

Nairobi AI Forum 2026 Drives AI Adoption and Impact

In line with the Mattei Plan for Africa, the AI Hub for Sustainable Development and Cineca announce 1.5 million Graphic Processing Unit (GPU) hours for 130 Innovators across the African continent.



Nairobi, Kenya | 10 February 2026: The Nairobi AI Forum 2026 announced compute access for 130 innovators across Africa, focused on tackling pressing challenges at the intersection of climate resilience, voice AI adoption in local languages and food security. Ahead of the Italy–Africa Summit in Ethiopia and the AI Impact Summit in India, and within the framework of the Mattei Plan for Africa, this support empowers private sector players and startups—many of them youth-led across the continent—to develop, deploy and scale green and sovereign AI infrastructure.

Organised by the Governments of Kenya and Italy, the Embassy of Italy in Kenya with the Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy, Ministry of University and Research, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Forum convened more than 500 participants, including government officials, private sector executives, innovators, builders and financiers from Africa, Europe, and the G7. The discussions and commitments centred on building scalable AI infrastructure and

investment-ready ecosystems, and strengthening adoption in key sectors like education, agriculture, and energy.

“Strengthening skills, training and research is the strategic choice to support innovation, technological sovereignty and inclusive progress in Africa. The Nairobi AI Forum highlights how joint efforts in higher education, researcher mobility, and knowledge exchange—rooted in the Mattei Plan and the AI Hub—can build global, sustainable Artificial Intelligence that leaves no one behind,” said **Senator Anna Maria Bernini, the Minister of University and Research in Italy.**

“The mission to Kenya ensures the continuity of our long-lasting cooperation and friendship within the Mattei Plan, which is not an abstract vision but a concrete strategy that Italy is implementing on the ground. With Kenya, as with Africa as a whole, we are building a structured, long-term partnership based on knowledge, innovation, and shared growth, grounded in the belief that universities, research, and skills are fundamental drivers of fair and lasting development,” Bernini said.

At the Forum, **Ambassador Philip Thigo, Special Envoy on Technology, Republic of Kenya** highlighted that: “Kenya and Italy, working with UNDP, are entering a defining phase of partnership—evolving beyond traditional aid towards the co-creation of future economic capability. This transition is unfolding as the global economy shifts into the Age of Intelligence. While the industrial era was shaped by energy and manufacturing, and the digital era by connectivity and software, the Intelligence Economy will be defined by compute infrastructure, sovereign talent, shared innovation in models and applications, and the ability to translate research into industrial production.”

Ambassador Vincenzo Del Monaco, Ambassador of Italy to Kenya and Permanent Representative to UNEP and UN-HABITAT underscored that: “The partnership between Italy and Kenya is entering a new era of intelligence cooperation—moving from dialogue to delivery. We are fully engaged in the Mattei Plan. The Nairobi AI Forum has laid critical groundwork: 1.5 million GPU hours distributed with Cineca and credits from AWS and Microsoft, flagship initiatives launched, and a clear delivery runway established ahead of the Italy–Africa Summit. This aligns with the roadmap we are advancing together at the upcoming India AI Impact Summit.”

The Nairobi AI Forum is a key milestone since the launch of the AI Hub for Sustainable Development in Rome in June 2025 by **Senator Adolfo Urso, Minister of Enterprises and Made in Italy.** Speaking from Rome, Senator Adolfo Urso said: “The Nairobi AI Forum gives a decisive boost to industrial innovation in Africa and directly strengthens the objectives of the Mattei Plan through strategic partnerships and operational agreements with AI Hub innovators in Kenya. The commitments undertaken in Rome on 20 June 2025, marking the launch of the Hub, are increasingly translating into concrete results: public–private partnerships with the Italian Space Agency, the Kenya Space Agency, the Kenyan Ministry of Agriculture, Microsoft, NASA Harvest, and UNDP are generating tangible industrial impacts in support of small

enterprises. This represents Italy's firm and strategic response to the challenge of global innovation."

Jean-Luc Stalon, UNDP Resident Representative in Kenya and **Keyzom Ngodup Massally, Director of the AI Hub for Sustainable Development** emphasised UNDP's pivotal role in re-imagining and delivering concrete private-sector-driven AI partnerships to create new jobs and improve the lives of people in communities. UNDP Kenya demonstrates how 400 jobs created in partnership with the private sector for people with disabilities is a call to action on what AI-enabled partnerships can deliver at scale.

The AI Hub is a collaborative platform endorsed by the G7 leaders and powered by the Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy under Senator Urso's clarion call to re-imagine the industrial value chain, with the African continent's leadership in its co-design and Executive Steering Group. As a multilateral platform responding to country demands, UNDP is unlocking global AI partnerships, financing and foundational capabilities to empower African ecosystems. This includes driving private-sector innovation, fit for purpose AI infrastructure, and inclusive growth aligned with the Italy-Africa Mattei Plan and the African Union AI Strategy, serving as an accelerator of the SDGs in line with the UNDP Strategic Plan.

Participants at the Forum explored how aligned public-private partnerships and innovative financing can transform AI aspirations into inclusive ecosystems that generate jobs, boost productivity, and foster sustainable growth. Ahead of the Italy-Africa Summit and the AI Impact Summit, this convening serves as a delivery runway for AI diffusion—creating shared, trusted rails that convert AI capability into real-world adoption at scale.

