is new in principle. It is, in fact, a return to the oldest and the most quoted idea in modern portfolio theory: That diversification is 'the only free lunch' in investing. Almost everything else in finance involves a trade-off - more expected return requires accepting more risk. Diversification is the only exception. Combining assets that do not move in lockstep can lower the risk of a portfolio without necessarily lowering its expected return at all. The clearest historical example remains 2008 itself. Investors holding pure equity portfolios lost well over a third of their capital within months. Those who also held high-quality government bonds fared better, because those bonds rose in value as panicked capital fled into safety, cushioning the blow substantially. That is diversification doing exactly what it promises: not eliminating risk, but genuinely reducing it, without a corresponding drop in return.

Today's environment raises an uncomfortable question: Can that free lunch still be relied upon in quite the same form? Government bonds themselves may now be a source of volatility, rather than a reliable offset to it or so the current global bond sell-off suggests. If so, the classical equity-bond diversification that underpinned six decades of portfolio construction needs to be re-examined. It does not need to be abandoned. That re-examination and what it means in practice for how a family's 'safe' and 'growth' sleeves should actually be built today is the subject we take up next.

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