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PROPOSAL FOR COLLABORATION WITH UNDP: FROM TRANSITIONAL AID TO SYSTEM-BASED DEVELOPMENT

A RESPONSE FOR THE REDUCTION OF AID IN THE WORLD

CREATED BY
EUSL AB
Care to Change the World

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1. Introduction: From Transitional Aid to Systems-Based Development

The ongoing reduction in traditional development aid—particularly from bilateral donors such as USAID and parallel agencies—is not merely a budgetary adjustment. It is symptomatic of a more fundamental shift: from a grant-based transitional aid logic to one in which systemic resilience, self-financing capacity, and structural coordination will define the future viability of development partnerships.

This transition is not a failure of multilateralism; nor does it reflect a retreat from global solidarity. Rather, it exposes a long-standing structural imbalance between policy ambition and delivery capacity, and between financial architecture and enterprise-level access. In many cases, the gap between what is agreed institutionally and what is realised operationally has widened, despite growing consensus on the urgency of climate, equity, and infrastructure agendas.

It is within this structural vacuum that our approach is positioned—not as a critique of existing instruments, but as an operational extension of what those instruments attempt to enable.

The European Social Label (EUSL), together with its continental counterpart the African Social Label (AFSL), and in direct cooperation with COMESA's ACTESA and the European Microfinance Network (EMN), proposes a formal, regional mechanism designed to complete what many global frameworks leave incomplete. That is:

- to translate vocational education into formalised enterprise,
- to link those enterprises into certified, trade-ready cooperatives,
- to finance their operations within an ethically governed system of thematic bonds and blended capital,
- and to monitor all progress with a transparency standard sufficient to satisfy both public accountability and investor-grade reporting.

This is not a theoretical reorientation. It is a functioning architecture, regionally embedded, institutionally mandated, and ready for scalable deployment.

The ambition is not to replace what remains of traditional aid—but to create a viable successor to it: one that reduces dependency, supports regional sovereignty, and sustains inclusive development at scale.

2. Institutional Convergence: Where EUSL/AFSL Align with UNDP Mandates

While UNDP has taken significant steps to support sustainable financing architecture across Uganda and the broader COMESA region—including the development of the Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF), the Green and Resilience Debt Platform (GRDP), and the proposed Trade Financing Facility (TFF)—these platforms remain contingent upon two conditions which are not yet sufficiently met:

1. The presence of regionally structured, delivery-ready infrastructure; and
2. The inclusion of productive actors—primarily SMEs—into the financing logic.

This is where the convergence with our system becomes both relevant and necessary. We do not seek alignment for the sake of visibility. We propose integration based on operational compatibility, institutional legitimacy, and capacity to absorb capital at scale.

2.1 Agenda 2074: The Strategic Policy Continuum

Agenda 2074, developed under the Global Social Equity Alliance, extends the logic of Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063 into a 50-year equity-focused framework. It is not a narrative document but a functioning policy spine that already governs the deployment of SDEP (Social Development and Empowerment Programme), ACTESA Power Play, and FlexSus monitoring.

Agenda 2074's institutional backbone is fully consistent with:

- The SDG pillars underpinning the INFF structure,
- The equity commitments embedded in GRDP bond issuance guidelines, and
- The risk reduction principles central to UNDP's GGBI platform.

2.2 SDEP: Education-to-Enterprise Pipeline

SDEP operationalises what most frameworks only recommend. It connects vocational training directly to microenterprise formation, then channels those new enterprises into trade-aligned sectors with access to structured capital.

It functions as:

- A **skills deployment mechanism** (providing over 30,000 trained individuals in its first phase),
- An **SME entry framework** (linked to AFSL certification and cooperative integration), and
- A **credit absorption channel** (ready to receive blended capital and thematic bonds through ACTESA Power Play).

2.3 ACTESA Power Play: Regional Project Aggregation and Capital Structuring

The $300 billion ACTESA Power Play is not a fund. It is a mandate-backed issuance platform for climate-aligned infrastructure and productive sector transformation across 21 COMESA member states. Its legal capacity, institutional endorsement, and thematic flexibility make it a viable issuer for:

- Green, blue, nature-based and social bonds;
- SME loan syndications tied to agriculture, energy and logistics;
- And trade corridor financing for AfCFTA-aligned outputs.

This platform resolves a key weakness in current bond-readiness models: the absence of scaleable, regionally certified projects capable of meeting investor due diligence requirements.

2.4 FlexSus: Monitoring, Verification and Private Sector Trust

All of the above components are governed under FlexSus, a precision monitoring system developed in partnership with European research institutions. It enables:

- Real-time visibility of project performance;
- Disaggregated reporting down to sub-national zones;

- ESG alignment verification that meets both public sector and institutional investor requirements.

