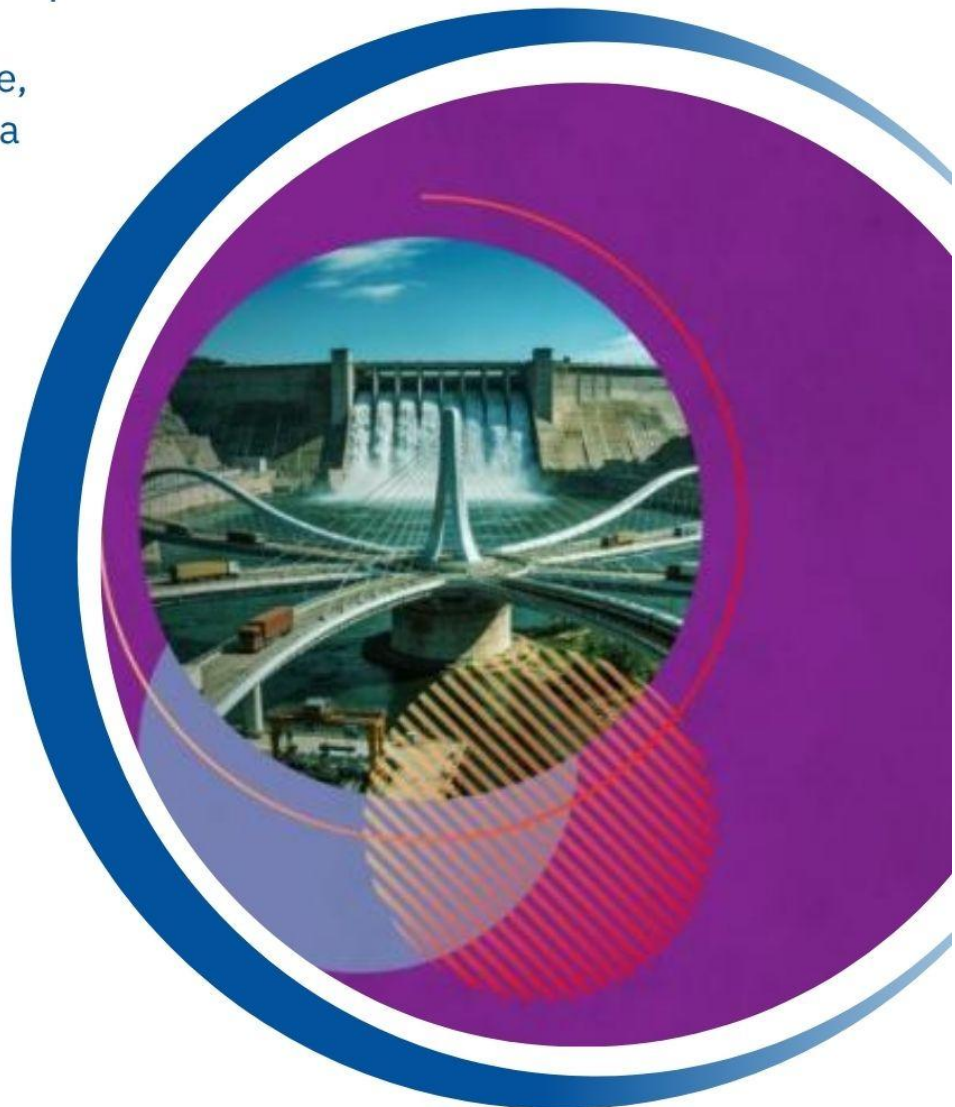


AFRICAN UNION

Specialised Technical Committee on Transport and Energy

5th Ordinary Session Report

Sandton Convention Centre,
Johannesburg, South Africa
27 – 30 April 2026



Dola Oluteye Ph. D

AFRICAN UNION
Specialised Technical Committee on Transport and Energy
5th Ordinary Session
Report

Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg, South Africa
27 – 30 April 2026

Prepared by
Dola Oluteye Ph.D
The PATNA Initiative and UCL Energy Institute

Table of Contents

Authors.....	4
Publication Details.....	4
Acknowledgements.....	4
Disclaimer.....	4
Contact Details.....	4
About The Professional African Technical Network Advisory (PATNA) Initiative.....	4
About UCL Energy Institute.....	5
About The African Union Specialised Technical Committee on Transport & Energy (STC-T&E).....	5
Executive Summary.....	6
1. Context and Setting: A Continent at a Defining Moment.....	7
1.1. Event Overview.....	7
1.2. The Global Context: Disruption as a Structural Condition.....	7
1.3. Freedom Day and the Symbolic Resonance of the Session.....	8
2. Procedural Matters, Bureau Elections, and Institutional Architecture.....	9
2.1. Quorum and Opening of Session.....	9
2.2. Agenda Adoption and the AU Constitution Amendment Debate.....	9
2.3. Election of the New STC Bureau.....	9
3. Just Transition, GHG Emissions, and the Maritime Decarbonisation Framework.....	11
3.1. Background and Strategic Significance.....	11
3.2. Content of the Continental Decarbonisation Strategy.....	11
3.3. Just Transition Provisions.....	12
3.4. The Revised African Maritime Transport Charter.....	12
3.5. Adoption Outcome.....	13
4. Energy Transition Outlook for Africa.....	14
4.1. The Energy Security Imperative.....	14
4.2. The Grand Inga Hydropower Project.....	14
4.3. Nuclear Energy and Diversified Supply.....	15
4.4. Green Hydrogen and the Just Energy Transition.....	16
4.5. G20 Energy Outcomes and the South African Presidency Legacy.....	16
5. Infrastructure, Innovation, Digitalisation, and Investment.....	17
5.1. PIDA Phase 2: From Planning to Execution.....	17
5.2. Aviation Infrastructure, Safety, and Connectivity.....	17
5.3. Maritime Digitalisation: Single Window Systems.....	18
5.4. Electric Vehicles and Sustainable Mobility.....	19
5.5. Corridors, Rail, and the Productive Infrastructure Imperative.....	19
6. Key Decisions and Adopted Frameworks.....	21
Transport Sector.....	21
Energy Sector.....	21
Cross-Cutting and Institutional Decisions.....	22

