



**The Brookings Institution
Africa Growth Initiative
*Foresight Africa Podcast***

“The promise of free trade and integration across Africa’s nations”

Wednesday, October 2, 2024

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Episode Summary:

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) aims to create one market across the 55 countries of the African Union, promising free movement of goods, services, investment, people, and cooperation. In this episode, host Landry Signé speaks with Francis Mangeni and Andrew Mold, both experts on African trade and regional integration, about the status of African integration under AfCFTA and how to catalyze its continued implementation.

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SIGNÉ: Hello, I am Landry Signé, senior fellow in the Global Economy and Development Program and the Africa Growth Initiative at the Brookings Institution. Welcome to *Foresight Africa* podcast, where I engage with contributors to our annual *Foresight Africa* report, as well as with policymakers, industry leaders, and other key figures. You can learn more about this show and our work at Brookings dot edu slash Foresight Africa podcast.

Today on the podcast, I am pleased to welcome two guests: Andrew Mold and Francis Mangeni. Andrew Mold is the chief of regional integration and the AfCFTA Cluster at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. Doctor Mold has served in various capacities at UNECA prior to his current position from the acting director of the Subregional Office for East Africa to a senior economic affairs officer. Francis Mangeni is the advisor on economic Integration, Office of the Secretary General of the African Continental Free Trade Area. Doctor Mangeni also serves as an advisor on African integration, the multilateral trading systems, and development practice at the center for Global Development. Welcome to the show.

MOLD: Thank you very much.

MANGENI: Thank you, Landry.

SIGNÉ: You both contributed to a piece on the African Continental Free Trade Area entitled, “How to catalyze AfCFTA implementation in 2024,” in this year’s edition of *Foresight Africa*. Can you describe the AfCFTA for those who are unfamiliar, including its potential benefits for the continent if successfully implemented? Francis?

[2:42]

MANGENI: So, thank you so much, Landry. And we commend Brookings on this, important series of podcasts which have a very important role to play in creating awareness about the African Continental Free Trade Area across the world, including in Africa.

Now, the African Continental Free Trade Area, for those who was not very familiar with it is an initiative, a homegrown initiative of Africans to create one market across the whole continent. To convert the 55 African countries into one market. And by market, we mean where there’s free movement of goods, services, investment, people, and also cooperation in all the important trade-related areas such as competition, intellectual property, digital trade, women and youth in trade. And then, of course, the dispute settlement. We need a system for settling disputes so that trade and investment can happen smoothly, unimpeded. So, that’s what the African Continental Free Trade Area is, just to create one market with its free movement.

And why would we want to have this market, this one continental market? It’s because we want to, once and for all, to permanently deal with this problem of the balkanization of Africa, of division of Africa into smaller and smaller economies. As one economy, when we are united as one economy, the combined GDP of Africa would be \$6.7 trillion, or \$7.4 trillion—depending on the methodology you use—at

purchasing power parity. Now, that would easily make Africa the fourth largest economy in the whole world. And you can see that sees a significant economic size as a global player.

The benefits that we expect include increased intra-African trade. It's famously said that intra-African trade is low, but I think we shall go into this. It's not as low as usually stated. It's definitely not 17% of total of trade between Africa and the rest of the world. It is a lot higher than that. So, we expect it to increase, actually to double.

[5:04]

And then secondly, we expect to lift at least 50 million Africans out of extreme poverty by the year 2035. This is significant. Of course, poverty on the continent is really immense. All right? We're talking about more than 700 million people living in extreme poverty. But nevertheless, we have to start somewhere. So, this will be a huge contribution to that.

Of course, the African GDP will increase, incomes will increase, women will benefit. And there will be actually benefits, say, across all sectors and for all the countries, though we expect agro, manufacturing to benefit immensely.

