

Africa Day

The Big Africa Debate

Fulfilling Channel Africa's mandate, in association with the Mail & Guardian

The Big Africa Debate (TBAD) series was launched by the South African Broadcasting Corporation's (SABC) continental radio service *Channel Africa*, in association with the *Mail & Guardian*, on 10 May 2022 in Cape Town. Held on the periphery of the Mining Indaba, the series is an interactive platform for policy and decision makers, civil society, experts and the academia to discuss and debate about challenges and opportunities for Africa.

The first debate, which was streamed live on both the *Channel Africa* and *Mail & Guardian* websites, focused on economic development, specifically on infrastructure and the bankability of Africa, anchored around politics and social issues. Moderated by Journalist Aldrin Sampear, the panellists included: Dolika Banda, Chairperson, ZCCM-Investment Holdings; Janade du Plessis, Launch Africa Ventures, Five35 Ventures; Edgar Pieterse, Director, African Centre for Cities, South African Research Chair in Urban Policy, University of Cape Town; and Catherine Koffman, Group Executive, Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA).

The debate concluded with exploring the future of smart cities on the continent and the convergence of infrastructure that's required. All of it remains linked to political will and striking a balance between traditional infrastructure and new technology, particularly when considering how to cater for rural areas, a common reality for most African nation states.

The conversation led to the question: what is next? During the next decade, African governments should embark on a sprint to bridge infrastructure gaps that could help position their countries toward more sustained growth. What are the right projects? Where will the funding come from? Who are the right partners to help deliver the projects? These looming issues are not mutually exclusive. Infrastructure projects take time to deliver. For this reason, they must be bankable, have the right policies, projects and partners, and be a priority for governments, as they can be a bottleneck to broader sustainable development.

The Big Africa Debate will continue to have exclusive conversations directly with those who are at the forefront of the continent's development. On Tuesday 31 May 2022, the SABC, in association with the *Mail & Guardian*, will address these questions as this year's Africa Month Debate Series is concluded.

The final debate – a webinar – will take place virtually on Tuesday, from 10am-11.45am, under the theme of Private and Public Partnerships in Africa – how to create the

foundation for the bankability of transboundary projects.

"The Big Africa Debate is an important instrument for implementing Channel Africa's advocacy mandate, which includes providing news, content and events from the African perspective," said SABC Group Executive of Radio, Nada Wotshela.

In order to ensure that the event serves to reflect the priorities of the African Union and its Member States, each year's edition of the TBAD focuses on the theme that the African Union adopts for the year. In this way, it contributes to and enhances the visibility of the AU's efforts, and provides a platform to promote innovative ideas and recommendations related to each year's theme. The AU theme for 2022 is: Building resilience in nutrition on the African continent: Accelerate the human capital, social and economic development.

"The world we live in today has a very discerning population," commented Banda, "the issue of youth tracing the hamburger they are eating to make sure it was produced in an ethical manner means that we're here to serve the communities in which we are hosted. If those communities don't feel they're part of the economic upgrade that's happening to corporations, then we run the risk of real social upheaval ... we must carry our communities along."

In addition to community cooperation and local alignment, Koffman identified regional mobilisation as a critical success factor. "We need coordination between different regions, and we need to identify regional priorities – collectively. Trade corridors are extremely important for me. They have a multiplier effect, and the introduction of the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) was such an important development for the region because of the stark reduction in tariffs among member states, and a common customs union where we have more capital flowing freely."

However, due to the backlog of projects, there is a need for a multi-pronged approach of "large infrastructure projects and localised and venture capital investments". Koffman said the DBSA often plays a part when commercial banks don't have the appetite, most noticeably at the local level.

Responding to the issue of government owning and running some businesses, Banda said: "Governments need to facilitate the environment so the global investors that we need are able to come and partner with us. This is where we fall short; we structure these institutions, we invest as government, sometimes we own them, but we run them like arms of the cabinet or parliament, as opposed to using professional, capable people



Dolika Banda, Chairperson, ZCCM IH, with Aldrin Sampear, Debate Moderator.
Photos: Lungelo Mbulwana/SABC



Athandwiwe Saba, Deputy Editor, Mail & Guardian; Macenje "Che Che" Mazoka, SABC Regional Communications/Stakeholder Manager; and Nada Wotshela, Group Executive SABC Radio



Luyanda Maome, debate MC and Channel Africa presenter



Panelists Janade du Plessis, Five35 Ventures; Catherine Koffman, Group Executive Project Preparation DBSA; Edgar Pieterse, Director, African Center for Cities; Dolika Banda, Chairperson ZCCM-IC; and Aldrin Sampear, Moderator

who know how to run that business, and run it well."

To register for this free webinar, visit the websites of the *Mail & Guardian*, *Channel Africa*, or the SABC. The interactive webinar brings to conclusion the discussion topic for this year's Africa Month engagements, with recommendations for policymakers, government and financial institutions alike – be sure to register and join the conversation.



Gugu Ntuli, Group Executive SABC Corporate Affairs & Marketing on stage

To close Africa Month SABC is hosting

THE BIG Africa DEBATE



Part 2: *The Webinar*

31 May 2022 | 10:00 – 11:45

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