

A call for the mobilisation of the continent's resources and resilience

It is time for Africa's large corporates and public-sector entities to open up their supply chains and for financial institutions to offer African businesses innovative and non-traditional financial services.



Source: David Mparutsa, head of enterprise and supply-chain development at Absa Africa.

This was the message from David Mparutsa, head of enterprise and supply-chain development at Absa Africa, in his address to the 2,780 delegates from 70 countries at the second Made in Africa (MiA) virtual conference and expo.

The event is Africa's largest online buyers-meet-sellers showcase. Its aim is to fuel a powerful Buy Africa, For Africa movement and to kindle powerful connections between purchasing decision makers, policymakers, investors, and organisations from across the continent.

In his presentation, Mparutsa said that while Africa has its fair share of challenges that have been well documented, he wanted to focus on the opportunities and the returns available for those that are forward thinking.

"I want to focus on why it is time for Africa," he stated. "The current population of Africa is just under 1.3 billion people and is expected to grow to 2.5 billion people by 2050, according to World Bank statistics," he told MiA attendees. He noted that this means that Africa will be one of the largest and youngest continents. "It will require a significant amount of goods and services through its continued development and there will be opportunities for local businesses on this journey."

Mparutsa discussed Africa's abundant supply of commodities - from precious metals such as gold in Ghana which is now the largest producer of gold on the continent having recently overtaken South Africa, to copper in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zambia, and large deposits of battery metals like lithium and graphite in Zimbabwe and Tanzania.



“These are critical for energy storage, as demand for electric vehicles surges in the West. We also have precious stones like diamonds in Botswana and Namibia and transitional fossil fuels such as natural gas in Mozambique and Tanzania.

“With the surge in commodity prices, we can expect to see increased mining activity and increased opportunities for those operating in these value chains.

Capitalising on renewable energy opportunities

“Expected increases in Africa’s agricultural output bode well for large commercial farmers as well as the many smallholder farmers. Looking at the energy sector, more than 600 million Africans still do not have access to electricity, and as the public sector and the private sector work together to close this gap there will be opportunities for businesses involved in this, including capitalising on renewable energy opportunities.

“The African Continental Free Trade Agreement is a game changer,” Mparutsa asserted, adding that it has the potential to significantly boost economies, reduce poverty and improve governance to ease intra-African trade.

“All of this means we can expect to see increased economic activity, increased trade within the borders of Africa and beyond, and, most importantly, it means we will see increased procurement in both the private and the public sector. It is this procurement that we are targeting as a lever for economic growth, especially procurement from local businesses and small and medium enterprises (SMEs),” Mparutsa said.

He asserted that, with the right support, including events like MiA, small companies could grow, and medium-sized companies could become the future major corporations of Africa.

The Made in Africa conference and expo forms part of the biennial Africa Supply Chain in Action event, which is hosted by Smart Procurement and Sapics - the professional body for supply-chain management.

The event partners were Absa, Dooka, Tradeshift, Global Trade Solutions (GTS), BEE123, the Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport (Cilt), Cameroon Association of Supply Chain, Logistics and Procurement Experts (Caslope), Kenya Institute of Supplies Management (Kism) and Fédération Africaine des Associations de Logisticiens (Faal).