

Conference Programme

Reimagining Cooperation on Trade and Sustainability: *An African Perspective*



Date

26 - 27 May 2025



Location

**Academic Conference
Centre, Graduate School
of Business**

9 Portwood Rd, V&A Waterfront



CONCEPT NOTE

The global economy is navigating a period of heightened geopolitical uncertainty, climate-driven disruptions, and deepening economic disparities. The weaponization of trade, debt vulnerabilities, and evolving multilateral frameworks are reshaping international economic cooperation. These dynamics present both challenges and opportunities for Africa, a continent with immense natural resources, growing markets, and strategic geopolitical importance.

As South Africa assumes the G20 Presidency, it is critical to amplify Africa's voice in global trade governance and ensure that trade policies are more inclusive, demand-driven, and responsive to the needs of developing nations. In this regard, the Cape Town workshop will focus on how best to strengthen trade as a source of sustainable development, including the potential for regional integration that includes the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). In addition, the gathering will explore new sources of finance to support economic development and investments in a sustainable future from international financial institutions, as well as domestic capital mobilization.

To advance these discussions, the **Nelson Mandela School of Public Governance**, in collaboration with the **Remaking Trade Project, Forum on Trade, Environment & the SDGs (TESS)**, and the **German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS)** will host a two-day workshop on 26-27 May 2025 in Cape Town, South Africa. The event will explore critical aspects of trade and sustainable development governance, with a focus on industrialization, value chain development, new sources of finance, and Africa's positioning in global trade reforms.

This workshop will inform policy discussions leading up to the G20 Summit in November 2025, contributing to a broader agenda on trade reform, sustainable industrialization (including the role of small and mid-sized enterprises), sustainable agriculture, and the role of regional institutions in shaping a more equitable global trade system.

PROGRAMME

Day 1 Theme: Key Challenges for Africa in a Global Context

Monday, 26 May 2025 08:30 - 17:30 SAST

Reception 18:00 – 20:00 SAST

8:30 – 9:00	Registration and Light Breakfast
9:00 – 9:15	<p>Welcome and Opening Remarks</p> <p>Prof Faizel Ismail, Director of the Nelson Mandela School of Public Governance, University of Cape Town</p> <p>Dr Jan Yves Remy, Co-Lead Remaking Trade Project, University of the West Indies</p>
9:15 – 10:15	<p>Session 1: Framing the African Context (AU/AfCFTA)</p> <p>Prof Faizel Ismail, Nelson Mandela School, in conversation with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ambassador Dr Anil Sooklal, Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), Government of South Africa Dr Stephen Karingi, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) Dr Tsotetsi Makong, African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) <p>This session will provide an overview of Africa's trade and industrialization challenges, exploring how regional and global trade dynamics impact the continent's economic transformation. It will highlight the role of AfCFTA in advancing more inclusive trade policies and examine how Africa can draw lessons from other Global South economies.</p>
10:15 – 10:45	Coffee Break
10:45 – 12:00	<p>Session 2: Sustainable Industrialisation & Inclusive Growth</p> <p>Prof Clara Brandi, German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS), in conversation with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dr Rob Davies, Former Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC), Government of South Africa

