



Speech delivered by Akinwumi A. Adesina, President of the African Development Bank Group, on the occasion of the Africa50 Annual Shareholders Meeting on September 12, 2017 in Dakar, Senegal

Your Excellency President Macky Sall,
Honourable Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you today to this Annual Shareholders Meeting. Thank you for your support for Africa50.

I am particularly grateful to His Excellency President Macky Sall for hosting us this year, and for his unwavering support of Africa50 and infrastructure development in Africa. Your leadership as Chairperson of the NEPAD Heads of State and the Government Orientation Committee, and your commitment to its vision of development through the ability and resourcefulness of the African people is an inspiration to many.

Africa's economic outlook is improving. While results were uneven in 2016, with slower GDP growth of 2.2 percent, prospects are favorable for 2017 and 2018. Africa will benefit from a rise in commodity prices – mainly minerals and oil – as well as buoyant consumer demand, which accounts for 60% of Africa's real GDP growth.

President Sall, your tireless advocacy for mobilising investment into infrastructure, which President Alpha Conde of Guinea recently seconded at the G20 meetings in Hamburg, strengthened the G20's commitment for funding African infrastructure, and continues to motivate new partners.

The catalytic role of infrastructure as a driver of economic growth and development has never been more glaring. This is highlighted in the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and our own High 5 development priorities, one of which is Light up and Power Africa. This priority is shared by African policymakers, who recognize that addressing the infrastructure deficit is an obstacle both for regional integration and Africa's ability to compete internationally.

Unfortunately, the reality is that only 60 percent of the estimated \$130 billion needed to finance African infrastructure was actually funded in 2015. And, funding for project development is equally scarce.

African Governments cannot meet these needs on their own. Looking ahead to 2025 and a projected annual funding gap of \$30-40 billion, financing African infrastructure



will require a balance between development finance, which can fund and de-risk early stage financing, and long-term institutional investment which can quickly narrow the funding gap.

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This was why the AfDB created Africa50, an investment vehicle that complements our own infrastructure funding, and that of other DFIs and investment funds. Most importantly, Africa50 was designed to invest in fully developed projects, and accelerate the provision of infrastructure by supporting project development from the earliest stages, and developing a pipeline of bankable projects to mobilise funding.

Today, I am proud that Africa50 has made great progress in establishing itself as a credible infrastructure investment vehicle. It has already committed capital of over \$800 million from 23 African shareholder countries, as well as the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO), the Bank Al-Maghrib (BAM), and the AfDB. Today, we welcome two new shareholder countries, Guinea and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Since his appointment one year ago, Chief Executive Officer Alain Ebobissé has shown leadership in building the foundation of a strong investment fund. He has overseen the establishment of Africa50's operations in Casablanca, with the support of the Kingdom of Morocco, and has hired several recognized experts for the senior management team, ably preparing the fund to ramp up its investment activities.

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In conclusion, I would like to once again thank everyone for their commitment to supporting economic growth and development in Africa. With Africa50 we have an important partner, with all the enthusiasm and vigour that is necessary for Africa's economic transformation. It deserves to succeed, and for this it has the support of the African Development Bank, its shareholder countries, and – I hope – every person in this room.

Thank you.