

The forums: Geneva as a meeting place for the African private sector

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The Africa CEO Forum, founded in Geneva in 2012, is the most visible of these bridges. Presented as the largest international conference of the African private sector and sometimes described as the Davos of Africa, it brings together every year business leaders, investors, public decision-makers and journalists from across the continent. Its first edition gathered some 500 participants, including 300 heads of African companies and 100 financiers.¹ Geneva had been chosen to highlight the dynamism of African capitalism in an international city. The event has alternated between Geneva and Abidjan, the fifth edition, held in Geneva on 20 and 21 March 2017, having welcomed more than a thousand participants.²

The forum offers Swiss companies, banks and financial players an opportunity to meet African decision-makers and to discover the business opportunities of the continent.³ The heads of Swiss groups active in Africa — the shipping company MSC, the oil and gas group AOG, the coffee trader Sucafina, the hotel group Kempinski — have taken part, alongside the members of the Swiss-African Business Circle.⁴ At the tenth edition, in June 2022, MSC reaffirmed its commitment to investing in Africa, where the group is expanding with new offices, ports, terminals and intermodal solutions.⁵

Other gatherings complete this picture: conferences of International Geneva devoted to Africa, events of the Geneva Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Services, one of whose vice-presidents saw in the holding of the forum on Geneva soil a first-rate transmission belt between African markets and Swiss entrepreneurs, and academic and sector-specific meetings.⁶ These forums make Geneva a place where business Africa meets, raises finance and looks to the future.

Key points. The Africa CEO Forum, founded in Geneva in 2012 and since then alternating with Abidjan, brings together the leaders of the African

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private sector and gives Swiss players access to the continent's decision-makers. The major Geneva groups active in Africa, MSC among them, have made investment commitments there.

1 Notes

1. Article "Africa CEO Forum", Wikipedia (en) (accessed September 2026). ↩
2. "Fifth Africa CEO Forum", GB News, accessed September 2026; Club suisse de la presse (Swiss Press Club), 2017. ↩
3. Club suisse de la presse, "Focus on business opportunities for Swiss companies in Africa", 2017. ↩
4. "Genève deviendra la capitale de l'Afrique" (Geneva will become the capital of Africa), Bilan, 27 January 2017. ↩
5. "Suisse et MSC : investir dans l'avenir de l'Afrique" (Switzerland and MSC: investing in Africa's future), Jeune Afrique, branded content, 2022. ↩
6. "La Suisse mise sur une Afrique chaotique, mais prometteuse" (Switzerland bets on a chaotic but promising Africa), Le Temps, March 2018, quoting Vincent Subilia. ↩

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