This speaks directly to private sector expectations: traceability, accountability, and governance. Without FlexSus or a comparable system, sustainability instruments remain politically justified but commercially fragile.

3. Completing the Loop: How We Operationalize What Frameworks Intend

It is not disputed that considerable institutional progress has been made across COMESA member states, supported in large part by UNDP and aligned multilateral partners. Instruments such as the Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF), the proposed Trade Financing Facility (TFF), and the Green and Resilience Debt Platform (GRDP) represent substantial efforts to realign fiscal governance, attract climate-compatible capital, and structure development around long-term sustainability commitments.

However, these frameworks, taken on their own, do not possess the internal mechanisms necessary to move from fiscal ambition to functional delivery. Their reliance on theoretical pipelines, unproven local absorptive structures, and fragmented implementation models remains a point of vulnerability—both politically and financially.

This is not a failing of intent. It is a structural incompleteness. To function, such platforms require:

- A governed ecosystem of productive actors (SMEs, cooperatives, certified vocational pathways);
- A credit system that is capable of engaging with informal, peri-formal, and micro-enterprises on commercial terms without compromising traceability;
- A monitoring framework that satisfies both donor accountability and private sector risk thresholds; and
- A capital mechanism capable of absorbing large volumes of climate-aligned funding without falling back into state-centred, debt-heavy instruments.

What we offer is not a recommendation to improve these frameworks. It is their completion—through a fully integrated delivery model grounded in institutional mandates and operational maturity.

3.1 Translating Vocational Education into Enterprise Formation

SDEP (Social Development and Empowerment Programme) provides a governed pathway from skills development into the formal economy. It does so by:

- Embedding vocational training in nationally relevant productivity sectors (agriculture, logistics, energy);
- Linking graduates directly to certified producer organisations (TAHA, UNFFE, and equivalents); and
- Routing successful graduates into the African Social Label (AFSL) framework, which serves as a financial and ethical certification mechanism for micro-enterprise formation.

This ensures that **workforce training is not a stand-alone policy tool**, but a direct entry point into national economic productivity.

3.2 Structuring Micro and SME Credit Through ACTESA Power Play
SMEs—particularly in the food-energy-logistics nexus—remain underfinanced not due to lack of policy interest, but due to lack of **platform-compatible credit structures**.

The ACTESA Power Play programme, with a secured Letter of Intent valued at $300 billion, provides a regional capital platform with a COMESA mandate. Its issuance logic is designed specifically to:

- Aggregate demand across member states;
- Blend concessional, commercial, and thematic instruments (e.g. green, blue, circular bonds); and
- Route capital through implementation-ready project clusters, tied to certified enterprises.

It thus fills the structural gap between **capital instruments and project-level bankability**, which frameworks like GRDP and INFF currently do not address.

3.3 Resolving the Liquidity Gap through EMN Bridging Credit
A known barrier for micro and small enterprises—particularly farmers and early-stage producers—is the time-based liquidity gap between investment (e.g. planting) and revenue (e.g. harvest or sale). This is typically where public frameworks collapse, either by over-reliance on subsidies or by failure to offer working capital solutions altogether.

Through our partnership with the European Microfinance Network (EMN), we introduce a structured **bridging finance mechanism**, secured against ACTESA-guaranteed capital. This enables:

- Working capital for SMEs during non-revenue phases;
- Seasonal financing with integrated repayment logic;
- Risk layering that de-risks EMN's lending through ACTESA and allows for private co-investment.

Here, again, we are not proposing an alternative to the TFF. We are simply ensuring that, once such a facility is established, **it has a delivery base to protect and finance.**

3.4 Monitoring, Risk Transparency, and Compliance
Through the FlexSus system, all project and financial flows are subject to high-resolution monitoring. FlexSus:

- Disaggregates data down to individual enterprise clusters or geographic zones;
- Produces real-time reporting for thematic bond issuers and climate finance facilities;
- Supports national compliance with NDC and SDG-linked KPIs;
- Creates conditions for third-party verification, ensuring **investor-grade visibility** across the entire system.

In this context, it is no longer necessary to speculate about ESG compatibility or fiduciary risks—these can be monitored, verified, and acted upon in real time, using a system already operational across SDEP sites.

Conclusion to Section 3
When taken together, the elements outlined above provide not a commentary on existing frameworks, but a working alternative for **what those frameworks were built to support but cannot themselves deliver**.

We do not propose pilot projects. We propose a **continentally governed, multi-layered delivery system** that is ready to be integrated into existing national and multilateral financing architecture—starting with, but by no means limited to, Uganda.