7. Implications for African Policy and the Road Ahead.....	23
7.1. Translating Strategy to Execution: The Defining Challenge.....	23
7.2. The Financing Gap and the Need for Blended Approaches.....	23
7.3. The Intersectionality of Energy, Transport, and Industrial Transformation.....	23
7.4. Africa’s Voice in Global Governance.....	24
8. Conclusion.....	25

Authors

Dola Oluteye^{1,2}

¹ The PATNA Initiative

² UCL Energy Institute

Publication Details

Publication Date: 7 May 2026

Cite as: Oluteye, D. (2026). African Union Specialised Technical Committee on Transport & Energy: 5th Ordinary Session Report. Published on:

<https://thepatna.org/african-union-specialised-technical-committee-on-transport-energy-5th-ordinary-session-report>

Acknowledgements

This report was developed by the PATNA Initiative in collaboration with the UCL Energy Institute, London. The authors gratefully acknowledge contributions from their funders, partners, and collaborators. Appreciation is extended to the delegates at the STC-T&E and the country representatives for their collaboration and shared commitment to amplifying Africa's progress through the AU Agenda 2063. The author also thanks the African Union Commission for facilitating open and transparent technical discussions.

Disclaimer

The views in this report are those of the authors and do not reflect the views of the organizations they represent or of those involved in the study. This document and its contents have been prepared and are intended solely for use by the PATNA Initiative, UCL Energy Institute, and interested researchers and policymakers in relation to the STC-T&E. It does not replace the policies of organizations and governments.

The use of this document must be informed by individual choice and how each deems it fit. The PATNA Initiative accepts no responsibility to any other party regarding this document and its contents.

Contact Details

If you require any further information on this report, please contact: Dr Dola Oluteye - dolapo.oluteye@ucl.ac.uk or dola@thepatna.org

About The Professional African Technical Network Advisory (PATNA) Initiative

The PATNA Initiative is a non-profit network of 100+ African experts, policymakers, researchers, and advocates formed to amplify Africa's voice in global energy transition and climate action. PATNA

leverages evidence-based research to inform policies that balance economic growth with environmental protection. The initiative brings together academics, technical experts, government professionals, and private-sector cohorts to ensure that African perspectives shape global policy and climate matters. For more information, please visit www.thepatna.org.

About UCL Energy Institute

The UCL Energy Institute hosts a world-leading research group which aims to accelerate the transition to an equitable and sustainable energy and trade system within the context of the ocean. The Shipping and Oceans Research Group's multi-disciplinary work on the shipping and ocean system leverages advanced data analytics, cutting-edge modelling, and rigorous research methods, providing crucial insights for decision-makers in both policy and industry. The group focuses on three core areas: analysing big data to understand the drivers of shipping emissions, developing models and frameworks to explore the path toward zero-emission shipping, and conducting social science research to examine the policy and commercial structures that enable the decarbonization of the shipping sector. For more information, visit www.shippingandoceans.com.

About The African Union Specialised Technical Committee on Transport & Energy (STC-T&E)

The Specialised Technical Committee (STC) on Transport and Energy is a decision-making organ of the African Union that provides policy guidance and strategic oversight for infrastructure integration. STC-T&E prepares and monitors programs like the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) to ensure regional integration and economic growth under Agenda 2063. The committee meets every two years and includes ministers from all AU member states, supported by technical experts. In February 2024, it was renamed from its previous title (STC-TTIIET) to its current, more focused name: STC on Transport and Energy. The 5th Session, hosted in Johannesburg, South Africa, from April 27–30, 2026, the 5th Ordinary Session aimed to accelerate Africa's industrialisation through resilient infrastructure.

Executive Summary

The 5th Ordinary Session of the African Union Specialised Technical Committee (STC) on Transport and Energy convened from 27 to 30 April 2026 at the Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg, South Africa. Hosted by the Republic of South Africa under its G20 Presidency, the session brought together ministers, technical experts, regional economic communities, continental institutions, and development partners from across the African continent.

The meeting proceeded in two distinct phases. The first three days were devoted to expert-level technical deliberations, during which papers on aviation infrastructure, maritime transport, road safety, electric mobility, energy security, the Grand Inga Hydropower Project, the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), and the African Continental Free Trade Area were presented, interrogated, and refined. The fourth day constituted the Ministerial Session, at which the recommendations from the preceding technical deliberations were presented for high-level consideration, adoption, and endorsement.

Four defining outcomes marked the session:

1. Technical experts and ministers adopted and endorsed a continental framework for the decarbonisation of maritime transport. This is the first African-owned, African-led policy instrument designed to chart a clear pathway for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from the maritime sector across the continent.
2. The session welcomed the entry into force of the Revised African Maritime Transport Charter and the African Road Safety Charter, both of which represent significant governance milestones.
3. Substantial deliberations advanced the case for accelerating the implementation of the Grand Inga Hydropower Project as a continental energy security critical for green industrialisation.
4. The session was framed throughout by the urgency of the Middle East conflict and its compounding effects on Africa's energy and transport systems, which is a dynamic that focused minds on the call for energy sovereignty, domestic resource mobilisation, and continental resilience.

