

CONCEPT NOTE

Yobel Biashara Initiative | Inaugural Annual Conference 2026

Co-convened with CASTLE Think Tank and Makerere University

Africa's Agency in an Era of Geopolitical Change

Trade, Investment and Economic Transformation

Date	30 th September 2026
Venue	School of Public Health, Makerere University
Convened by	Yobel Biashara Institute
Co-conveners	CASTLE Think Tank
Host Institution	Makerere University
Guest of Honour	Dr. Adam Mugume, Executive Director, Research and Policy, Bank of Uganda
Think Piece Presenter	Dr. James Magara, Futurist & Chairman, Yobel Biashara Initiative
Panelists	Prof. Pamela Mbabazi, Chairperson, National Planning Authority Allen Asimwe, DCEO / Chief of Programmes, TradeMark Africa Dr. Fred Muhumuza, Director, MUBS Economic Forum
Moderator	Awel Uwihanganye (VC's Office, Makerere University)
Target Audience	Policymakers, Bank of Uganda, Academia, Private Sector, Development Finance Institutions, Civil Society

1. Background and Organisational Context

The Yobel Biashara Initiative is a Ugandan-based organisation founded in 2024 with a core mission to transform entrepreneurship across Uganda by empowering business owners to build sustainable, impactful enterprises that transcend the pursuit of profit alone. Yobel exists at the intersection of business, purpose, and economic leadership — championing a model of enterprise that creates lasting value for communities, industries, and nations.

Since its founding, Yobel has convened an Annual Conference each July, establishing a trusted platform for business leaders, investors, government officials, and development stakeholders to explore Uganda's growth and investment landscape. A signature feature of the conference has been field exposure visits to the Albertine Region, showcasing Uganda's oil and gas opportunities and their implications for national economic development.

At the February 2026 Strategic Planning Retreat, the Yobel Board affirmed a decisive strategic evolution: to position the organisation as a leading Thought Leader within the economic sphere. This transition reflects Yobel's conviction that sustainable economic transformation requires not only entrepreneurial energy, but intellectual rigour, evidence-based advocacy, and active participation in shaping the policy environment.

2. The 2026 Annual Conference: Overview

The 2026 Yobel Annual Conference marks a significant milestone — a strategic expansion in both ambition and scope. This year's edition will be co-convened with CASTLE Think Tank and hosted by Makerere University, bringing together the complementary strengths of policy intelligence and academic scholarship alongside Yobel's entrepreneurial leadership platform.

The conference will expand its lens from Uganda's domestic economic landscape to a broader, continental perspective — examining Africa's role and agency as the global world order continues to shift. In a period defined by geopolitical realignment, energy transition, and new patterns of global trade and investment, the 2026 conference will convene Uganda's decision-makers, thought leaders, and researchers to examine this pivotal moment and define strategic responses.

3. Conference Theme

CONFERENCE THEME:
Africa's Agency in an Era of Geopolitical Change
Trade, Investment and Economic Transformation

This theme asserts that Africa is not merely a passive observer of shifting global dynamics, but an active agent with the capacity, resources, and strategic interest to shape its own economic destiny. It calls on African leaders — in government, finance, business, and academia — to move beyond reactive adaptation and towards deliberate, forward-looking economic strategy.

For Uganda, the theme invites reflection on how the country positions itself within this emerging order: leveraging its natural resources, deepening regional integration, attracting strategic investment, and building the institutional capacity required for long-term prosperity.

4. Rationale and Timeliness

The selection of this theme reflects a convergence of global and continental dynamics that make 2026 a defining moment for African economic leadership:

- **Geopolitical Realignment:** The reconfiguration of global alliances, the expansion of BRICS, and the shifting architecture of multilateral institutions are redrawing the map of global power — and Africa's strategic significance is growing.
- **Energy Transition and Natural Resources:** Surging demand for critical minerals and the global shift away from fossil fuels repositions Africa — including Uganda — as a pivotal player in the global energy economy.
- **AfCFTA and Economic Integration:** The African Continental Free Trade Area represents the most ambitious act of African economic self-determination in decades, creating new imperatives for Uganda's trade and investment strategy.
- **Monetary Sovereignty and Financial Architecture:** How African central banks navigate global monetary pressures, sovereign debt, and the rise of digital currencies is central to the region's economic agency.
- **The Knowledge Deficit:** Africa remains under-represented in global economic research and policy discourse. The partnership with Makerere University and CASTLE Think Tank directly addresses this deficit.