But then politically also we shall be able to have stronger agency across the world because speaking with one voice as a block of 55 countries gives us a stronger voice. This includes in the international arenas like the United Nations and the World Trade Organization, but also engagements with the strategic partners such as China, you know, Japan, and all of these, say, Africa plus one summits. So, this would be what the AfCFTA is and what we expect to benefit from it.

SIGNÉ: That is fantastic, Francis. And it is clear that the combined consumer and business spending, will reach \$6.7 trillion U.S. dollar by 2030 and can even exceed \$16 trillion U.S. dollar by 2050. What is the agreement's current state of implementation? For example, which country are trading under the AfCFTA rule, Andrew? And please feel free also to expand on the previous question.

[6:47]

MOLD: Yes. I mean, just to add to what Francis was saying about the main objective of the AfCFTA. The Economic Commission for Africa has undertaken with CEPI [Central European Policy Institute] in Paris simulation work on the impact of the agreement once it is fully implemented. And we estimate that there will be an increase by 2045 by 35% in intra-African trade. And that's the continental average, actually.

So, if you look at sectors which are particularly important to the continent in terms of its structural development and diversification, then you'll see that the increases in intra-African trade will be much higher. So, agri food, for example, is forecast to go up by 54%; and services, 38%; industry in general, 36%. So, there will be a very significant impetus to those intra-Africa trade.

And that has a lot of importance for the continent. In your own work, Landry, I think you've stressed the potential opportunities for Pan-African businesses. And giving

African companies and firms the space to develop on, a regional scale will give them better opportunities also to compete both within the, you know, the domestic markets and also, internationally.

So, you ask the question about, you know, the current status of implementation and countries, how much they're trading under the agreement. It's important to start by stressing that of the 54 signatories of the AfCFTA, 48 countries have now ratified the agreement, which means in principle it is now fully operational for those countries.

Back in 2022, in October, there was the Guided Trade Initiative, which was the first attempt to actually practice trading under AfCFTA rules and regulations. And at the time, eight countries participated in that first phase. It's very welcome to see that this time round—there's a second round of the Guided Trade Initiative—we now have 29 African countries expressing their interest. So, there's a lot of countries which are now keen to start trading under AfCFTA rules and regulations.

[9:00]

MANGENI: Yeah, if I can add to that as well. I think some of the significant developments recently, just building on what Andrew has just said there about the Guided Trade Initiative, are that some bigger countries have joined now. For instance, South Africa just launched its first consignment by exporting to Kenya under the AfCFTA rules. That was immensely important. And then Nigeria has also just done that, which is immensely important.

So, just to build on what Andrew said, from the eight countries that participated, we have had actually a number of countries that have subsequently actually dispatched consignments under the AfCFTA rules and and procedures. And then, of course, we are hoping that in this month, October we are going to have this second iteration, just as Andrew said.

SIGNÉ: Francis, you mentioned the Guided Trade Initiative and you mentioned eight countries, but I also know that the Secretary General announced during Davos and also, you know, the event—we hosted him here in Washington, D.C. at Brookings—the expansion of the number of countries. So, has there been an increase in inter-, or let's say intra-regional trade under the AfCFTA since its official launch, especially for those countries which were part of the Guided Trade Initiative? And I see that Andrew want to step in here. Please, Andrew.

[10:30]

MOLD: Yes, if you don't mind, Francis. I was just looking at the statistics for this because we're just getting the final 2023 numbers in. Actually, the agreement officially, the trading began on the 1st of January 2021 under the AfCFTA. And since 2020, we've actually seen the amount of intra-African exports expand by nearly 40%—39% between 2020 and 2023. So, it's gone up from around \$67 billion USD in 2020, up to \$94 billion in 2023, according to UNCTAD, the UN figures. I've seen other statistics actually from other institutions like IMF Dots, which even put intra-African trade as higher, over \$100 billion now.

So, you could say that there's a relationship. However, with the Guided Trade Initiative, what is being done really is consignments of trade to practice how well the new rules and regulations work. And what we would hope and expect is once the agreement is properly implemented, much larger increases in traffic or trade. But at least those first signs are very encouraging.