Across all thematic areas, a consistent thread ran through the proceedings: *the challenge before Africa is no longer one of strategy or aspiration, but of execution*. Undoubtedly, the continent possesses abundant resources, established frameworks, and credible continental institutions. What is required now is disciplined, coordinated, and accountable implementation, at scale, and with deliberate alignment between infrastructure, industry, trade, and energy systems.

1. Context and Setting: A Continent at a Defining Moment

1.1. Event Overview

The 5th Ordinary Session of the AU STC on Transport and Energy was convened under the theme of **accelerating the implementation of continental infrastructure and energy programmes in service of Agenda 2063**. South Africa, as the G20 host country and co-host of the session, provided the institutional and political context within which the meeting operated. The session followed an extraordinary STC session held in December 2024, at which several key continental frameworks had been adopted, and was positioned as the critical moment to translate those frameworks into actionable ministerial guidance.

The formal proceedings were opened by the Acting Director General of South Africa's Department of Transport, Mr Subesh, who welcomed delegates and situated the session within both continental and global dynamics. The AU Commission was represented by the Director of Infrastructure and Energy, Dr Abu Kazora, who provided a comprehensive overview of the agenda, institutional progress, and the commission's forward commitments. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the African Development Bank also delivered opening remarks, reinforcing the multilateral and partner character of the session.

1.2. The Global Context: Disruption as a Structural Condition

A recurring and consequential theme throughout all four days was the relationship between Africa's infrastructure and energy agenda and a world in which disruption has become a structural feature rather than an episodic event. The ongoing conflict in the Middle East, the disruption of shipping through the Red Sea and Suez Canal corridor, the volatility of global oil and gas prices, tightening access to international capital, and the accelerating reconfiguration of global supply chains were all cited as direct pressures bearing upon African economies.

The ECA representative drew specific attention to the way in which the crisis had elevated oil prices, disrupted aviation fuel supply chains, and exposed the vulnerability of African economies that remain dependent on imported energy. Transport logistics costs, already among the highest globally, were being further elevated by the re-routing of shipping traffic around the Cape of Good Hope — a development that, while placing additional pressure on some ports, also presented an opportunity for ports along the southern African corridor, including Djibouti, Mombasa, Dar es Salaam, and Durban.

South Africa's Minister of Electricity and Energy, Dr Kgosientsho Ramokgopa, set the tone for the Ministerial Session on Day 4 with a keynote address that described the current moment as a 'period of profound disruption' in which infrastructure had ceased to be a neutral development input. In his framing, infrastructure had become an instrument of sovereignty, the mechanism through which Africa would determine whether it remained peripheral to or became a competitive participant in reshaping the global economic order.

**KEY
FRAMING**

‘The question before us is not whether the challenges are real. It is whether we remain exploiters of our own opportunities, or emerge as a competitive, industrialised, energy-secure, and logistically efficient continent that captures value across integrated transport and energy systems.’ — Minister of Electricity and Energy, South Africa, Day 4 Ministerial Session

1.3. Freedom Day and the Symbolic Resonance of the Session

The opening of the session on 27 April 2026 coincided with Freedom Day, South Africa’s commemoration of the country’s first democratic elections in 1994 and the adoption of its Constitution. The Chair acknowledged this symbolism, noting that freedom on the African continent would ultimately be measured not by declarations alone, but by the ambition and execution reflected in Agenda 2063, which is an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa. This symbolic register informed much of the rhetorical tenor of the session, particularly in the Ministerial Day, where speakers consistently linked infrastructure investment to sovereignty, dignity, and self-determination.

2. Procedural Matters, Bureau Elections, and Institutional Architecture

2.1. Quorum and Opening of Session

The technical experts' session was formally declared open on 27 April 2026 following confirmation of quorum. The AUC Legal Counsel confirmed that 35 of the 49 member states eligible to vote were present, comfortably exceeding the simple majority threshold of 25 required for the session to proceed. Member states under various sanctions regimes or whose participation was suspended were noted and excluded from voting procedures in accordance with STC Rules of Procedure.

2.2. Agenda Adoption and the AU Constitution Amendment Debate

The adoption of the agenda was not straightforward. A significant procedural debate arose over the inclusion of an item relating to proposed amendments to the AU Constitutive Act. Several delegations, notably Chad, Morocco, and Algeria, raised formal objections on the grounds that the document circulated did not constitute a proper legal protocol for constitutional amendment, had not been distributed to member states in the required timeframe of 30 days before the session, and had not been translated into all working languages of the AU (Arabic, French, and Portuguese, in addition to English).

The AUC defended the process, noting that documentation had been shared with the relevant offices in August 2025 and that the amendments had been discussed in prior expert forums and legal standing committee sessions. However, the concerns raised were not fully dispelled, and the item was retained on the agenda on the understanding that it would be treated as a discussion item during the expert sessions, with a view to bringing a properly constituted text forward to a subsequent session. The episode illustrated the continuing tension between the commission's desire to advance institutional reforms and the procedural sovereignty expectations of member states.