5. Thematic Pillars

The conference programme will be structured around five thematic pillars:

- Redefining the Rules: Africa and the New Global Economic Architecture
- Harnessing Natural Wealth: From Resource Extraction to Economic Transformation
- Deepening Integration: Making AfCFTA Work for Uganda and the Region
- Monetary Policy, Finance, and Economic Sovereignty
- Knowledge, Research, and Africa's Intellectual Leadership

6. Convening Partners

The 2026 conference is built on a collaborative structure designed to bridge business leadership, policy analysis, and academic research. The conference is co-convened by Yobel Biashara Initiative and CASTLE Think Tank, and hosted by Makerere University:

Convening Partner	Role & Contribution
Yobel Biashara Initiative	Lead convener; stakeholder mobilisation; business community and private sector engagement; conference management, communications, and field programme coordination.
CASTLE Think Tank	Policy research and analysis; high-level policy dialogue facilitation; regional and international think tank network linkages; pre-conference research briefings and policy papers.
Makerere University	Host the conference, including provision of the venue and supporting facilities. Co-host the conference sessions. Nominate faculty to serve as a discussant. Facilitate student engagement and input.

7. Target Audience

The conference is designed to convene a high-calibre, multi-sectoral audience whose members are active shapers of Uganda's and Africa's economic trajectory. Target participants include:

- Senior Government Officials, Cabinet Ministers, and Policymakers
- Bank of Uganda
- Members of Parliament
- Academia and Research Institutions
- Private Sector Leaders and Business Executives
- Development Finance Institutions
- Regional and International Organisations
- Civil Society and Think Tanks
- Business and Economic Media

8. Guest of Honour, Think Piece, and Panel Discussion

Dr. Adam Mugume, Executive Director for Research and Policy at the Bank of Uganda, will serve as the Guest of Honour for the 2026 Yobel Annual Conference. Dr. Mugume's presence signals the conference's relevance at the highest levels of Uganda's national economic architecture, and reflects the centrality of monetary policy, economic research, financial sovereignty, and institutional leadership to the conference theme.

Dr. James Magara, Futurist and Chairman of the Yobel Biashara Initiative, will serve as the Think Piece Presenter. Dr. Magara will prepare and present an original think piece that sets the intellectual tone for the conference, offering a substantive analysis of Africa’s economic agency in the multipolar world and a clear framing of the strategic opportunities and challenges confronting Uganda and the continent. The think piece will serve as the anchor for the conference’s intellectual discourse.

Following the presentation of the think piece, a panel of distinguished experts and authorities in the field will engage with its findings and recommendations. The panel will comprise:

- **Panellist 1 (Government & Policy):** Prof. Pamela Mbabazi, Chairperson, National Planning Authority
- **Panellist 2 (Regional Economist):** Allen Asiimwe, DCEO / Chief of Programmes, TradeMark Africa
- **Panellist 3 (Academia):** Dr. Fred Muhumuza, Director, MUBS Economic Forum
- **Moderator:** Awel Uwihanganye (VC’s Office, Makerere University)

The panel discussion will be followed by a moderated audience dialogue, ensuring that conference participants — from government, academia, business, and civil society — are active contributors to the discourse.

9. Expected Conference Outputs

The 2026 conference is designed to generate tangible, transformation-oriented outputs that extend its impact beyond the event itself. All outputs will be anchored in the conviction that knowledge must drive change — in policy, in institutions, and in practice.

1	Policy Briefs Concise, evidence-based briefs on each thematic pillar, prepared by CASTLE Think Tank and Makerere University. Policy briefs will be disseminated to Government Ministries, the Bank of Uganda, and regional bodies — with each brief designed to trigger concrete policy action.
2	White Papers In-depth analytical white papers on priority economic questions identified through the conference deliberations. Each white paper will be oriented towards transformation — translating research findings into actionable frameworks and recommendations for institutions, policymakers, and the private sector.
3	Declaration on Impact-Driven Indices A formal call from conference participants for a greater focus on impact-driven measurement frameworks — moving beyond conventional macroeconomic growth indicators to indices that capture wellbeing, equity, resilience, sustainability, and the quality of economic development. This declaration will be addressed to national statistical bodies, Government, the Bank of Uganda, regional institutions, and development partners.

For enquiries regarding this Concept Note, please contact:
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