[11:39]

MANGENI: So, what I can also tell you is that the AfCFTA Secretariat, we have sent out a questionnaire to countries, right? and then to also industry, private sector, to actually give us, you know, information from their own sources on the trade that is happening.

Now, I would like to make maybe two points, Landry, if you don't mind. The first one is that there is a lot of trade happening under the AfCFTA since October 2022, on the seventh when we launched the Guided Trade Initiative, which we did not know about. All right? So, it's happening but we have not been told about it. For instance, between Uganda and Nigeria there's trade in milk, but it's not recorded as having happened under the Guiding Trade Initiative. So, there's trade which is happening outside the Guided Trade Initiative, that's why we're trying to elicit this information.

Then the second point I like to make is that trading under the AfCFTA does not have to be under the Guided Trade Initiative. I hope this is not contradictory. The reason I am making this point is that there are some people who think that for trade to happen under the AfCFTA, it must be notified to the Secretariat and then it must be categorized as taking place under the Guided Trade Initiative. No. We are happy as a Secretariat to know about the consignments that are being settled. And we hope of course to assist as appropriate to facilitate, which is actually why it's called the Guided Trade Initiative. But that doesn't mean that you should not trade unless you have told us.

So, trade can happen between in African countries that have ratified the AfCFTA. And on any products, any products, that have good rules of origin and that are subject to the trade liberalization schedules. Any products, any 5,000 or so of products that market intelligence tells you have got an export market, please go ahead and trade it. It doesn't have to be limited in a few products.

SIGNÉ: Wonderful point, Francis. And as a matter of fact, we can trade with the agreement, aiming at facilitating trade. But even without the agreement, we can still trade with one another on the continent. And, Andrew, I appreciate the insight that you have shared with specific statistics on trade on the continent.

Andrew, what are some of the successful trade impact stories thus far?

MOLD: Before I answer that, just to mention that we have some torrential tropical rain here. I'm speaking from Kigali. So, excuse me if there's a bit of background noise as I reply.

[14:24]

So, Francis mentioned the case of South Africa trading with Kenya. I think that's a very good example because it was the kind of diversified trade that everybody's hoping that will be greatly incentivized under the AfCFTA. So, South Africa sent a shipment containing refrigerators, paperboard, and steel products to Kenya. And ultimately, most analysts were selling the AfCFTA on the grounds it will really help the continent accelerate its structural diversification. It will help in those diversified industries. So, the continent will no longer be exporting purely commodity-based products, but actually value addition. So, there will be diversified products in manufacturing, agri foods, for example.

We already have examples of that within the region. So, for example, you see that the trade that East Africa community does with the rest of the world tends to be 80%, 90% primary commodities. But within the East Africa community, it's as high as 60% of diversified goods, you know, manufactured goods, processed foods, and the like. And so, that's the real power of having a continental market to incentivize that kind of thing. And so, we've seen a few examples of that.

Other countries have decided to trade more of their traditional commodities. So, coffee's been quite popular. Rwanda exported coffee to Ghana under the AfCFTA. But we should note it's not the raw coffee, it's actually the packaged coffee, which is what countries should be really promoting. Tanzania: one of its first trades was coffee to Algeria, which is a very successful trade according to the person that was involved in that operation that I spoke to.

So, that's where the beauty of the AfCFTA resides, really giving an added incentive to value addition and economic diversification on the continent.

[16:17]

MANGENI: I just want to add just one or two other perspectives. And the first one is that some people were quite surprised. But the operators, the people who exported under the Guided Trade Initiative were actually SMEs. Like, for instance, Andrew just mentioned the consignment from Rwanda to Algeria. The exporter from Rwanda, who also has a company in Ghana, was actually a small- to medium- enterprise, and a woman. You see? So, there's that gender dimension as well.

And then the consignment of tea from Kenya, right? to to Ghana, which took six weeks, was actually a bulking or an aggregation of the contributions from out growers who are mostly, again, women.