2.3. Election of the New STC Bureau

A central procedural matter of the session was the election of the incoming STC Bureau, with the tenure of the Ethiopia-led bureau drawing to a close. Following regional consultations among the five African regional groupings, the following bureau composition was confirmed and formally announced:

- Chair: Gabon (Central Africa)
- 1st Vice Chair: Togo (West Africa)
- 2nd Vice Chair: Deferred at the request of the North Africa region for additional time for consultations
- 3rd Vice Chair: South Africa (Southern Africa)
- Rapporteur: Ethiopia (outgoing Chair, continuing in advisory capacity)

The incoming Chair from Gabon accepted the position with a statement of commitment to advancing the transport and energy agenda. South Africa, as 3rd Vice Chair, assumed the role of chairing the Ministerial Session on Day 4. Ethiopia delivered a handover statement expressing appreciation for the cooperation and solidarity extended during its tenure, during which several landmark frameworks, including the continental strategy on sustainable fuels, the energy efficiency strategy, and the smart and climate-resilient infrastructure policy, had been adopted.

3. Just Transition, GHG Emissions, and the Maritime Decarbonisation Framework



CONTINENTAL MILESTONE: The 5th Ordinary Session adopted and endorsed the Continental Strategy for the Decarbonisation of Maritime Transport in Africa, which is the first African-owned policy framework providing a structured pathway for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the maritime sector across the continent. This represents a landmark outcome of the session.

3.1. Background and Strategic Significance

The development of a continental maritime decarbonisation strategy reflects Africa's growing engagement with the global transition away from fossil fuel-powered shipping. The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) adopted a revised strategy in 2023, committing international shipping to reach net-zero, or near net-zero, greenhouse gas emissions by or around 2050. This strategy, agreed at the IMO's Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC), introduced binding targets including a 20–30 per cent reduction in GHG emissions by 2030, a 70 - 80 per cent reduction by 2040, and net zero by 2050, against a 2008 baseline.

For African states, this transition carries both risks and opportunities. The risk lies in the exposure of African shipping, port operators, and coastal economies to compliance costs, fuel transition requirements, and potential carbon pricing mechanisms that may not adequately reflect Africa's differentiated responsibilities or developmental circumstances. The opportunity lies in the possibility of positioning Africa as a producer and exporter of zero-emission marine fuels, particularly green hydrogen and green ammonia, given the continent's exceptional renewable energy endowment.

The continental strategy presented at the session, developed in collaboration with GIZ and The PATNA Initiative, sought to provide practical guidance on how African ports, maritime administrations, and member states could navigate the transition in a manner consistent with the continent's development priorities, energy realities, and capacity constraints.

3.2. Content of the Continental Decarbonisation Strategy

The strategy is structured around five intervention areas: renewable energy integration within port operations and vessel bunkering; waste management and verification systems at ports; digitalisation and modern technology adoption; climate resilience planning for coastal and port infrastructure; and institutional monitoring and reporting capacity. The strategy adopts a step-by-step approach, recognising that African member states are at very different stages of readiness and that a one-size-fits-all implementation model would be neither appropriate nor effective.

A key analytical contribution of the strategy is its candid assessment of the current state of African maritime infrastructure and the barriers to green transition. These include:

- a. limited fleet ownership by African entities;

- b. high costs of capital for vessel upgrades or replacement;
- c. limited domestic technical expertise in low-emission marine technologies;
- d. fragmentation across port authorities and regulatory bodies; and
- e. absence of reliable climate finance access mechanisms calibrated to the African maritime context.

At the same time, the strategy highlights tangible opportunities: job creation through green port retrofitting; export positioning for green hydrogen and ammonia as marine fuels; strengthening of Africa's voice in IMO technical negotiations; and the enhancement of African ports as competitive logistics hubs in a net-zero shipping world.

3.3. Just Transition Provisions

Throughout the deliberations on maritime decarbonisation, the language of just transition was not peripheral but central. Multiple delegations emphasised that the pace, modality, and financing of the maritime transition must reflect the historical, developmental, and resource asymmetries between African states and the major maritime powers. Tanzania, in particular, welcomed the establishment of an African Maritime Transition Facility that would provide dedicated concessional finance for the decarbonisation of African maritime assets and port infrastructure. The delegation also proposed the creation of an African voice under the IMO's net-zero framework, operating under the auspices of the AU, to coordinate and strengthen African positions in international negotiations.

The AUC representative underscored that a just transition in the maritime sector was not simply a matter of equity rhetoric. It had concrete technical and financial dimensions, such as:

- a. access to green technology at non-discriminatory conditions;
- b. capacity building for maritime administration staff on emissions monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV); and
- c. ensuring that the phasing out of high-emission vessels and bunkering infrastructure did not impose disproportionate adjustment costs on lower-income African shipping operators and coastal communities.

3.4. The Revised African Maritime Transport Charter

Complementing the decarbonisation strategy, the session formally noted and celebrated the entry into force of the Revised African Maritime Transport Charter on 14 August 2025, following ratification by 15 member states, with Uganda's deposit being the instrument that triggered the threshold. The charter provides an overarching governance framework for maritime transport across the continent, addressing safety and security standards, harmonisation of regulatory frameworks, inter-African cabotage, environmental protection obligations, and institutional architecture.

The AUC called on all member states that had not yet ratified the charter to do so urgently, emphasising that the charter's transformative potential could only be realised when its provisions were broadly and consistently applied across the continent. Tanzania announced that it was in the process of finalising ratification and would be depositing its instrument of ratification in the near term.

A notable deliberation arose around the relationship between the Revised Maritime Transport Charter and the broader Maritime Charter, which encompasses fisheries, environmental protection, and blue economy dimensions beyond transport. The Legal Counsel of the AUC clarified that the Revised Maritime Transport Charter had been specifically designed to consolidate and modernise the maritime transport provisions, while the broader Maritime Charter would continue to govern other dimensions of Africa's maritime domain.

3.5. Adoption Outcome

The technical experts' session formally adopted the Continental Strategy for the Decarbonisation of Maritime Transport in Africa as a guiding framework for member states, regional economic communities, and port authorities.