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Atul Kaushik, Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) • Prof Wei Liang, Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey (MIIS) • Ms Poorva Karkare, European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) <p>Industrialization remains a pillar of economic development, but how can Africa ensure sustainability while advancing growth and ensuring greater value added in Africa? This session will examine policies that balance competitiveness, technological progress, and environmental responsibility, and opportunities for small and mid-sized businesses.</p>
12:00 – 13:00	<p>Session 3: Nexus between Climate Change and Trade</p> <p>Prof Christophe Bellmann, Forum on Trade, Environment & the SDGs (TESS), in conversation with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Sachin Khumar Sharma, Centre for WTO Studies in India • Mr Mahendra Shunmoogam, Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC), Government of South Africa • Mr Saliem Fakir, African Climate Foundation (ACF) • Mr Seutame Maimele, Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies (TIPS) <p>As governments increasingly implement a variety of trade-related climate measures and policies – ranging from border carbon adjustment measures, through green industrial policies to greenhouse gas emissions standards, subsidies and taxation, and other regulatory measures – this session will discuss how Africa can navigate the intersection of climate change policies and trade regulations. The implication for sectors like agriculture, manufacturing, and energy, exploring how Africa can enhance resilience and capitalize on emerging opportunities.</p>
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch
14:00 – 14:30	<p>Keynote Address: Reform Challenges in the New Geopolitical Context</p> <p>Ms Xolelwa Mlumbi-Peters, Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC), Government of South Africa</p>
14:30 – 15:45	<p>Session 4: Critical Minerals & Extended Value Chains</p> <p>Ms Yasmin Ismail, Forum on Trade, Environment & the SDGs (TESS), in conversation with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Clovis Freire, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) • Dr Marit Kitaw, African Minerals Development Center (AMDC)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Jason Clay, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) • Mr Michael Smith, University of Cape Town <p>Africa's vast reserves of critical minerals are vital for the global energy transition, yet most value is captured outside the continent. This session will explore how Africa can move beyond raw material extraction to build competitive manufacturing and processing industries. Discussions will include intra-African collaboration, investment incentives, and sustainable value chain development.</p>
15:45 – 16:15	Coffee Break
16:15 – 17:30	<p>Session 5: The Social Dimensions in Global Governance</p> <p>Dr Tawanda Sachikonye, Southern African Liaison Office (SALO), in conversation with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Tetteh Hormeku-Ajei, Third World Network-Africa • Mr Trenton Elsely, Labour Research Service • Ms Afia Agyeman Amponsah-Mensah, Ashesi University Ghana • Ms Thembekile Mlangeni, Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC), Government of South Africa <p>This session will examine how women, youth, and grassroots movements are shaping global governance frameworks and advocating for more inclusive, equitable decision-making. It will highlight the transformative potential of their participation in international institutions, trade negotiations, and climate diplomacy. Discussions will focus on strategies to amplify marginalized voices, bridge representation gaps, and strengthen accountability in global systems.</p>
18:00 – 20:00	Reception

Day 2 Theme: A Vision for Rebuilding

Tuesday, 27 May 2025 08:30 - 15:00 SAST

8:30 – 9:00	Light Breakfast
9:00 – 10:15	<p>Session 6: Trade System Reform for Sustainable Development: Debt, Finance and Climate Change</p> <p>Prof Dan Esty, Yale University, in conversation with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr Kamal Ramburuth, Institute of Economic Justice (IEJ)• Mr Dode Seidu, Africa Trade Academy• Mr Thandolwethu Lukuko, Fossil Fuel Non-proliferation Treaty Initiative• Mr Dipak Patel, Presidential Climate Commission (PCC), South Africa <p>Trade can be a key mechanism for addressing debt challenges and reducing reliance on hard currency borrowing. With one month leading to the United Nations Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FFD4), this session will explore innovative trade-finance mechanisms that support the international fiscal reform to mobilize the finance needed for sustainable development. In this regard, what sources of capital should be mobilized – covering regeared international financial institutions, regional development banks, export credit agencies, and local African investments? Discussions will also include engagement with new creditors like China and the Middle East and strategies to strengthen Africa’s financial autonomy.</p>
10:15 – 10:45	Coffee Break
10:45 am – 12:00	<p>Session 7: Vision for Global Governance Reform & Trade System Reform</p> <p>Mr Emmanuel Kwabena Amoah, Ashesi University Ghana, in conversation with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ms Nomalanga Gule, African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)• Ms Vahini Naidu, South Centre• Dr Mustaqeem de Gama, Independent Consultant <p>This session will assess WTO reform efforts and their implications for Africa. Moving beyond the current Geneva-centric debates, it will explore how trade governance can become more inclusive, responsive, demand-driven, and aligned with sustainable development priorities in Africa and led by African leaders and institutions. The session will examine how</p>

	trade systems can better integrate climate change, finance, biodiversity, health, and digitalization within the evolving geopolitical landscape – particularly the weaponization of trade. The discussion will explore how the global governance framework might be reframed to better meet Africa’s needs and values, and ensure that trade contributes to long-term sustainability and economic resilience. The particular opportunities raised by South Africa’s pivotal role in the G20 will be considered.
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch
13:00 – 13:30	Keynote Address (virtual): Digital Opportunities for Africa Ambassador Dr Mzukisi Qobo, South Africa’s Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the WTO
13:30 – 14:30	Session 8: Round Table Dr Jan Yves Remy, Chair of the Round Table, in conversation with the audience to share key ideas and introduce the Statement of Pledge
14:30 – 15:00	Closing and Next Steps Prof Faizel Ismail, Director of the Nelson Mandela School of Public Governance, University of Cape Town Dr Jan Yves Remy, Co-Lead Remaking Trade Project, University of the West Indies