



ICOYACA Side Event Report

Leveraging Digital Trade and AfCFTA for Youth Engagement

PAN AFRICAN YOUTH FORUM (PAYF) – ORAN, ALGERIA, NOVEMBER 2024

Executive Summary

This report presents a comprehensive review of ICOYACA's side event at the Pan African Youth Forum (PAYF) 2024, which took place in Oran, Algeria from November 1st to 4th, 2024. The side event, entitled **“Leveraging Digital Trade and AfCFTA for Youth Engagement and Foresight Planning”**, was designed to empower African youth by engaging them in scenario-based planning around the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and digital trade.

The ICOYACA Secretariat proudly sponsored the participation of its North Africa members, further reinforcing its commitment to regional inclusion and youth empowerment in Africa's digital era. The event fostered diverse collaboration, critical thinking, and leadership among youth, resonating with the African Union's One Million Next Level initiative .



Oran, Algeria – Host City of PAYF 2024 ([Mosaic North Africa](#))

🌐 About the Pan African Youth Forum (PAYF) 2024

- **Dates:** November 1–4, 2024
- **Location:** Oran, Algeria
- **Theme:** “1 Million Next Level is Knocking: Educate an African Fit for the 21st Century”

The PAYF is a premier annual gathering that convenes young African leaders, innovators, policymakers, and activists to drive Africa’s Agenda 2063 and the AU’s African Youth Charter. The 2024 edition provided a platform for critical discussions on youth empowerment, leadership, education, and sustainable development.

Main Objectives of PAYF 2024:

1. Celebrate and recognize youth contribution towards a prosperous, peaceful, and integrated Africa.
2. Reimagine the African Youth Charter to tackle modern challenges.
3. Promote youth-driven leadership, training, capacity development, and entrepreneurship.
4. Strengthen continental youth networks and cross-country collaborations.



Scenes from Oran, Algeria, PAYF 2024 Host City

💡 ICOYACA Side Event: Objectives & Rationale

The **ICOYACA side event** was crafted as an innovative, interactive workshop to deepen youth understanding of **digital trade** and the **AfCFTA**. It aimed to empower new generations to navigate Africa's evolving digital economy and become future agents of change.

Recognizing the AU's commitment to youth inclusion, ICOYACA's sponsorship of North Africa members reflected our core value of regional engagement and mutual learning.

Key Objectives

- Educate youth on AfCFTA and digital trade paradigms.
- Engage diverse stakeholders in foresight planning.
- Foster collaboration and scenario-based problem solving.
- Enhance capacity for innovation and strategic leadership.

Rationale

- Digital trade is pivotal for Africa's youth employment and entrepreneurship.
- AfCFTA presents transformative opportunities for Africa's digital future.
- Youth must be equipped to navigate emerging challenges and changes.

Sponsorship Highlight

ICOYACA directly sponsored North Africa members' travel and accommodation, ensuring their full participation in the PAYF for intercultural learning and networking.

African Youth Workshop Session

Event Methodology & Foresight Planning Activities

Approach: A scenario-based, gamified workshop using stakeholder role-play and team scenario-mapping to broaden youth perspectives on AfCFTA and digital trade.

Interactive Steps:

- Anonymous stakeholder identity assignments to spark curiosity.
- Random allocation of participants into diversified teams.
- Guided scenario-mapping and foresight planning exercises.
- Visual mapping, debate, and interactive presentation of team scenarios.