So, what this tells you is that the AfCFTA is actually having impact at the grassroots level. That is, small operators, whether they be from the rural areas, whether they be women, or youth, can also benefit from the AfCFTA. I think that's what that consignment from Kenya tells us.

SIGNÉ: Fantastic, Francis. Your paper highlights the need for countries with positive regional trade balances to adopt a more liberal import regime for intra-African imports. Can you explain why, Andrew?

[17:43]

MOLD: Yes. The large economies in any regional process tend to drive economic integration. So, if you look at the European Union experience, for example, it very much hinged on Germany and its great manufacturing capacity, on the one hand, and also its financing of the European integration process. And there are some reasons to think this will be true also for the African continent. So, we really need those larger economies to be driving this process. And in a book that Francis and I have written, it was published in May this year, *Borderless Africa: A Skeptic's Guide to the Continental Free Trade Area*, we very much stress this point that those large economies have an additional responsibility to making this agreement work. Partly because they already enjoy large, positive trade balances with the rest of the continent.

So, again, I was just recalculating on the new numbers what those balances are. And it's really quite impressive. So, in the case of Egypt, they have a trade surplus with the rest of the continent of around \$5 billion U.S. dollars in 2023. In the case of Nigeria, it's around \$4 billion. Kenya recently announced it had a \$1.2 billion surplus with the rest of the African continent. And finally South Africa at more than \$20 billion U.S. dollar surplus.

So, it's incumbent on those economies also to open up more to imports from the rest of the continent. That will really help drive the opportunities in terms of value addition for the rest of the continent. And you could even make an argument that they should lead by example by accelerating their own tariff reduction schedules. Now, they were already under slightly more ambitious tariff reduction schedules than the LDCs across the continent because whereas the LDCs have a 10-year time frame to eliminate 90% of tariffs for the non-LDCs, like Egypt, like Nigeria, like South Africa and Kenya—they actually only have a time frame of five years. But we believe that it act as a catalyst for the Continental Agreement that these countries really took a lead in the liberalization process.

SIGNÉ: Fantastic, Andrew. Do you want to add anything, Francis?

[20:06]

MANGENI: Yeah. This is an extremely important point, and I can add something. And what I can add is that the political economy of the tariff reduction, of liberalization, needs to be taken into account. And that's why we are making this point. That for a country that's already has a large positive balance, it should be easy, it shouldn't raise these complicated protectionist tendencies.

And we also think that this idea of having champions is extremely important. It's how regional integration operates across the whole world. You always need, you know, champions who who can actually, shall I say, you know, have the back of the economic integration arrangement in case things are not working, in case there are this need for critical interventions, strategic interventions at certain points in time. You need those countries who can come forward and take it upon themselves, whether it's to foot the financial bills, you know, whether it's to _____ sensitive initiatives. So, these are extremely important to have.

And even during the negotiations, actually, that's how the negotiations actually happened. We had a core group of countries during the difficult moments who always came together, hammered out a compromise, and then went out as ambassadors to all the other countries to get buy in. So, this has been happening, and we hope that you can continue into implementation as well.

SIGNÉ: Fantastic, Francis. The essay also touches on certain countries not complying with their AfCFTA obligations. Have you seen any mechanism successfully encourage compliance? And Francis, I come to you first now.

[21:52]

MANGENI: So, I think there are two points to make here. The first one is that the dispute settlement body has been activated. So, right now, as we speak, assuming there's a country which wanted to raise a matter formally against some other country, there is a facility to do so. We have the dispute settlement body, which has met a number of times. We have got the appellate body, this is a panel of judges which has been appointed, and sworn-in, and has met. And then, of course, we have got the rules of appointment of panels. So, that's the first one.

Then the second one, which is already in use, is that we have got the system for addressing non-tariff barriers. So, it's a web-based system. Once you are on the internet you can log on to the system. It's called the Africa Trade Barriers dot org. And then register a complaint from wherever you are. And your complaint will be triggered at the focal points across the continent, who can then attend to your problem. And then you can liaise with them by email, by WhatsApp, once the process has been kickstarted.

