



Gitex Africa 2025

Monday, April 14, 2025

Theme:

«Forecasting for the Road Ahead »

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Dear guests, partners and colleagues,

Welcome to this 3rd edition of “Future of Finance.” It is a real pleasure for me to address an audience that brings together so many key players from the fintech ecosystem, making this gathering a remarkable opportunity to explore how finance, combined with the power of digital technologies, can contribute to advance financial and economic inclusion across our continent.

Today's discussion is not about the future of finance that feels unsettling, as we have seen in recent days with commercial policy shifts triggered by geopolitical and economic factors. Instead, we are discussing finance that seizes the opportunities of innovation to implement solutions that enable the digital transformation of financial services and improve their accessibility and use by underserved or unserved African populations, particularly small businesses operating in the informal economy.

Undoubtedly, we cannot overlook the impact of geopolitics and the significant uncertainties of the international environment on the development of financial technology in Africa.

In terms of funding, it is important to highlight that Africa has become one of the fastest-growing fintech markets, with the number of fintech companies tripling over the past five years, surpassing the number of traditional banks.

However, we've seen a slowdown in fintech funding in recent years due to tighter global financing conditions—affecting FDI flows more generally.

Furthermore, in a context where the global economic policy uncertainty index is approaching 2020 levels, according to the World Bank, the financing needs of African economies are under pressure, due to the challenges of navigating a triple transition: the digital transition, the climate transition, and the transition towards a stable macroeconomic framework

To address this challenge, it is crucial to accelerate the integration of African economies to benefit from economies of scale that can help develop capital markets, especially financing tools tailored to startups and fintechs, and to attract more foreign capital—including from the diaspora.

In terms of new technologies, they are increasingly shaped by geopolitics, with a few dominant companies controlling much of the field. These new technologies are no longer just about competitiveness—they are now matters of sovereignty.

The continent must therefore start preparing to reduce its dependency, particularly in the financial services sector. In this respect, the draft regulatory framework for financial services within the African Continental Free Trade Area, currently under review, is a unique opportunity to lay the foundations for resilient policies to control and secure critical digital infrastructure across the zone.

Despite these headwinds, the outlook for African's fintech industry is promising, considering the untapped growth potential that could be unlocked by prioritizing three key challenges specific to the region's economies:

The first challenge concerns adapting and easing fintech regulation:

A critical lever for the industry's growth, as shown by certain experiences, particularly M-Pesa in Kenya and Wave in Senegal, both of which have significantly boosted the number of mobile money accounts and accelerated the development of digital financial services.

This is also the case in Morocco, where the opening of the banking market to non-banking players since 2017 has been a major driver of financial inclusion for millions of people, particularly those benefiting from government social aid program.

However, fragmented regulation across the continent still hampers fintech growth. Today, fintechs operating in multiple countries of the continent must obtain separate licenses and comply with heterogeneous national regulations—leading to additional costs, slower regional expansion, and hindered innovation.

The recent initiative by the central banks of Rwanda and Ghana to endorse the single license principle for fintech, and the introduction of sandboxes in several countries, send a strong signal for regulatory harmonization and flexibility.

The second one concerns laying down infrastructure needed to scale up the adoption of digital services:

This includes addressing the lack of electricity for 800 million people (according to the African Development Bank), and issues with digital identity and internet connectivity. While mobile coverage has reached 80 percent of the population, actual internet use is still limited to 30 percent.

Digital platforms and real-time payment systems are also essential accelerators of digital transformation, as demonstrated by experiences in various regions of the world. In Africa, only four countries have adopted real-time payment systems: Nigeria, Ghana, Tanzania, and Morocco.

The Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS), which currently includes 14 African countries, should be a strategic priority. It will help establish real-time, interoperable payment systems continent-wide, easing cross-border transactions at lower costs—especially since a large portion of these transfers still go through informal channels.

The 3rd challenge is rising competition in the fintech industry:

African fintechs are increasingly contributing to the digital transformation of the financial services sector, proving more effective where traditional banking intermediation has failed to meet the population's needs.

In response to this evolution, traditional African banks are speeding up the digitization of their services in order to retain their customer and attract younger population that is enthusiastic about financial technologies.

Meanwhile, both African fintechs and traditional banks face growing competition from neo-banks, big tech companies, and foreign fintechs.

In this fast-evolving and competitive landscape, fintechs must rise to the challenge of scaling up, diversifying their products, and adapting to market needs.

Changing business models may require strategic partnerships to meet new investment needs, notably to develop sufficient capabilities to manage increasingly complex risks and to comply with regulatory requirements.

The continent's financial services and fintech industry also face challenges common to many other countries. These include the global competition for talent, which is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit, and the rise in fraud, financial crime and cyber-attacks. These risks, exacerbated by AI, are increasingly threatening data protection systems and market integrity.

As digital adoption continues to grow, driven by a young and tech-savvy population showing no signs of slowing down, governments, educational and academic institutions, and central banks must coordinate efforts to strengthen awareness campaigns, enhance financial and digital literacy programs, and promote research in financial innovation.

Before concluding, allow me to emphasize: we have no choice but to unite the efforts of public and private actors—at both national and regional levels—to create the right conditions for the ongoing digital transformation of financial services and to address the challenges that come with it.

This vision is reflected in various national initiatives, such as Morocco's Digital Strategy 2030, the recent launch of the Morocco Fintech Center by financial regulators, in partnership with both public and private stakeholders, as well as the creation of a \$10 million Fintech Fund by Bank Al-Maghrib

Thank you, and I wish you all an excellent GITEX Africa 2025, full of ideas, collaboration, and opportunities.