

**A preview of the African Transformation Report:
a discussion on how the state and private sector can work together to promote
transformation**

1. Background and objectives of the seminar

Compared with other regions, economies in Africa remain predominantly dependent on primary commodity production and exports. The economies are yet to significantly transform the point where they are important producers and exporters of manufactures and high-value services in the global economy. How do African countries do this? All of the economies in the region are now market economies, and in such economies it is widely accepted that the private sector is the engine of growth. To boost growth, modernize agriculture, and shift economies towards higher value manufacturing and services, profit will be a major motivating force. Exports will be ramped up only if there are markets to serve and factories will be built only if the returns justify the costs. The exact role of the state is a subject of intense debate. Less controversial is the notion that the state can help create the favorable environment for the private sector. Perhaps more controversial is the notion that the state can intervene proactively to try to spur growth and economic transformation. However, it is clear that both the state and the private sector have important roles to play, and the more they collaborate, the more they can leverage each other's efforts to the benefit of the economy. The state and the private sector *must* therefore talk to each other. But how?

Some Asian countries have implemented models for state-business collaboration with remarkable success. In the present global economic environment, and in Africa's unique context, what should be the path for Africa?

2. The objectives of the seminar are:

At this seminar, ACET will share a preview of the report, especially as it relates to getting the state and the private sector to forge a strategic partnership for transformation. ACET is particularly interested in learning from success stories and understanding what African governments can do to attract more manufacturers, especially from Asia. This seminar will be one of a series of consultations with practitioners to inform the final report, which will be launched in October.

3. Key questions to be addressed will include:

- What are the mechanisms through which business realities can inform public policy?
- In which industries lie the most promising pathways to Africa's transformation?
- How should government balance promoting national champions and attracting global leaders in those key industries?
- Where are the opportunities for public-private partnerships?
- How can the state assist private companies to upgrade technology?

- How can government work with companies to close the skills gap?

4. Speakers

- Dr. Kingsley Y. AMOAKO, Founder and President of ACET, and former Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)
- Dr. Yaw ANSU, Chief Economist, ACET, and former Director of Economic Policy and Country Director, World Bank.
- Mr. Toru HOMMA, Senior Advisor on Private Sector Development, JICA

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