4. Vocational Pipelines and Enterprise Formalization through SDEP and AFSL

In most contemporary development strategies, vocational training is presented as a transitional tool—intended to lift individuals from informal subsistence into formal participation. However, what is rarely addressed is the structural vacuum that follows graduation. Without a system to absorb, organize, and finance these individuals, vocational education becomes a bottleneck rather than a lever. It prepares capacity that remains underutilized, and in many cases, displaced.

The Social Development and Empowerment Programme (SDEP) was designed to prevent this disconnect. Its purpose is not only to deliver skills, but to establish a functioning pipeline that links education to enterprise, and enterprise to productive economy. The system is structured, documented, and already in operational deployment.

In its initial rollout across three COMESA countries, SDEP is expected to reach 30,000 vocational students within five years. These individuals are not trained generically—they are prepared for placement into national production systems tied to agriculture, logistics, green infrastructure, and energy transition. Their insertion into the economic system is not left to chance, but governed by a three-part logic:

1. Skills acquisition tied directly to market gaps;
2. Micro-enterprise formation supported through mentoring and capital access;
3. Formal inclusion through certification by the African Social Label (AFSL).

This process creates a defined social contract: vocational education is not a terminal policy output. It is the starting point of a governed pathway toward financial participation and trade access.

Projected Scaling and Economic Impact
If this structure is maintained and extended across all 21 COMESA member states, in alignment with the Agenda for Social Equity 2074, the results become both quantifiable and transformational:

- **Estimated vocational graduates over 50 years**:
  ~4,200,000 individuals trained through SDEP structures (based on 10 cycles across 21 states).
- **Projected micro-business formation**:
  Assuming a conservative conversion rate of 20%, approximately 840,000 new micro-enterprises will be created.
- **Employment generation**:
  With an average of three employees per enterprise, this produces an estimated 2.5 million formal jobs—within a system already compliant with ESG and SDG indicators.

This projection does not account for secondary or induced employment, nor does it speculate on trade volumes. It is based on conservative estimates, structured deployment, and governance already under design.

The Role of AFSL in Structuring Micro-Enterprise Participation

The African Social Label (AFSL) is not a conventional certification body. It operates as a structured inclusion mechanism. Its function is to:

- Verify enterprise formation under agreed ethical, environmental, and financial standards;
- Organize micro-enterprises into clusters that can be onboarded into trade organisations (e.g. TAHA, UNFFE, KENAF) and regional producer associations;
- Prepare these clusters for access to financing instruments, whether through national banks, trade cooperatives, or thematic bond vehicles.

AFSL ensures that micro-enterprises are visible, compliant, and capable of participating in structured economies, rather than remaining isolated and exposed in the informal sector.

What This Resolves

Too often, current development strategies treat skills, credit, and trade as separate domains. Training is managed by ministries of education or labour. Credit is offered by finance institutions without contextual understanding. Trade access remains out of reach unless enterprises are already formalised. This fragmentation produces inefficiency at best—and systemic exclusion at worst.

What SDEP and AFSL resolve is this fragmentation. They provide an integrated system that ensures:

- Every vocational graduate has a pathway to productive inclusion;
- Every enterprise is traceable and financeable;
- Every investment—whether public or private—has a clear line of impact measurement.

A Final Observation

It is insufficient to measure development by enrolment figures or credit disbursed. Impact must be measured by how many systems are created that can reproduce inclusion at scale, over time, with minimal external dependency.

The vocational-to-enterprise pipeline outlined here is not theoretical. It is operational. It can be scaled. And it is ready to be incorporated into the thematic financing structures already proposed under UNDP's GRDP and Uganda's INFF.

5. ACTESA Power Play and the Capital Architecture of Sovereignty

It is increasingly evident that the global development landscape is moving away from traditional grant mechanisms. Not by neglect, but by necessity. As fiscal space narrows in donor economies and appetite for permanent subsidy declines, emerging regions are left with a choice: either to sustain the architecture of dependency through diminishing returns, or to design new instruments capable of financing transformation on market terms—without compromising equity or control.

The ACTESA Power Play has emerged as one such instrument. Developed under a regional mandate within COMESA and backed by a Letter of Intent valued at $300 billion, it is neither a donor vehicle nor a sovereign debt programme. Rather, it is a continental capital platform—designed to finance resilient infrastructure, scale rural productivity, and stabilize cross-border trade corridors. Importantly, it does so without reverting to centralized aid logic. It offers structured investment on relative market terms—terms that are compatible with investor expectations but informed by developmental purpose.

