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CALL FOR PAPERS

AFRICA AND THE FUTURE OF INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC LAW: NAVIGATING GEOPOLITICAL REALIGNMENTS, SUSTAINABILITY IMPERATIVES, AND TECHNOLOGICAL DISRUPTIONS

JUNE, 24 - 26 2026

Mohammed VI Polytechnic University, Rabat, Morocco

The [African International Economic Law Network](#) (AfIELN) and the Mohammed VI Polytechnic University are pleased to announce the 8th AfIELN Biennial Conference will take place at the **University Mohammed VI Polytechnic, Rabat, Morocco, from 24 to 26 June 2026.**

BACKGROUND

The global order is undergoing a profound transformation shaped by a confluence of three interconnected forces: heightened geopolitical rivalries, the urgent imperative of sustainable transformation, and the rapid acceleration of technological change. Rising global rivalries, reflected in geo-economic fragmentation, resource nationalism, the weaponisation of trade and finance, and new configurations of South–South and North–South alliances, are reshaping the foundations of international economic law (IEL). At the same time, climate change and the global push toward decarbonisation are exerting unprecedented pressure on existing legal regimes governing trade, investment, finance, intellectual property, and energy. In parallel, the Fourth and emerging Fifth Industrial Revolutions, characterised by breakthroughs in AI, automation, datafication, quantum technologies, blockchain and advanced biotechnology, are blurring traditional divisions between goods, services, data, and knowledge.



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For Africa, these overlapping transformations create historic opportunities but also heightened vulnerabilities. They open pathways for digital leapfrogging, new value-chain participation, green industrialisation, and a more assertive African agency in global governance. However, they also generate systemic risks: exposure to supply-chain realignments, dependence on extractive resource cycles, unequal access to technology, climate fragility, cyber vulnerabilities, intensified debt pressures, and structural asymmetries in global rule-making.

African states are responding through a range of initiatives, including the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the African Union Digital Transformation Strategy (2020–2030), the African Mining Vision, and continent-wide commitments to climate resilience and sustainable development. Yet these initiatives raise critical questions about the adequacy, adaptability and legitimacy of existing regimes of international economic law

CONFERENCE THEME

The theme of the 8th AFIELN Biennial Conference is « *Africa and the future of international economic law: Navigating geopolitical realignments, sustainability imperatives and technological disruptions* ».

This conference seeks to explore how geopolitical realignments, sustainability imperatives, and technological transformations are reshaping international economic law, and how African actors (States, institutions, firms, and civil society) can navigate, influence, and benefit from this transformation.





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We invite submissions that engage with the conference theme in relation to, but not limited to, the following (non-exhaustive) areas:

1. Africa's Engagement in Global Governance

- Africa's role in an era of geo-economic fragmentation
- African approaches to global digital governance and multilateralism
- Africa's participation in WTO e-commerce negotiations
- Legal diplomacy and Africa's voice in shaping digital rules

2. Sustainable Transformation, Climate Governance, and Green Industrial Policy

- Climate change, IEL, and Africa's structural vulnerabilities
- Carbon border adjustment mechanisms (CBAM) and their impacts on Africa
- Green industrialisation, critical minerals, and clean energy transitions
- International environmental law and Africa's development imperatives

3. Digital trade and Regional Integration

- Digital trade under the AfCFTA
- Cross-border digital services under the AfCFTA
- Cross-border data flows under the AfCFTA Digital Trade Protocol
- Comparative analysis of national digital economy laws
- Competition law and the digital economy

4. Regional Integration and Economic Resilience

- Implementation of the AfCFTA in a fragmented geopolitical landscape
- Regional value chains in agriculture, energy, mining, and manufacturing



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- Sovereign debt crises and international financial architecture reform
- Monetary integration, currency regimes, and Africa's financial sovereignty

5. Intellectual property and Innovation

- Intellectual property, innovation, and knowledge transfer
- Traditional knowledge and digital piracy
- Africa's role in global IP norm-setting

6. Investment Law, Geopolitics and the Digital Economy

- Investment screening mechanisms in a geopolitical context
- The AfCFTA Investment Protocol
- Digital assets as investment
- Investment law and technology-driven sectors
- Investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) in Africa

7. Emerging Technologies : Legal Readiness and Regulatory Gaps

- Artificial intelligence, automation, and labour rights in Africa
- Blockchain, cryptocurrencies, and digital assets regulation

8. Crosscutting Issues

- Technology and dispute resolution: online courts, digital arbitration, and mediation
- Technology, climate change, and sustainable development goals
- Business and Human rights in the digital economy
- Technology transfer and capacity-building through international economic law



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Relevant submissions outside the listed sub-themes that can enrich the overall theme are also welcome.

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS:

We welcome submissions in English and French.

Papers will be selected based on quality, originality, alignment to the theme/sub-themes and their capacity to provoke productive debates.

Submissions must include a research abstract (no more than 400 words) and a short biography (no more than 200 words).

Submission Deadline: **Thursday, 15 January 2026**. Email: afieln.siel@gmail.com

Authors working on a common issue or topic may propose their own panel by submitting a common proposal for the establishment of such a panel with the following details: Proposed topic or issue for the panel; names of panel participants and their respective affiliations; respective paper titles and abstracts of no more than 400 words; and contact details of panel head.

Decisions on the acceptance of abstracts will be communicated by **Sunday, 15 February 2026**. Selected applicants will be expected to submit their complete paper (not exceeding 6,000 words) by **Sunday, 31 May 2026**.

CONFERENCE FEES, COSTS AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT





Conference fees and associated attendance costs will be kept fairly low in the interest of securing widespread attendance and accommodating African researchers and early career researchers. All conference participants, and speakers, must plan to cover their own travel, accommodation and attendance costs.

If funds become available, AfIELN plans to offer limited scholarship and conference registration waiver for graduate students of African origin and scholars that are based in Africa. Those requesting consideration for funding are invited to submit a paragraph-long motivation indicating why they will need financial support, along with their abstract submission. More information on the conference registration fee will be available on the conference webpage in due course.

CONFERENCE PUBLICATION

In line with previous AfIELN Conferences, the Conference Committee plans to publish selected articles in an edited volume and in a journal special issue after a successful peer-review. More information will be provided in due course.

ENQUIRIES:

Please submit any enquiries to the Conference Chair, Dr Jonathan Kabré, by email at afieln.siel@gmail.com.