The ministerial session subsequently endorsed the strategy, along with decisions requesting the AUC to:

- a. coordinate with member states on the domestication of strategy provisions into national maritime policies;
- b. develop a continental monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV) framework; and
- c. collaborate with the IMO, international development partners, and climate finance institutions to mobilise resources for implementation.

The session also requested the AUC to establish, in line with Article 5 of the Revised Maritime Transport Charter, a continental maritime oversight structure with a formal Conference of the Parties mechanism.

4. Energy Transition Outlook for Africa

4.1. The Energy Security Imperative

The energy transition agenda occupied a significant portion of the session, with deliberations organised around the African Single Electricity Market (AFEM), the Continental Power System Master Plan (CMP), the Continental Energy Security Policy, and the energy dimensions of the G20 outcomes from South Africa's presidency. The overarching message from presentations and discussions was that Africa's energy challenge has a dual character: it is simultaneously a crisis of access and a crisis of transition.

Over 600 million Africans currently lack access to electricity, and over 970 million lack access to clean cooking solutions. At the same time, the continent is being asked to decarbonise its energy systems and honour international climate commitments in an environment where domestic energy demand is rising rapidly, and fiscal space is severely constrained.

The AUC Director of Infrastructure and Energy emphasised that these two imperatives of expanding access and managing the transition were not mutually exclusive but had to be pursued simultaneously, with carefully calibrated sequencing. The continental energy framework adopted by the previous STC session provided the architecture for this integrated approach, and the 5th Ordinary Session was tasked with reviewing implementation progress, identifying barriers, and producing guidance for ministers.

4.2. The Grand Inga Hydropower Project

Few agenda items generated as sustained and substantive a discussion as the Grand Inga Hydropower Project. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) presented the current status of the project with considerable detail, including an overview of the financing breakthrough secured through a USD 1 billion loan from the World Bank approved in June 2025, with a first disbursement of USD 250 million made in February 2026. This financing package was directed at feasibility studies, environmental and social impact assessments, capacity building, and the development of the domestic mineral extraction economy around the project site in the Kongo Central province.

The Grand Inga project is conceived in multiple phases, with the eventual installed capacity at Inga 3 and beyond potentially reaching 11,050 megawatts, and the full development of all hydropower sites on the Congo River promising up to 44,000 megawatts of installed capacity. For context, this would represent more than the entire current installed generation capacity of sub-Saharan Africa. The project is therefore not simply an energy infrastructure project; it is a continental transformation platform, connecting energy generation, transmission infrastructure, mineral-intensive industries, and regional power trade.

The DRC representative was candid about the structural challenges that had historically impeded progress:

- a. the difficulty of securing bankable Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs);

- b. the complexity of multi-country coordination across the Inter-Governmental Memorandum of Understanding (IGMOU) framework;
- c. delays in transmission infrastructure planning; and
- d. the need for an effective coordinating body with a political mandate and operational capacity.

Progress had been made in bilateral engagement with South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, and Nigeria, all of whom had expressed interest in offtake arrangements. However, the DRC stressed that movement from political intent to legally binding agreements required renewed political will from all countries involved.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The Grand Inga Hydropower Project must be understood not as a future ambition but as an immediate continental priority. Its development would deliver energy security, regional integration, industrialisation potential, and climate co-benefits simultaneously. The session called for a dedicated Strategic Coordination Committee at the highest political level to drive implementation.

The African Development Bank (AfDB) and AUDA-NEPAD updated the session on ongoing technical support activities, including transmission corridor mapping, stakeholder engagement with the Southern African Power Pool (SAPP), Eastern Africa Power Pool (EAPP), and Central Africa Power Pool (CAPP), and preliminary work on the financial structure required to unlock private sector participation. The session concluded with a strong call for all member states involved to notify the Secretariat of their formal intention to participate in the coordinating structure, and for the AUC to convene a ministerial-level strategic coordination meeting within three months.

4.3. Nuclear Energy and Diversified Supply

The session introduced, for the first time as a formal agenda item, the question of nuclear energy as a component of Africa's energy mix. The AUC presented a preliminary paper on the potential for nuclear energy development on the continent, noting that Africa's abundant uranium resources and growing electricity demand created a compelling strategic case for exploring nuclear power as a baseload generation option. A dedicated side event on nuclear energy was held during the session, and delegates were invited to participate in subsequent technical workshops on the subject.

Several member states expressed measured enthusiasm, noting the long lead times, high capital costs, regulatory complexity, and waste management challenges associated with nuclear development. Others, particularly South Africa (which operates Africa's only commercial nuclear power station at Koeberg), argued that nuclear remained an important option in the context of a continent that could not afford to foreclose any source of firm, low-carbon electricity. The session did not adopt a definitive position but agreed to continue exploration through a dedicated continental framework on nuclear energy development, to be developed in consultation with member states and submitted to the next STC session.

4.4. Green Hydrogen and the Just Energy Transition

Green hydrogen featured prominently in the energy transition discussion, reflecting the momentum that had built around the subject since the 2023 Zanzibar Ministerial Declaration, in which African ministers requested the AUC to develop a continental green hydrogen strategy. The session considered the progress made in several member states, including South Africa, Namibia, Morocco, Kenya, and Egypt, all of which were at different stages of green hydrogen development, ranging from feasibility studies to pilot projects.

The Continental Strategy on Green Hydrogen was noted as a key deliverable from the previous STC period. Discussion centred on the operationalisation of the strategy, specifically on how the continental framework could be translated into bankable national roadmaps, how African countries could access available international climate finance for hydrogen projects, and how the regulatory and certification frameworks required for hydrogen trade could be harmonised at the continental level.