5.1 A Regional Mechanism, Not a National Pilot

Although Uganda has provided an illustrative use case, the Power Play is explicitly not designed for national isolation. It is a regional financing system—meant to integrate and coordinate project issuance across all 21 COMESA member states. Its internal structure permits aggregation of climate-compatible infrastructure needs, from energy and transport to food systems and local input industries. By treating these investments as a regional balance sheet rather than isolated country-by-country requests, the platform achieves scale, credibility, and efficiency—while enabling smaller or more fragile states to benefit from pooled issuance and blended finance structures.

This shift from individual projects to regional coordination is not theoretical. It is structural. It allows COMESA countries to leverage their collective market size and policy alignment to issue thematic bonds that would otherwise remain out of reach.

5.2 Structured Risk, Not Assumed Guarantees

One of the most persistent limitations in donor-driven models is the assumption that risk can, or should, be fully removed before private investment is introduced. In practice, this assumption often leads to paralysis: private actors wait for public guarantees that are politically delayed, while governments absorb more risk than their fiscal space can sustain.

The Power Play addresses this by shifting the framework. It does not deny risk—it organises it. Through its layered capital structure, senior tranches can be placed with institutional lenders; catalytic capital can de-risk entry layers; and performance-based guarantees can be built in for socially necessary components. Risk is not eliminated—it is priced, sequenced, and made accountable.

This has proven attractive to the private sector—not because risk is low, but because it is finally clear.

5.3 Market Terms, Development Purpose

Power Play does not pursue purely commercial returns. But it does offer return structures that replace the logic of indefinite grants. Capital is invested where revenue exists, and returns are indexed to realistic performance. Financing costs remain accessible, but do not require indefinite subsidy. In this way, the programme preserves the integrity of its development objectives while speaking the language of investment.

What matters here is not only that the system works—it is that it becomes predictable, repeatable, and fiscally neutral over time. It is no longer reliant on ad hoc negotiations for each deployment. It operates under a regional logic with clearly defined eligibility, traceability, and repayment paths.

5.4 The Buyer Side: Demand Is Structured, Not Assumed

The central obstacle in past infrastructure programmes has been the absence of downstream demand. Investments were made into capacity, but no buyer existed to absorb the output. The ACTESA Power Play has reversed this order: demand is the starting point, not the afterthought.

At the heart of this model is intra-African trade. Through AfCFTA-aligned partnerships, the programme builds regional supply chains in food, logistics, and climate-aligned industrial inputs. Equally important is its export positioning—developing compliant and certified export pathways to EU, Gulf, and selected Asian markets. This ensures that every bond issuance or infrastructure investment is tied to structured, visible, and diversified demand.

It is this clarity—of who the buyer is, where the revenue flows, and what mechanisms are in place to secure that flow—that has shifted investor interest from cautious engagement to proactive participation.

5.5 The Role of UNDP, AfDB, and Member States

No regional system of this magnitude can function without institutional alignment. Power Play is not a replacement for multilateral support—it is the next phase of it. UNDP brings the frameworks that provide policy legitimacy and compliance integrity. The African Development Bank holds both the balance sheet and regional capital market expertise. Member states are the constitutional anchors of any financing programme.

But without integration, these actors operate in parallel. What we propose is not a new platform, but a coordinated application of the platforms already built. Power Play can carry the capital load; FlexSus can verify the outcomes; Agenda 2074 ensures policy consistency over five decades. What remains is to formalise a shared logic—between institutions that already share objectives, but now require a common operational frame.

6. Bridging the Liquidity Gap: EMN and the Seasonal Economics of SMEs

One of the most persistent and under-acknowledged structural failures in development finance is the lack of provision for liquidity between investment and return. Particularly in agricultural economies, where capital is often required months in advance of revenue, the result is a form of built-in fragility: systems collapse not due to lack of productivity, but because of the absence of credit structures that match the time cycles of actual production.

To address this, our proposed model does not seek to bypass this constraint through subsidies or direct cash transfers. Instead, it introduces a disciplined and replicable mechanism whereby liquidity is provided under structured terms, supported by a robust de-risking framework and anchored in local oversight.

This is not simply a finance intervention. It is a governance structure.

6.1 The Role of AfDB: Capital Foundation, Not Direct Disbursement

Funds raised under the ACTESA Power Play and SDEP umbrella—particularly through the African Development Bank—are not intended to be disbursed directly to individuals or smallholders. Doing so would replicate the vulnerabilities of past models, where capital delivery outpaced verification, and impact was diluted through fragmentation or misuse.

Instead, these funds are to be housed in a centralised, risk-managed implementation framework, co-governed by GSIA/SDEP and accredited local partners (such as TAHA or UNFFE), under formal programmatic envelopes. Their purpose is to create a capital cushion—not to serve as retail finance.

