

The new bridges: forums, investment, fintech, diaspora — overview and summary

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Relations between Geneva and Africa go far beyond commodity trading and the assets of the elites. For some fifteen years, new bridges have been under construction. They are business forums that bring the leaders of the African private sector together in Geneva, investments in infrastructure, agriculture, health and services, financial innovations in which Africa is a pioneer, a diaspora that links the two shores, and a federal strategy which, for the first time, addresses the continent as a whole. This chapter describes these bridges, assesses their reach and identifies the conditions for their success, without concealing the imbalances that persist between the intensity of trading and the weakness of productive investment.

1 In five sentences

1. The Africa CEO Forum, founded in Geneva in 2012 and alternating with Abidjan, makes Geneva a meeting place for the African private sector, where Geneva groups, MSC among them, have made investment commitments.
2. The Federal Council adopted in January 2021 a first strategy for sub-Saharan Africa, then in December 2024 a strategy covering the whole continent for 2025–2028, which involve International Geneva and the financial centre in their implementation.
3. Swiss productive investment in Africa remains weak — around 1 per cent of direct investment in 2017 — despite the commitments of the groups, specialised funds, *family offices*, impact finance and blended finance.
4. Africa, which accounts for 50 per cent of the world's mobile-money accounts, is a pioneer in fintech, a field in which Geneva players invest and experiment, including with crypto-assets and digital assets, subject to compliance requirements.

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5. Geneva's African diaspora is both a bridge and a critical eye. The new bridges demand coherence, reciprocity, knowledge, patience and openness to African players.

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