Several delegations flagged the continuing risk of a two-tier hydrogen economy emerging globally, in which Africa becomes primarily a raw hydrogen exporter, with value addition, technology development, and industrial application occurring elsewhere. The session's response to this concern was to emphasise the importance of developing domestic hydrogen demand as well as supply, including through hydrogen-powered transport corridors, industrial applications, and, over the longer term, hydrogen-based ammonia production for fertilisers.

4.5. G20 Energy Outcomes and the South African Presidency Legacy

South Africa presented the outcomes of its G20 Presidency with respect to energy and transport, noting that the country had used its position as the only African member of the G20 to advance continental priorities at the global level. Two legacy projects from the South African G20 Presidency were highlighted: the Ten-Year Infrastructure Investment Plan, emphasising a shift from individual project financing to integrated long-term infrastructure pipelines; and the Energy Efficiency Legacy Project. Both were presented to the session as resources that African member states could draw upon in aligning their national plans with continental frameworks.

The G20 Energy Transitions Working Group outcomes, including the consensus document on access to clean cooking as a non-negotiable dimension of energy transition, were noted with appreciation. South Africa's success in securing a unanimous G20 agreement on language recognising clean cooking access as integral to, rather than separate from, the global energy transition was acknowledged as a significant diplomatic achievement.

5. Infrastructure, Innovation, Digitalisation, and Investment

5.1. PIDA Phase 2: From Planning to Execution

The Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) Phase 2, which covers the period 2021 to 2030 and comprises 69 priority regional projects across transport, energy, digital, and water sectors, was reviewed in depth during the session. The AUC and AUDA-NEPAD presented a detailed progress update, noting that while significant momentum had been built since PIDA Phase 2's adoption, the majority of the priority projects remained at early stages of project development, with approximately 45% at feasibility or transaction structuring stages and only around 5% under construction.

The session acknowledged that PIDA Phase 2 represented a more disciplined and evidence-based approach than its predecessor, with clearer selection criteria, stronger regional ownership through the RECs, and an integrated corridor approach that sought to maximise cross-sectoral co-benefits. However, the structural challenges that had historically impeded PIDA implementation remained:

- a. financing gaps estimated at over USD 100 billion annually;
- b. limited project preparation capacity in member states and RECs;
- c. complex cross-border coordination challenges; and
- d. insufficient alignment between continental project pipelines and national development plans.

A landmark proposal introduced during the session was the establishment of a Heads of State and Government Committee on PIDA. The rationale offered was clear. The current governance architecture for PIDA operated at technical and ministerial levels but lacked a high-level political forum that could provide the ownership, accountability, and mobilisation capacity required to drive the most complex regional projects forward. The proposal was modelled on similar heads-of-state-level committees established for other African Union priority initiatives.

The proposal generated substantive debate. North African delegations expressed reservations, arguing that a parallel presidential-level committee risked duplicating the existing Presidential Infrastructure Champion Initiative (PICI), which already assigned continental infrastructure champions at the level of heads of state, and potentially weakening rather than strengthening existing coordination mechanisms. The resolution reached was to note the proposal and subject it to a structured consultative process with all member states, with a view to presenting a more fully elaborated governance proposal, including a clear mandate, legal basis, and relationship to existing structures, at the next session.

5.2. Aviation Infrastructure, Safety, and Connectivity

Aviation occupied a substantial portion of the technical programme, with four detailed papers presented covering the Aviation Infrastructure Gap Analysis, the Continental Cost-Benefit Analysis for SBAS (Satellite-Based Augmentation System), the Regional Safety Oversight Organisations (RSOOs) Strategic Plan and Roadmap, and the Transformation of the African Association of Aviation Training Organisations (AATO).

The Aviation Infrastructure Gap Analysis represented a significant technical achievement: a continent-wide assessment of infrastructure gaps across airports, air navigation services, and airline equipment, based on data collected from 42 member states and 98 airports. The exercise identified 60 primary infrastructure gaps across communication, navigation, surveillance, meteorology, and aircraft equipment categories, and produced a set of seven priority bankable project pipelines to address these gaps. The session endorsed the gap analysis report and the proposed high-level strategy for harmonisation of CNS/ATM (Communication, Navigation, Surveillance/Air Traffic Management) systems, while calling on member states to prioritise their submissions to enable targeted financing mobilisation.

The SBAS cost-benefit analysis confirmed the economic viability of implementing satellite-based navigation systems across Africa, with projected returns on investment for airlines of approximately 545 per cent and for airports and air navigation service providers significantly positive across all scenarios. Phase 2 of the analysis provided detailed recommendations on institutional models for governing a continental SBAS programme, with the AUC identified as the appropriate oversight body. The session approved both phase outcomes and requested the development of a harmonised regulatory and service provision framework by 2027.

On aviation safety oversight, the session received a presentation on the strategic plan for strengthening RSOOs across the continent, noting that many of the regional bodies faced structural capacity challenges, governance weaknesses, and sustainability concerns. The AUC committed to supporting phase 2 and phase 3 of the RSOO strengthening roadmap, which would expand mandates to cover security oversight as well as safety, and to support member states in establishing independent accident investigation bodies.

5.3. Maritime Digitalisation: Single Window Systems

A dedicated presentation on maritime digitalisation addressed the status of Port Community Systems (PCS) and Maritime Single Window (MSW) systems across Africa. The presenter noted that only 13 of Africa's 54 countries had operational Port Community Systems, and only 8 had maritime single window systems, a striking indicator of the continent's exposure to digital exclusion in a global maritime economy that was rapidly moving toward mandatory data exchange standards under IMO instruments, including the FAL Convention (Convention on Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic).

