



Closed-door roundtable

Development and Digitalisation in Africa: Italy's Cooperation Policy and Synergy with EU Plans

“Shaping a shared vision on digital cooperation between Italy and Africa”

FRIDAY, 9 MAY 2025

15:00–17:00 CEST

Venue:

Istituto Affari Internazionali-IAI
Via dei Montecatini, 17
Rome – Italy

Working language: English (no simultaneous translation will be provided)

CHATHAM HOUSE RULE / IN PERSON MEETING

The digital divide remains stark despite increased connectivity, with disparities across regions, gender, and income. 5.3 billion people are digitally connected today compared to only 1 billion people in 2002. Despite progress of the last two decades, high connectivity costs and limited digital skills training hinder access, particularly in low-income countries. For example, the cost of a smart phone in sub-Saharan Africa is more than 40 per cent of average monthly income, and users pay three times the global average for mobile data. Furthermore, data and innovation gaps exacerbate and reinforce inequality between and among social groups, as a few global players dominate technological advancements, while many developing countries remain mere data providers. Wealth concentration accelerates, with a handful of tech billionaires amassing fortunes greater than half of G20 economies. In most instances, governance frameworks lag rapid digital transformations, leaving public institutions ill-equipped to regulate emerging technologies. Without urgent global cooperation and inclusive governance, digital inequalities will deepen, threatening equitable progress and shared prosperity. A shared vision on digital cooperation between Italy (Europe) and Africa is crucial to achieving a governance framework required for a sustainable digital future for both continents.



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Guiding Questions:

- *How can Italy's Mattei Plan serve as an instrument to bridge Africa's digital divide, and what role can it play in addressing gender, income, and regional disparities in internet access and affordability in Africa?*
- *What strategies can governments and the private sector adopt to ensure that investments in digital technology are matched by investments in public education, infrastructure, and skills development?*
- *How can African countries move beyond being raw data providers to fully participating in and benefiting from the digital economy? What policies are needed to ensure fair value distribution from data-driven innovations?*
- *Given the governance gap in regulating AI, blockchain, and other disruptive technologies, what frameworks should Africa and Europe adopt to ensure ethical, inclusive, and responsible digital development?*
- *With digitally deliverable services dominating global trade, how can African and European economies foster equitable participation in the global digital marketplace while preventing monopolization by a few dominant players?*
- *How can digital innovation be harnessed to improve public service delivery, build climate neutral and cyber resilient digital foundations and advance Africa's digital public infrastructure? What role can policy interventions play in achieving this balance?*
- *What mechanisms should be put in place to mitigate the risks associated with digital technologies, such as cybercrime, misinformation, and the weaponization of technology in political and economic conflicts?*
- *How can Africa and Europe drive global multi-stakeholder cooperation to ensure that digital transformations benefit all, rather than entrenching existing inequalities?*
- *How can Italy's Mattei Plan strengthen synergies with other EU and EU Members' policies on digital transformation?*
- *Given the constant evolution of the international scenario, especially considering the US changes in its development agenda, what role should the EU and Italy have in supporting development cooperation and digital cooperation with Africa?*



AGENDA

14:30 – 15:00 Registration and Welcome Coffee

15:00 – 15:20 Welcome Remarks

ETTORE GRECO

Vice President, Istituto Affari Internazionali-IAI

FILIPPO LONARDO

Deputy Head, Finance for Development, Environment and Digital, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

POLICY PAPER PRESENTATIONS

15:20 – 15:30 Input Remarks

Paper 1: “Africa’s Digital Transformation: Driving Economic Growth, Inclusive Governance, and Sustainable Development”

DARLINGTON TSHUMA

Researcher, Mediterranean, Middle East and Africa Programme, Istituto Affari Internazionali-IAI

15:30 – 15:40 Input Remarks

Paper 2: “Digital Cooperation for Africa’s Development: Mattei Plan and the Role of International Partners”

MARIANNA LUNARDINI

Researcher, Multilateralism and Global Governance Programme, Istituto Affari Internazionali-IAI

15:40 – 16:40 Open Discussion

Open discussion on fostering partnerships, enhancing cooperation, and addressing key challenges and opportunities for digital cooperation between Italy, the EU and African countries.

Moderator

DARLINGTON TSHUMA

Researcher, Mediterranean, Middle East and Africa Programme, Istituto Affari Internazionali-IAI

Discussant

BENEDIKT ERFORTH

Senior Researcher & Project, German Institute of Development and Sustainability – IDOS



Discussant

CHLOE TEEVAN

Head of Digital Economy and Governance, European Center for Development Policy Management–ECDPM

16:50 – 17:00

Closing Remarks

MARIA LUISA FANTAPPIÈ

Head, Mediterranean, Middle East and Africa Programme, Istituto Affari Internazionali - IAI

DUCCIO TENTI

United Nations Development Programme–UNDP, Rome

