

Sahara Group Links Success of Integrated Trade to Infrastructure Development at Africa CEO Forum

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Sustained infrastructure development is required across Africa to boost the prospects of integrated trade on the continent, Sahara Group has stated, as business leaders gather in Kigali, Rwanda for the 7th edition of the Africa CEO Forum.

Sahara Group's Director for Governance and Sustainability, Pearl Uzokwe said the energy conglomerate would make a strong case for multi-stakeholder partnerships to shore up infrastructure development as "this is one of the most critical enabling factors required to achieve the ambitious ideals of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCTA)."

Uzokwe noted that the disparity in landscape composition across the continent is one of the most daunting barriers to economic development.

According to her, "There's no doubt that infrastructure development should be accorded a prominent position on the agenda for the continent's CEOs. The non-uniformity of Africa's landscape confers some measure of advantage on countries with coastal lines as against nations that are landlocked. How to navigate this and other challenges to facilitate an integrated trade scenario remains a critical issue. The business community must be prepared to articulate a collaborative position that will address the achievement of the estimated \$170 billion infrastructure funding gap in Africa," she stated.

Scheduled to attend several meetings to push this position, Uzokwe will also join the AFRICA CEO's Women in Business Initiative workshop dedicated to "Drafting a gender diversity charter to reach equality in the workplace".

She said all stakeholders billed to attend the meeting are confident that the charter would drive specific actions geared towards ensuring there is adequate representation of approximately half the world's population while becoming a catalyst for increasing female representation and retention at various levels of organizational hierarchies.



President, Republic of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, President, Democratic Republic of Congo, Felix Tshisekedi and Director, Governance and Sustainability, Pearl Uzokwe at the 2019 Africa CEO Forum in Kigali, Rwanda



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*Pearl Uzokwe, Director,
Governance and
Sustainability, Sahara Group*

Uzokwe added that she was hopeful that the charter would also inspire more interventions to drive gender equality and more access to education for girls and women in Africa. "We are intentional about women empowerment and gender parity at Sahara Group and will continue to lead conversations and collaborations in this regard. Our support for women goes beyond just our employees as over two million people have benefitted from Sahara Foundation's projects, with women and girls accounting for over 50% of the beneficiaries. Some of the initiatives include eye care programmes, scholarships, literacy development programmes, career guidance programmes

and water and sanitation programmes and will continually look for ways to encourage sustainable growth and development in this regard."

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