The session adopted a six-step implementation roadmap for scaling port digitalisation across Africa, beginning with regulatory and legal framework development, moving through institutional capacity building, stakeholder engagement, and ultimately the deployment of interoperable digital systems aligned with international standards. The AUC was requested

to work with relevant maritime organisations, technology partners, and development finance institutions to mobilise resources for implementation.

5.4. Electric Vehicles and Sustainable Mobility

The session received a presentation on the Continental Framework for Electric Vehicle (EV) Development in Africa, developed jointly by the AUC and ECA. The framework was presented against a backdrop of rapidly evolving but unevenly distributed EV adoption across the continent: while South Africa, Morocco, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Nigeria were leading in terms of policy frameworks and early deployment, 16 of the 26 countries surveyed had no EV policy at all. Ethiopia was noted as a global pioneer, having become the first country in the world to ban the importation of internal combustion engine vehicles.

The continental framework articulated a vision of Africa as a global leader in sustainable electric mobility — not only as an adopter of EVs but as a manufacturer and exporter of EV components and batteries, leveraging its dominance in critical mineral resources including lithium, cobalt, manganese, and nickel. Key recommendations included promoting local EV manufacturing, accelerating charging infrastructure and electricity supply development, providing innovative financing incentives, and strengthening awareness and capacity.

A presentation on the Pan-African Action Plan for Active Mobility (walking and cycling) complemented the EV discussion, noting that approximately one billion Africans walk daily to access essential services, often in environments that are unsafe and inadequate. The plan called for the integration of active mobility into national and city transport policies, infrastructure investment, and regional knowledge-sharing frameworks.

5.5. Corridors, Rail, and the Productive Infrastructure Imperative

The African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) presented a detailed analysis of the relationship between infrastructure investment and economic transformation, drawing on both continental and international experience. The central thesis was that Africa's infrastructure challenge was not simply a matter of scale, but that of alignment. Roads built without regard for production geography, energy systems expanded without clear links to manufacturing or logistics, and corridors designed for resource extraction rather than value addition had all contributed to a pattern of infrastructure investment that was visible but insufficiently productive.

The session shared the example of the Greater Mekong Sub-region as a model of infrastructure-led development integration, where sustained coordinated investment across transport, energy, and telecommunications had enabled cross-border production zones, shortened transit times, and attracted significant industrial investment. The message was not that Africa should replicate this model mechanically, but that the underlying logic of infrastructure being aligned to industry, power and logistics sequenced around production and institutions able to work across sectors over time, was transferable.

In the railway subsector, the session received updates on the African Integrated High-Speed Railway Network Master Plan, which provides a long-term continental framework for rail

connectivity linking production centres, agricultural zones, markets, and ports. Progress was noted on several corridor projects, including the Standard Gauge Railway developments in East Africa, though implementation pace remained a concern across most regions.

6. Key Decisions and Adopted Frameworks

The Ministerial Session of Day 4 formally considered, adopted and endorsed the outcomes of the preceding three days of technical deliberations. The following constitute the principal decisions and endorsed frameworks:

Transport Sector

- Endorsement of the Continental Strategy for the Decarbonisation of Maritime Transport in Africa as the guiding continental framework for reducing GHG emissions from the maritime sector.
- Noting the entry into force of the Revised African Maritime Transport Charter (14 August 2025) and calling on all remaining member states to ratify.
- Noting the entry into force of the African Road Safety Charter (March 2026, following 15 instruments of ratification).
- Approval of the Aviation Infrastructure Gap Analysis report and the proposed list of seven priority bankable project pipelines.
- Approval of Phase 1 and Phase 2 outcomes of the Continental Satellite-Based Augmentation System (SBAS) Cost-Benefit Analysis as evidence to guide continental decision-making on SBAS implementation.
- Approval of the establishment of an African SBAS programme governance structure under the AUC, including a continent-wide regulatory road map.
- Adoption of the Pan-African Action Plan for Active Mobility for implementation across member states and regional bodies.
- Adoption of the Continental Framework for Electric Vehicle Development in Africa.
- Approval of the Transformation Plan for the African Association of Aviation Training Organisations (AATO) as a strategic continental partner for aviation human capital development.

Energy Sector

- Note of the progress made in implementation of the African Single Electricity Market (AFEM) and the Continental Power System Master Plan (CMP).
- Approval of the Continental Energy Security Policy framework and requesting the AUC to work with member states on domestication.
- Approval of the G20 Energy Transitions Working Group outcomes from South Africa's presidency, particularly the consensus on clean cooking access.
- Endorsement of the Continental Green Hydrogen Strategy and a request to the AUC to develop a harmonised regulatory and certification framework.
- Decision to explore the development of a continental nuclear energy framework, with a dedicated paper to be prepared for the next session.
- Request to the AUC to convene a ministerial-level strategic coordination meeting on the Grand Inga Hydropower Project within three months, and to support the finalisation of the IGMOU framework.

Cross-Cutting and Institutional Decisions

- Note and ongoing discussion of the proposal to establish a Heads of State and Government Committee for PIDA Phase 2, subject to further consultative process with member states.
- Decision to elevate PIDA's profile and alignment with Agenda 2063 priorities, including through a comprehensive review of the PIDA Phase 2 project selection methodology and the commencement of preparatory work for PIDA Phase 3 (to begin 2031).
- Adoption of the continental framework for cross-border electricity sharing and harmonised charging infrastructure for EV development.
- Request to the AUC to develop a continental model regulatory tool for minigrids to support harmonised regulatory frameworks across member states.

