

Scaling up the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS) for AfCFTA Implementation and leveraging economic growth

Side Event: The Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development

Date: July 1, 2025

Time: 10:30 – 12:00 CET (11:30 – 13:00 EAT)

Link: <https://zoom.us/j/96126173178>

1. Background

The Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development presents a strategic opportunity to position the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS) as a regional model for overcoming systemic barriers to financial integration. The conference offers a platform to secure new commitments from global partners to co-invest in Africa’s payment infrastructure, strengthen public-private collaboration, and advance inclusive financial systems that support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Africa’s goal of building an integrated and self-reliant continental market depends on the effective implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Beyond tariff reductions, seamless cross-border payments in local currencies are essential to unlocking trade and economic growth. However, over 80% of intra-African payments still rely on external banking channels, increasing costs and risks. In response, the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS) was launched in 2022 by Afreximbank, in collaboration with the African Union and AfCFTA Secretariat, to enable instant, secure, and low-cost payments across Africa in local currencies. PAPSS is already operational in 15 countries, connecting over 500 banks, cutting settlement times from days to minutes, and reducing transaction costs by up to 80%. The FFD4 2025 presents an opportunity to discuss scaling this progress, securing political and financial support, and positioning PAPSS as a key driver of AfCFTA and Africa’s sustainable development.

This event is organized by the UNECA in collaboration with Afreximbank and the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS).

2. Context

The Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development presents a strategic opportunity to position the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS) as a regional model for overcoming systemic barriers to financial integration. The conference offers a platform to secure new commitments from global partners to co-invest in Africa’s payment infrastructure, strengthen public-private collaboration, and advance inclusive financial systems that support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is designed to scale up Africa’s financial integration, directly supporting SDG targets such as “Mobilize Domestic Resources”, “Mobilize Additional Financial Resources”, “Enhance Global Partnerships”, and “Promote Effective Public-Private Partnerships”. Collaboration between African governments, regional institutions, the private sector, international development partners,

and financial technology providers is essential to accelerate adoption, improve regulatory alignment, and ensure last-mile connectivity for businesses across the continent. Engaging these stakeholders through the FFD4 will be key to unlocking the full potential of PAPSS for advancing the AfCFTA and achieving Africa's development objectives.

3. Objectives

The **objective of this side event** is to discuss the challenges and potentials of scaling PAPSS adoption across all **African member states**. The discussion will focus on:

- **Expanding PAPSS membership among all African member states** to achieve continent-wide adoption by central banks and financial institutions.
- **Harmonizing cross-border payment regulations** to ensure interoperability and legal clarity.
- **Engaging the private sector**, particularly commercial banks, Fintechs, and SMEs, to promote practical uptake and usage.
- **Leveraging digital trade protocols** under AfCFTA to ensure PAPSS supports Africa's digital economy and innovation agenda.

4. Expected Outcomes

The expected outcomes include:

- **Policy recommendations** for African governments on regulatory and Legal alignment to accelerate regulatory harmonization of cross-border payment systems
- **Strategic partnerships** to mobilize multi-Stakeholder partnerships and financial Support by engaging multilateral and bilateral partners.
- **Enhanced regional cooperation** through the promotion of joint implementation frameworks between AU, Afreximbank, the AfCFTA Secretariat and ECA to scale regional payment infrastructure in line with Agenda 2063.

5. Target audience

The target audience for the panel discussion includes **African finance ministers, central bank** governors, regional **economic community** representatives, and officials from **the AfCFTA Secretariat** and the **African Union**. This discussion also targets **international financial institutions** such as the World Bank, IMF, AfDB, and bilateral development partners interested in advancing financial inclusion and trade facilitation in Africa. Private sector leaders, particularly from **commercial banks, fintech associations, and payment service providers**, are key stakeholders, alongside **academia, policy researchers, and CSOs** engaged in digital finance, regional integration, and sustainable development are a vital component of the discussion. The session seeks to engage this multi-stakeholder audience to generate political will, mobilize partnerships, and discuss practical solutions for scaling PAPSS to advance Africa's financial integration and the achievement of the SDGs.

Agenda

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10:30 – 10:35	<p>Opening Remarks</p> <p>Mr. Claver Gatete -Executive Secretary <i>Economic Commission for Africa</i></p>
10:35 – 10:50	<p>Context setting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentation of PAPSS
10.50-11.50	<p>Panel discussion</p> <p>Views from PAPSS, the African Union, Central Banks and Private Sector on the challenges and potentials of scaling PAPSS adoption across all African member states.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mike Ogbalu – Chief Executive Officer <i>Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (tbc)</i> - Gilberto Antonio - Chief Technical Advisor <i>African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat</i> - Clarence Blay - Head of Payments System <i>Bank of Ghana</i> - Pierre Celestin Rwabukumba – President <i>The African Securities Exchanges Association</i> - Luca Antonio Ricci - Division Chief (tbc) <i>International Monetary Fund</i> <p>Open discussion</p> <p>Moderator: Amal Phleem - Microeconomic, Finance and Governance Division, <i>United Nations Economic Commission for Africa</i></p>
11:50 -12:00	<p>Closing remarks</p> <p>Amine Idriss Adoum - Director for Infrastructure and Energy, Industrialization, Trade and Regional Integration, <i>AUDA-NEPAD</i></p>