Stakeholder Roles:

Teams represented:

- Tech Entrepreneurs
- Digital Platforms
- Government Agencies
- Educational Institutions
- Businesses & Consumers



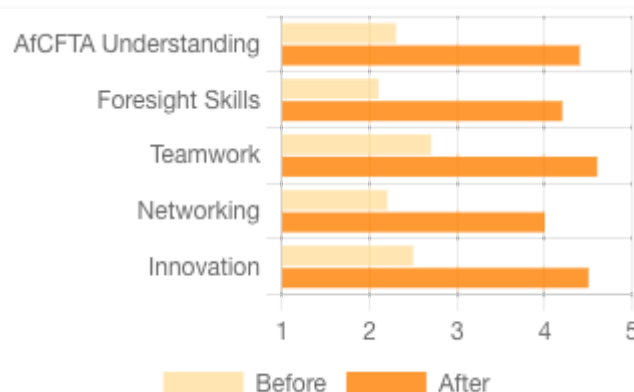
Participant distribution by stakeholder role at the side event (approx.)

Foresight Planning Spotlight:

Attendees, in their stakeholder roles, developed future scenarios considering AfCFTA's successful implementation **vs** challenges of non-implementation. Through group debate, mapping, and cross-team feedback, youth identified tangible gains of implementation (such as more jobs, access to new African markets, digital startup opportunities, greater e-learning access), and flagged risks of non-implementation (missed economic growth, digital exclusion, increased youth unemployment). This exercise catalyzed participants' inspiration for advocacy and policy-shaping upon return to their home countries.

★ Key Outcomes & Youth Advocacy Gains

- 1. Deeper Understanding:** Youth mastered AfCFTA drivers, effects of integration, digital trade impact, and new advocacy tools to influence local policymakers.
 - 2. Enhanced Skills:** Scenario mapping and strategic planning skills improved markedly; participants reported feeling "future ready" for Africa's dynamic economy.
 - 3. Stakeholder Appreciation:** Interacting as multiple stakeholders fostered cross-sector empathy, a practical grasp of negotiation, and greater unity.
 - 4. Network Expansion:** North African and other region's youth formed post-event advocacy circles leveraging workshop lessons.
- 1. Contribution to AU Goals:** This workshop concretely advanced the AU's "One Million Next Level" aspirations for African youth in digital innovation.
 - 2. New Advocacy Initiatives:** Teams proposed social media drives, youth parliaments, and direct engagement with AfCFTA policymakers as their post-event "way forward".



Post-event participant skills and engagement growth (self-assessed, scale 1–5)

Way Forward for Youth Advocacy:

Participants agreed on joint “AfCFTA Youth Advocacy Commitments”—including running digital campaigns, policy roundtables, and mainstreaming AfCFTA education in high schools across multiple North African countries. Several delegates pledged to work with ICOYACA on a youth policy paper summarizing workshop insights in 2025.

Testimonials & Sponsorship Impact

“ I was able to connect with peers across the continent and apply cutting-edge foresight skills to real African challenges. The multi-stakeholder simulation opened my eyes to new career possibilities in digital trade. Thank you, ICOYACA, for making this possible! ”

– Sponsored North Africa Participant

“ This workshop was the highlight of PAYF! The level of interactivity and diversity in the team tasks made learning tangible and memorable. ”

– Workshop Attendee

Sponsorship Impact: ICOYACA's support enabled broader inclusion, especially for North African youth whose cross-cultural perspectives supercharged teamwork and learning. Many cited sponsorship as the reason they could participate, connect and become AfCFTA advocates.

►► Recommendations & Next Steps

- **Expand regional sponsorships** to foster even more diverse participation for future Pan African Youth Forums and sector workshops.
- **Create an online community or mentorship hub** to maintain momentum for youth-led digital trade and AfCFTA initiatives.

- **Facilitate follow-on bootcamps** to turn scenario-mapped solutions into entrepreneurial ventures and innovative projects.
- **Continue collaborating with AU organs** to advance Agenda 2063 and the “One Million Next Level” goals at scale.
- **Capture more real event stories and visuals** for future reporting to illustrate authentic impact and youth voices.

Thanks & Acknowledgements

ICOYACA extends sincere gratitude to the African Union, PAYF organizers, our North Africa members, community sponsors, and all youth participants.

Find more photos, reports, and future opportunities at <https://icoyacafrica.org/>.



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