Now, are there prospects that this will work well? There is a similar system which has been operating since 2010, the year 2010 among COMESA—that's the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa—the East African Community, and the Southern African Development Community, COMESA, EAS, SADC, online system for addressing non-tariff barriers.

Now, if you go to the website of that system, they are figures there on compliance rates. You will see that this process of just reporting and then consultations where there are non-tariff barriers parties has resulted in resolution of more than 90% of the reported non-tariff barriers. So, it has been immensely successful. But of course, for those non-tariff barriers which are not yet resolved through informal consultations, then the formal consultations can kick in where the matter is raised in a formal meeting, for instance, and then countries can talk to each other and see how these can be addressed.

Now, when you add that aspect as well, the number reaches up to 99% of the reported NTBs. So, the prospects are good because the similar system, which is already working in COMESA, ESA, and SADC has proved to be immensely successful. And if you go to the website of that system, which is www.TradeBarriers.org, you'll see that the numbers actually there which show that it has been easy to eliminate non-tariff barriers using just informal consultations. And where informal consultations have not worked, then the matter has been referred to

bilateral meetings, formal bilateral meetings, which have even helped to increase the performance of that system.

[24:50]

MOLD: If I may just come in there. Actually, I was just going to add, you know, part of it, it's not a question of compliance, it's actually just raising sufficient awareness amongst customs officials and authorities about the necessary documentation to be able to trade under AfCFTA rules.

So, we were recently in Cameroon, and officials there were explaining they wish to import a consignment of fertilizer from neighboring Nigeria but were unable to do so because the AfCFTA rules of origin certification wasn't available. And so, that's precisely when Nigeria becomes involved with the Guided Trade Initiative. Now those kind of problems should be resolved and those trades take place under AfCFTA rules. So, I really think you're going to see an acceleration over this coming year of the pace of implementation.

SIGNÉ: I like the point you are making, Andrew. And how do African policymakers and officials accelerate the implementation of the AfCFTA to deliver better trade and industrial development outcomes across Africa, Andrew?

[25:57]

MOLD: I think one key recommendation is a need to focus initially on the tariff liberalization and the removal of the non-tariff barriers to intra-African trade. The AfCFTA, as Francis was saying in his opening remarks, is a very ambitious agenda. It's about creating a continental market. And there are many aspects to that, whether that's related to rules on intellectual property, competition, digital trade, services liberalization, and the like.

All that is very important. But at its heart this is, this current stage a free trade agreement and we need to make the free trade agreement work effectively. That requires member states to respect the tariff reduction schedule so that they've signed up to. So, for LDC African countries, they have a 10-year time frame to reach a 90% liberalization and an additional three years to reach 97% of tariff lines being liberalized. It's important that member states respect that because if they do not, the new market opportunities won't open up for their trading partners.

So, in a sense, it's very important that all countries behave like good African citizens in the sense that they work hard at liberalizing imports. Because at heart, a free trade agreement like this is an agreement on the import side rather than the export side. For people's export opportunities to materialize, we need countries to really follow up in terms of making sure that they do everything possible to liberalize trade imports and remove the non-tariff barriers. That way, their own exporters will also have more opportunities if their trading partners do likewise. So, it's a question of building up the trust and confidence that this continental market is really a dynamic, growing proposition for everybody.

[27:50]

MANGENI: Yeah. Landry, if I can just add this. I usually like to unpack what exactly implementation means, just for as a framework for discussing this matter or talking about it. So, implementation, as I understand it, can refer to first of all the initial stages of signature and ratification. So, those have to be done. So, we need to complete the ratification process. And we still have seven countries to go.

And then after ratification we need domestication. Domestication is now the process of getting the AfCFTA the force of law within the country, of putting in place policies that, say, are needed in order for the AfCFTA to be in place, to be operational in place.