7. Implications for African Policy and the Road Ahead

7.1. Translating Strategy to Execution: The Defining Challenge

The 5th Ordinary Session produced a rich and substantive set of decisions, but it was marked throughout by an awareness that the continent's challenge was no longer one of framework development. The frameworks exist. The strategies are elaborated. The legal instruments are in force. What remained, as expressed by every major speaker, from the Acting DG of South Africa's Department of Transport to the AU Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy to the Minister of Electricity and Energy, was identified as the central challenge: **execution**.

Execution requires more than political will, though political will is a necessary precondition. It requires:

- a. effective and sustained financing;
- b. institutional capacity at the project preparation, procurement, and contract management stages;
- c. effective coordination across the many actors involved in any regional infrastructure initiative; and
- d. accountability frameworks that ensure progress is measured, reported, and acted upon.

7.2. The Financing Gap and the Need for Blended Approaches

Africa requires between USD 130 billion and USD 170 billion in infrastructure investment annually, against a financing gap of between USD 68 billion and USD 108 billion. This gap cannot be closed by public finance alone. The session consistently emphasised the need for blended finance approaches that mobilise private capital alongside development finance and domestic public investment. However, several speakers cautioned against an uncritical embrace of private sector financing, noting that private capital requires bankable projects, clear regulatory frameworks, and credible offtake agreements, conditions that many African infrastructure projects have historically struggled to meet.

A particular emphasis was placed on the role of African capital, the growing pools of pension funds, sovereign wealth funds, and institutional assets on the continent, as an underutilised resource for infrastructure financing. The challenge, as one speaker noted, was not the absence of capital but the absence of appropriate instruments and frameworks that would allow domestic institutional investors to deploy capital into long-term productive infrastructure.

7.3. The Intersectionality of Energy, Transport, and Industrial Transformation

One of the most intellectually substantive themes of the session was the consistent call to move beyond sectoral thinking in infrastructure planning. Transport systems and energy systems are deeply interdependent. *Ports need power, logistics hubs need reliable*

electricity, rail electrification depends on transmission, and EV deployment depends on charging infrastructure. When these systems are planned in isolation, inefficiencies are embedded in the economy. When planned together, costs decline, reliability improves, and productivity increases.

The session challenged member states and continental institutions to treat infrastructure not merely as an economic input but as a platform for industrial transformation. For instance, a road that connects a mine to a port has limited transformative value if it does not also connect to processing facilities, agricultural zones, and industrial clusters. An energy project that generates power but does not support real economic activity in the surrounding region remains an isolated asset rather than a development catalyst.

7.4. Africa's Voice in Global Governance

A persistent theme across transport and energy discussions was the importance of Africa's collective voice in international governance fora. In the maritime context, this was expressed through calls for a coordinated African position in IMO negotiations on the Net-Zero Framework, the Global Fuel Standard, and the operationalisation of the proposed IMO carbon pricing mechanism. In the energy context, it was expressed through South Africa's account of how continental priorities had been advanced through the G20 Presidency, and through the ECA's emphasis on the importance of African participation in international transport and energy standard-setting processes.

The session reaffirmed that the AUC STC on Transport and Energy was the continent's authoritative policy and decision-making platform for infrastructure integration, and that its decisions carried both normative weight and practical significance for how African states engaged in international negotiations. The importance of arriving at international fora with a common African position, grounded in evidence and expressed through a legitimate continental process, was emphasised as a strategic imperative.

8. Conclusion

The 5th Ordinary Session of the African Union STC on Transport and Energy was a session of considerable substance and consequence. It took place at a moment of genuine geopolitical uncertainty and structural disruption, and it responded to that moment with a mixture of analytical rigour, institutional commitment, and strategic clarity that augured well for the implementation agenda ahead. The session also convened in parallel with the consequential 84th session of the Marine Environment Protection Committee at the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), headquartered in London, United Kingdom.

The adoption of the Continental Strategy for the Decarbonisation of Maritime Transport in Africa stands as the most historically significant outcome of the session. It is the first African-owned, African-led framework specifically designed to reduce GHG emissions from the maritime sector. This strategy was both technically endorsed by experts and politically endorsed by ministers. The importance of this dual legitimacy signals that Africa is not simply responding to an externally driven transition but is actively shaping the terms of that transition in a manner consistent with its development priorities, its equity expectations, and its just transition commitments.

The broader agenda of the session, that comprise advancing PIDA implementation, accelerating the Grand Inga Hydropower Project, building aviation connectivity and safety, scaling electric mobility, and aligning infrastructure investment with industrial transformation, reflected the maturity of Africa's continental planning architecture. Now that the frameworks are in place and institutions are mandated, the next challenge, which the ministers both acknowledged and sought to address, is the translation of that architecture into tangible delivery outputs.

The session closed with a clear message: *Africa cannot afford to remain at the level of planning*. The people of the continent, including the 600 million without electricity access, the one billion who walk daily in unsafe environments, and the coastal communities exposed to the compounding risks of maritime decarbonisation and climate change, demand more than declarations but delivery. The 5th Ordinary Session committed Africa's collective institutions to that delivery, and the record of its deliberations stands as both an account of what was achieved and a mandate for what must follow.

This report was prepared by The PATNA Initiative representative, with thanks to the UCL Energy Institute

*<https://www.thepatna.org> and
<https://www.shippingandoceans.com>*

This report is based on observer notes by The PATNA Initiative's representative, who attended all daily sessions at the 5th Ordinary Session of the AU STC on Transport and Energy, 27–30 April 2026, Johannesburg, South Africa.