One of the key takeaways from the Forum is that: scaling AI is not about institutions constantly 'doing AI' – it is about AI leadership and institutions performing their core missions better, with AI seamlessly embedded into workflows, interfaces, and decisions that deliver meaningful outcomes. At the Nairobi AI Forum, Shikoh Gitau of Qhala, who is leading the curation of the Africa Village at the AI Impact Summit highlighted how this vision aligns closely with the focus on impact and the AI diffusion infrastructure being advanced at the upcoming India AI Impact Summit. Kenya, Italy, and Indian partners are starting to work together to unlock AI foundations through use cases that can scale adoption and improve outcomes for people and planet.

The high-level engagement of the **Honourable William Kabogo Gitau, Kenya's Minister of Information, Communications and the Digital Economy** and others from the European Union, India and the United States signalled a decisive shift towards partnering with the private sector. This was evident in discussions led by the AI Hub's African Infrastructure Builders and Innovators, including Horus Labs, Deep Leaf, Crane AI, AfCEN among others.

The Forum unfolded against the backdrop of strengthened Africa-Europe ties, as Italy advances the Mattei Plan for Africa. The Mattei Plan establishes a long-term framework for cooperation across agriculture, health, education, water, energy, and infrastructure—rooted in partnership and mutual value creation. Within this framework, the Nairobi AI Forum positioned AI as a

powerful cross-cutting enabler, enhancing delivery, productivity, and sustainability where investments align with national priorities to achieve development goals.

The Forum culminated in several impact-driven announcements to fast-track AI infrastructure, mobilize capital, and enable innovators to scale solutions continent-wide:

- **Co-design Launch of the AI 10 Billion Initiative:** In collaboration with the African Development Bank and private sector partners, UNDP and the AI Hub initiated co-design of this bold effort to generate up to 45 million jobs across Africa by 2035 via targeted investments in AI foundations and adoption. The initiative anticipates mobilizing phased commitments of up to US 10 billion to fuel AI entrepreneurship (from proof-of-concept to equity/debt financing), regional data embassies, core data infrastructure, and technical support for continental AI policies and hubs. The investment call comes directly from the African Development Bank's report *Productivity Gain Pathways to Labour Efficiency, Economic Growth and Inclusive Transformation*, which demonstrates AI-enabled pathways as a vital driver of productivity, employment, and inclusive growth.

Making the announcement, **Emanuele Spampinato, CEO of the Harmonic Innovation Group** said: "At Harmonic Innovation Group we believe that innovation must be ethical, inclusive, sustainable and rooted in culture. We are inspired by the Harmonic Innovation Paradigm of our founder, Francesco Cicione: a humanistic approach that combines technology and sustainability. Every element of the Harmonic Africa Startup Acceleration Programme (H-ASAP) embodies these values: from respect for dignity and privacy, to the empowerment of women and young people; from the construction of green infrastructure to the enhancement of Africa's rich cultural heritage and linguistic diversity."

- **Launch of the Harmonic Africa Startup Acceleration Programme:** Harmonic Innovation Group, partnering with the AI Hub, unveiled this programme to equip high-growth African AI startups with capital, technical assistance, and market access—prioritizing deployable solutions in agriculture, health, education, and energy.
- Partnership agreements were signed between Harmonic Innovation Group and AI Hub's innovators Chestify AI and Africa Compute Fund in Kenya.

"The partnership with Harmonic Innovation Group through the AI Hub's acceleration programme compounds our deep belief that we are ready to scale our services to rural and community-based health clinics that form the backbone of Africa's health ecosystem," **said Mustapha Zaidan, CEO of Chestify AI Labs.**

- The Harmonic Innovation Group also announced the activation of the Harmonic Fund's venture platform with an initial €50 million investment envelope, the establishment of the first Italian incubator in Africa, with a focus on climate tech, food systems intelligence, and digital public infrastructure (DPI), and the launch of a groundbreaking Nairobi–Italy–San Francisco–India innovation triangle for cross-corridor scaling.

The Nairobi International Financial Centre (NIFC), under Daniel Mainda's leadership, reinforced its role by providing capital structuring support, domiciling investment vehicles, and delivering regulatory certainty and clarity—cementing Nairobi's position as Africa's premier Technology hub and the Region's Financial Capital.

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Space-Enabled AI Collaboration for Food Security: A new public-private partnership was unveiled to leverage space-based data and AI for stronger food security and climate resilience in Kenya, with expansion potential across Africa. Led by the Kenya Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development and the Kenyan Space Agency, and backed by Italian Space Agency, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), NASA Harvest, Microsoft, and the AI Hub, the initiative will create a trusted, national-scale geospatial data foundation for agriculture—delivering standardized, updated layers for crop mapping, yield forecasting, and early climate risk detection to benefit farmers, insurers, financial institutions, and public agencies.

- **Cybersecurity Readiness Initiative for African AI Startups:** Cyber 4.0, in partnership with the AI Hub, launched an open call to bolster cybersecurity preparedness among African AI startups. The programme champions secure-by-design principles, aids in building competencies and capacities as AI scales in critical sectors, and builds the talent pipeline through hands-on training, in cooperation with the Cisco Cybersecurity Training Center in Nairobi.

Moving forward, the Nairobi AI Forum's outcomes will guide ongoing collaboration among governments, development partners, and the private sector.