So, after domestication, then you need utilization. Landry, you do a lot of work in the area of promoting investment, like your white paper which was launched at the World Economic Forum this February. So, utilization is important and it's part of implementation. It means the private sector should pursue trade and investment opportunities that open up under the AfCFTA.

Now, this requires market information of course, as well as the mobilization of private sector associations, whether that's the AfroChampions [Initiative], the African Business Council, the regional business councils. And then capacity building, awareness creation among all stakeholders. This is government, just as Andrew was saying there; industry just as I've been saying there; academia, and other civil society organizations. So, this capacity building, awareness creation, is also extremely important. Not that it helps utilization, but also it creates ownership, ownership and engagement from an informed point of view.

And then lastly, follow up. You know, we were talking about enforcement just a moment ago. So, follow up is extremely important. Also, in the context of monitoring and evaluation. What are we learning? What is working? What's not working so that we can fix it?

So, I believe that such a framework can help us to talk about implementation in a comprehensive way, so that we don't forget an aspect, which is part of the ecosystem for the implementation of the AfCFTA.

SIGNÉ: Insightful, Francis, I like the systematic account you provide on better understanding implementation and the implications for multiple stakeholders. And thank you for highlighting also the work that we do along those lines, Francis. But also, Andrew, you highlighted that earlier.

So, as you know from previous *Foresight Africa* podcast episodes, I love finishing the session with a couple of questions for all my guests. AGI looks at Africa from an economic perspective, and we focus on how to maintain economic growth and structural change while fostering inclusion, especially for youth and women on the continent. Building on your work and experience, what is one piece of advice you will give to other African and global policymakers to encourage and promote free trade and regional integration on the continent? Go ahead, Francis.

[31:22]

MANGENI: So, I have worked in various regional integration arrangements on the continent. Now, what I have seen over the years, and we don't talk a lot about this, is that we need to minimize audit queries. All right? Audit queries in the way Secretariats are managed, in the way finances are managed, human resources are managed. And the reason I'm saying this is because we have had cases where you go into meeting, even at the ministerial level, even at the summit, and more than 90% of the time is spent not on substantive agenda items of regional integration, but on audit queries.

Now, this takes away the time that's required for actually focusing on the substantive issues of regional integration. So, I would advise that we also pay careful attention to these aspects of how secretariats are managed, of the operational and institutional arrangements, of the governance arrangements of our organizations. How our summits are managed, how our councils of ministers are managed. And President Kagame has highlighted the importance of getting this right, of making sure that we have efficient organizations that run well in order to minimize, you know, excess baggage and wastage of time and wastage of resources. So, I thought I should point out this because it's not in the mainstream of the discussion much of the time.

SIGNÉ: Thank you, Francis. And Andrew, please.

[32:58]

MOLD: Yes. I mean, I have an additional observation to make here, and I think it's about the way continental integration is sold, you know, because often it's talked about in rather limited terms of opportunities for SMEs and small cross-border traders and the like. And in reality, continental integration is far more ambitious than that. It's about giving rights and entitlements to Africans as citizens, as consumers, the general population need to be beneficiaries of this process. So, actually, in the book that Francis and I wrote together, we very much stress positive examples of things like the One Area Network which started in the East Africa Community over a decade ago. It was Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda initially. Now, Tanzania and Burundi have entered, I believe, South Sudan as well. I believe it's extended to six countries now. And this removes roaming charges for people traveling between those countries. And that gives tangible benefits for the citizens of those countries.

Another example we cite is in SADC the removal of differential fees for university students. That's to say, if you're a citizen from a SADC member state, you will be charged if you study in another member state the same fee as a national from that country.

We need to shift gradually towards an optic where we make people realize that this is done for the benefit of all citizens, rather than just for exporters. That's not really the final objective of any integration process. It is for African citizens to benefit across the board.

