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A U.S.–Kenya Technology Prosperity Deal: Securing Durable AI Partnerships with Africa

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The United States launched America's AI Action Plan as part of its strategy to build a dominant global AI architecture. To advance it, the Department of Commerce established the American AI Exports Program to expand the global deployment of secure, full-stack American AI—from chips and compute infrastructure to models, applications, and standards. In parallel, Washington has pursued bilateral Technology Prosperity Deals and the multilateral, $250 million Pax Silica coalition with fourteen partner countries across Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. None of these instruments has yet reached Africa—despite growing demand for AI products and services and a deepening Chinese presence on the continent. Beijing pledged $50 billion through the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in 2024, including twenty digital infrastructure projects and a China-Africa digital technology cooperation center. The U.S. absence from this market is increasingly consequential as the continent emerges as a critical player in the global competition over AI who will shape long-term adoption pathways. Demand for structured partnership is already articulated by sixteen African countries and the African Union through AI strategies that highlight the priority areas for action and identify international partnerships as the vehicle for delivering them. Delayed U.S. engagement risks ceding ground to competitors and allowing competing technology ecosystems to become entrenched. Structured engagement with Africa's AI landscape is therefore a strategic imperative for Washington.

Translating U.S. AI engagement with Africa into a durable partnership, however, requires the right cooperative instrument—one that can bridge the gap between U.S. strategic ambitions and Africa's development-centered AI priorities. Washington has a proven vehicle: a Technology Prosperity Deal (TPD), a type of technology-focused MOU. Already deployed with the United Kingdom, Japan, South Korea, and Sweden, a TPD provides a framework to accelerate deployment of the full American AI stack, align technology standards, advance joint research, and support regional norm-setting. Extended to Africa, beginning with Kenya as a model case, a TPD can do exactly that—and it is built to scale.

A Proven Instrument: Technology Prosperity Deals

TPDs are nonbinding bilateral agreements signed as memorandums of understanding between the U.S. Office of Science and Technology Policy and partner countries that are key allies. They are designed to align technology standards, accelerate joint research, and expand U.S. AI exports, tailored to each partner country's technology ecosystem. Four have been signed to date: with the United Kingdom, Japan, South Korea, and Sweden. A proposed Kenya-US TPD would be the first for Africa and would serve as a replicable baseline adaptable for other African partners.

A Model Case: Kenya

Strategic Ally: Long-standing U.S. ties spanning trade, security, and development

Silicon Savannah: Home of M-PESA and existing operations of Google, Microsoft, IBM, and Cisco. A TPD extends established relationships rather than opening a new frontier.

AI Vision: Kenya's AI Strategy 2025–2030 names international partnership as a vehicle for infrastructure, talent, and governance.

A U.S.–Kenya TPD

A U.S.-Kenya TPD provides a modeling framework for US AI engagement in Africa and serves as a replicable baseline, adaptable to the specific contexts and priorities of other African partners. The TPD would be organized around the hallmark principle shared by all four deals signed to date: accelerating AI adoption and innovation. Seven focus areas should shape the framework:

1. **AI infrastructure** across the full technology stack, including compute, data centers, and digital connectivity across the infrastructure chain, including backbone networks and edge infrastructure to expand access to AI-enabled services.

2. **Governance and regulatory alignment** to harmonize AI policy frameworks and industry standards, to reinforce a shared AI ecosystem. This includes collaboration between U.S. standards bodies (the U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology's AI Agent Standards Initiative) and the Kenya Bureau of Standards.

3. **Skills, research, and innovation** support to develop talent pipelines, including the launch of the Tech Prosperity Corps and flagship research initiatives in priority sectors such as healthcare, education, and energy, between U.S. science agencies (the U.S. National Science Foundation) and Kenyan institutions (the Kenya National Innovation Agency).

4. **AI commercial diplomacy** that connects U.S. and Kenyan technology firms through targeted investment mobilization.

5. **Financing mechanisms** that map public, private, and blended instruments from both countries to make U.S. technology available and affordable.

6. **A regional and multilateral strategy** that positions the TPD as a platform for broader U.S. AI engagement across East Africa, including potential Kenyan entry to Pax Silica.

7. **Soft diplomacy** and people-to-people connectivity such as visa pathways, exchange programs, academic partnerships, and air connectivity that bring a signed agreement to life.

From Framework to Partnership

A TPD serves as an entry point and helps to produce wider network effects:

Coalition entry. Kenyan participation in Pax Silica through a TPD would extend cooperation into a shared ecosystem of trusted technology partners—advancing the U.S. goal of a global coalition of AI allies.

Trilateral pathways. The Microsoft-G42 coinvestment in Kenya shows how Gulf partners like the UAE—a Pax Silica signatory and active investor in African AI—can carry U.S.-aligned architecture into African markets.

Commercial diplomacy. A TPD effectively transitions U.S. engagement from an aid-focused relationship with Africa to a trade- and investment-focused relationship as outlined in the U.S. National Security Strategy.

What Delivery Requires

A TPD identifies areas of cooperation but does not deliver them. Turning ministerial commitments into action on the ground requires:

Activate Fast: Stand up the bilateral working group immediately after signing; bracket the deal from unrelated bilateral disputes.

Map the Owners: Assign agency leads (Commerce, State, USTDA, EXIM, DFC) for each focus area via the American AI Exports Program interagency architecture.

Frame for Nairobi, not Beijing: Lead with the practical value of the U.S. stack—development relevance and affordability—not China competition.

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Read the full analysis: "A Kenya Technology Prosperity Deal Could Help Washington Secure Durable AI Partnerships with Africa," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 23, 2026. carnegieendowment.org/research/2026/06/united-states-kenya-technology-prosperity-deal-could-help-washington-secure-durable-ai-partnerships-with-africa.