

Kigali 2026: the African private sector in search of critical mass

*Dr Alexander Ressos, TEP
Attorney-at-Law (Switzerland), Solicitor (Hong Kong),
Solicitor (England & Wales)*

The Africa CEO Forum, founded in Geneva in 2012, was held in 2026 in Kigali, on 14 and 15 May, in the presence of heads of state and several thousand executives, on the theme of the critical mass that the African private sector must reach in order to carry weight in the world economy.¹ The alternation between Geneva, Abidjan and Kigali illustrates a shift: the forum, conceived as a place where Africa came to Geneva, is now held mainly in Africa, where African leaders prefer to play host. Geneva takes part as a guest. This shift is healthy for Africa and instructive for Geneva: the financial centre, which can no longer rely on the pull of its name to bring African business together, must go out to meet it.

The themes of the 2026 forum, the consolidation of African champions, the financing of growth, continental integration and industrialisation, correspond to the fields in which Geneva's operators have something to offer: financing, structuring, arbitration, the management of entrepreneurial fortunes, advice. The Geneva banks, traders and firms that attend find partners there. Those that stay away cede the ground to Dubai, Casablanca, London and Paris, whose delegations are larger.²

1 Notes

1. Africa CEO Forum, "Forum 2026 – Kigali – 14 & 15 May 2026", theafricaceoforum.com; "Africa CEO Forum 2026 : à Kigali, Kagame, Tinubu et le secteur privé africain en quête de taille critique", Jeune Afrique, May 2026. ↩

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2. Wikipedia (en), article “Africa CEO Forum”: forum created in 2012 by Jeune Afrique Media Group in partnership with the IFC, the first edition bringing together some 500 participants, including 300 heads of African companies and 100 financiers; 2023 edition in Abidjan opened by President Alassane Ouattara and the Managing Director of the IFC, more than 1,800 participants from 70 countries; Africa CEO Forum, “Forum 2026 – Kigali, 14 & 15 May 2026”: 2025 figures of more than 2,800 participants, more than 90 countries represented, more than 500 government participants and more than 750 women leaders; 2,500 executives, heads of state, ministers and investors expected in 2026. ↩

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