SIGNÉ: Extremely important, Andrew. And given your successful career and impact, what advice would you give to youth hoping to follow in your footsteps? Andrew, we start with you this time.

[34:51]

MOLD: Oh, goodness. Well, if we're addressing African youth, you know, I often feel very sorry for the state of the African job market. It's very difficult, isn't it, for young people to get their first job experiences, work experiences? There's a lot of qualified young people across the continent, and often they struggle to find those job opportunities.

So, clearly, you're going to have to be persistent to find those opportunities. And I think you're going to have to build up your career by always looking for new experiences. So, anything where you can learn from. I've moved now, during my career, seven times, I've lived in seven different countries. And each time I've moved, it's been a really fulfilling experience where you learn a lot of new things. So, I think for young people's curriculums, once you've finished your initial degree does it help build the experience that I have? And that will hopefully ultimately give you the possibilities of the kind of job that you're looking for.

SIGNÉ: Fantastic, Andrew. Francis?

[35:50]

MANGENI: Let me first of all say that, of course, we need to get the basics right. Of course, you must be well trained in your area. You must be ambitious, motivated. Right? And you must be a go getter. Go out and be inquisitive.

There's a friend of mine, I wrote a book with him called *Emergent Africa* it's called, Professor Calestous Juma. Well, he passed away, right? So, he he was born in a village in the western Kenya. And then by the time he was 64, you know, he was advising 67 presidents around the country. He was a professor at Harvard Kennedy School of Government. He had been founding executive secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity. And many, many things, he had been many, many things.

So, one day I was hosting him when he came to visit us as the organization in Lusaka. And we were moving around talking to students, actually. So, at the University of Zambia, one student asked him, but how did you make it from being, you know, a village boy, a schoolteacher, to to everything you are? And his response was, "I listened to advice." That's what he said. Right?

So, this is also the same advice I would give to the youth, that in addition to building your competencies, capabilities, please work with the networks. Work with the people who are role models. They can help you with connections and with contacts. These things matter. And they are not a dirty word, you know, contacts and connections. They really help. Some people will even call it social capital. But if you don't work with them, maybe there can be opportunities that you can miss. But these people are mentors, and many of them are happy to help young people make it in life. That's what I can say.

SIGNÉ: Fabulous. Francis, Andrew, thank you so much for joining me today.

MOLD: Thank you very much, Landry, for inviting us. It's been a pleasure to speak with you finally. I've been reading your own publications and research work for a long time now. So, yeah, it's a pleasure to be engaged with you in person.

SIGNÉ: Thank you, Andrew.

MANGENI: So, I would also just reiterate what Andrew has just said. Both of us, greatly value the work, that Landry, that you are doing, and your colleagues, your entire team at Brookings, we cite it quite a bit in our book, *Borderless Africa*. And we think you're having a very good impact around the world. And as staff of the AfCFTA Secretariat, I can also take this opportunity to thank you for the partnership that you have with us, not just with the Secretary-General himself, but also with colleagues like [Cynthia E. Gnassingbe] Essonam, you know, Private Sector Advisor, where you actually, you know, bring in a lot of knowledge and a lot of networks and teamwork, which helps to publicize the AfCFTA across the world and to bring investments into the continent and to promote investments across the continent by African economic operators. So, we encourage you to continue, and we hope that you can always call on us if you need any input whatsoever. We'll be happy to help.

SIGNÉ: Thank you so much, Francis and Andrew. I'm also following your work, citing it profusely.

[music]

SIGNÉ: I am Landry Signé, and this has been *Foresight Africa*. To learn more about this show and our report, visit Brookings dot edu slash Foresight Africa podcast.

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My special thanks to the production team, including Kuwilileni Hauwanga, supervising producer; Fred Dews, producer; Nicole Ntungire and Alexandria Cordero, associate producers; and Steve Cameron, audio engineer.

This show's art was designed by Shavanthi Mendis. Additional support for this podcast comes from my colleagues in Brookings Global and the Office of Communications at Brookings.