



United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa

LAUNCH OF THE 2025 BRAND AFRICA 100

Welcome Remarks

By

**Mr. Claver Gatete
United Nations Under-Secretary-General and
Executive Secretary of ECA**

**Africa Hall, Addis Ababa
23 May, 2025**

**Your Excellencies,
Mr. Thebe Ikalafeng, Chairman and Founder of Brand
Africa,
Representatives of Africa's Top Brands
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen:**

It is an honour to welcome you to the launch of the 2025 Brand Africa 100 at this defining moment in Africa's journey, as we seek to reshape our continent's global image and elevate its economic power and cultural vibrancy on the global stage.

As we convene here at the historic Africa Hall, the same space where in 1963 the founders of our continent gathered to chart a path toward a free and united Africa, we do so today to advance the next chapter of Africa's story.

Let me begin by commending the leadership of Brand Africa and partners for consistently advancing this vital initiative of excellence, enterprise and innovation over the last fifteen years.

I also extend heartiest congratulations to all the brands that have made it into the 2025 ranking.

I wish to particularly acknowledge MTN, Dangote Group, mPesa and Ethiopian Airlines for consistently maintaining

their distinguished positions among the “Most Admired African Brands” category and continuing to set benchmarks in brand leadership, innovation and continental impact.

More than just market leaders, all of you here are ambassadors of Africa’s promise, and you define what it means to be proudly African in a competitive global marketplace.

Indeed, we are no longer asking the world to change the narrative about Africa.

We are taking charge.

And we are owning the narrative.

Why? Because the evidence is undeniable.

Africa is the world’s youngest continent, with over 70% of its population under the age of 35, a demographic asset with far-reaching implications for sustainable development.

A rising middle class is propelling a consumer market projected to surpass US\$2.5 trillion by 2030.

And everywhere you look, Africa's brilliance is on full display.

From the creative pulse of Lagos to the tech corridors of Nairobi, from Addis Ababa's green industrial zones to Dakar's digital design studios, Africa is building and branding.

And it is imperative that we keep in mind that what defines a brand is not merely a logo or a slogan; an authentic African brand must straddle the embodiment of Africa's stories, culture and aspirations.

Our continent holds over one hundred UNESCO World Heritage Sites from the ancient churches of Lalibela to the ruins of Great Zimbabwe.

Far beyond their status as tourist attractions, these heritage sites are powerful brand assets that hold immense potential to boost economic potential from cultural tourism to creative content licensing.

Significantly, they also reflect Africa's contribution to global civilisation.

And our host nation, Ethiopia, exemplifies this duality of heritage and economic progress.

Yes, it is the land of Lucy, but it is also the land of green growth, coffee innovation and world-class aviation.

Across Africa, the branding story is equally diverse and dynamic.

Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire lead in cocoa value addition.

Kenya has revolutionized mobile banking.

Nigeria's creative industries are global.

Rwanda is charting a path in green transformation.

South Africa's industrial base continues to anchor the region.

However, one question persists: why do so few African brands enjoy global visibility?

This is the challenge that we must address.

To that end, allow me to outline five strategic pathways to integrate Africa's brand into our broader development agenda.

First, we must invest in youth-driven innovation and the creative industries.

Across the continent, young entrepreneurs are merging tradition with technology to create, for example, digital fashion in Dakar, music platforms in Nairobi and Afrofuturist art in Accra, and this must be supported.

Second, we must build and scale regional value chains that support authentic African products and services.

In this regard, the AfCFTA provides a historic opportunity to not only industrialize and integrate our markets, but also leverage regional integration to develop brands that are African-made, African-owned and globally respected.

But to do this, we need harmonized standards, efficient logistics, and a regulatory environment that elevates “Made in Africa” to a mark of quality and pride.

Third, we must mainstream the African brand in our trade and investment strategies.

African embassies, trade missions and business forums beyond presenting data must promote our African stories to investors, tourists and all others.

And our diaspora must also be seen as global brand ambassadors and investors in this effort.

Fourth, Africa must invest in robust, real-time data systems to track consumer sentiment, market perception and brand competitiveness within Africa and globally.

In this respect, ECA is ever ready to partner with research institutions and national statistics offices to develop this capacity and support evidence-based branding strategies at the national and regional levels.

Fifth, we must also establish a pan-African creative innovation fund, a public-private facility to identify, finance and globalize Africa's most promising brands across sectors including fintech, fashion, food processing, agribusiness, arts, among others.

This fund must also nurture, finance and scale youth-led enterprises keeping in mind that these are drivers of jobs, growth and global influence.

This can be complemented by individual country financial commitments.

**Excellencies,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:**

The ECA is proud to support this launch because it aligns closely with our mission to promote inclusive

industrialization, advance regional integration and unlock the potential of the African private sector.

Crucially, the 2025 ranking is coming at a time when the continent is asserting a stronger voice on the world stage, from hosting the BRICS Summit in 2023, to the African Union's call for reparative justice, and South Africa's Presidency of the G20 in 2025.

And this is another opportunity to show the world what we have and what we can do.

We will therefore continue to work hand in hand with governments, the African Union, Regional Economic Communities, the AfCFTA Secretariat, youth, the diaspora and private sector actors to elevate Africa's visibility and amplify its voice on the global stage to fully unleash Africa's vast brand potential.

Later this year, the ECA will convene the **African Development Impact Forum** which will bring together researchers, academics, policymakers, and all of you private sector leaders, to exchange knowledge and co-create practical policy solutions for the structural transformation and sustainable development of Africa.

Together, we can reshape the African narrative and position our continent where it truly belongs.

And with that, I have the honour to officially launch the 2025 Brand Africa 100.

Thank you.