This cushion acts as a guarantee layer, insulating the system from first-loss risk, while ensuring compliance with AfDB's fiduciary standards and performance-linked expectations.

6.2 The Role of TAHA and UNFFE: Aggregation and De-Risking

Organisations such as TAHA (Tanzania Horticultural Association) and UNFFE (Uganda National Farmers Federation) serve as the institutional interface between national farmer networks and the financing framework. Their role is structural and contractual.

They are responsible for:

- Aggregating eligible farmers or cooperatives under defined governance models;
- Verifying that minimum operational, training, and compliance standards are met;
- Acting as formal de-risking partners, ensuring that only qualifying, verifiable producer units are permitted to draw liquidity under the financing mechanism.

In this way, TAHA and UNFFE do not distribute funding; they govern eligibility and consolidate responsibility. This both simplifies administration and builds local institutional strength.

6.3 The Role of EMN: Structured Liquidity, Not Subsidy

The European Microfinance Network (EMN) is integrated into this system as the primary financing mechanism. It is tasked with structuring micro-loans, seasonal credits, or input financing for the verified farmer groups—only after eligibility is confirmed and institutional de-risking has been secured.

These micro-loans are:

- Designed to cover specific needs (e.g. ECHO technology access, input procurement);
- Tied to realistic repayment timelines based on crop or market cycles;
- Governed by contractual arrangements that make farmers active co-investors, not passive recipients.

This resolves a key design flaw in many development programmes: where finance is either withheld due to risk, or granted without repayment conditions—neither of which supports sustainability.

6.4 The Role of ECHO: Technology and Traceability Through Participation

ECHO functions not merely as a digital platform, but as a contractual object within the financing mechanism. Farmers acquire ECHO via EMN-backed loans—not through direct subsidy—creating three critical outcomes:

1. **Ownership**: Technology is not gifted; it is acquired and thus maintained.
2. **Accountability**: Usage is linked to financial responsibility, improving adherence.
3. **Scalability**: Expansion becomes financially autonomous and replicable.

This model avoids one of the most persistent liabilities in digital agriculture interventions: over-subsidisation leading to platform abandonment or technical failure once donor support is withdrawn.

6.5 Strategic and Legal Advantages of the Proposed Model

This financing structure is not only economically sound—it is legally and institutionally robust:

- **De-Risking Integrity**: By insulating AfDB funds from first-line exposure, the programme satisfies public accountability and mitigates the reputational risk associated with direct transfer models.
- **Replicability Across Member States**: The aggregation and lending framework is designed for exportability. Any COMESA country with a competent aggregator (such as TAHA or UNFFE) and a functioning microfinance partner can implement the model without structural modification.
- **Financial Ethics and Development Logic**: Farmers are not disempowered. They are structured participants. They access finance under supportive but disciplined terms. They

scale. This reflects the principles of "Charity as a Business" and Agenda 2074's ethical economy framework.

- **Compliance Assurance**: Each transaction, each training record, each financing line, and each repayment schedule is digitised and auditable via FlexSus. The entire model is therefore impact-verifiable, ESG-compatible, and investment-grade from a monitoring perspective.

Closing Perspective
This is not a hybrid of aid and investment. It is a mature system of capital deployment. It does not assume trust—it verifies it. It does not replace markets—it builds them. And it ensures that liquidity—often the most elusive element in rural systems—is no longer an afterthought, but a fully governed component of a continental financing strategy.

7. GSIA: Governance, Compliance, and Public Trust in Finance

At the centre of every credible financing system lies one essential condition: trust. Trust in the data, trust in the instruments, trust in the allocation, and—most crucially—trust in the governance overseeing it all. Without it, even the best-designed funding mechanisms become volatile, either politically or financially. Investors retreat. Institutions hesitate. Beneficiaries disengage.

The Global Social Impact Alliance (GSIA) was established precisely to answer this condition. It is not a project vehicle, nor a certification bureau. It is the governing spine of an emerging continental financing ecosystem, designed to manage complexity, ensure compliance, and build systemic accountability—especially where capital moves at scale across borders, institutions, and public-private lines.

7.1 The Need for a Neutral, Structured Governance Body
In many development contexts, governance is diffused. Ministries control funds, external partners manage reporting, and implementing organisations function in silos. The result is a lack of operational continuity and a fragmentation of oversight that hinders both scale and investor confidence.

GSIA responds to this by providing a singular governance framework that coordinates across:

- Thematic bond issuance and project bundling (through ACTESA);
- SME certification and cooperative inclusion (through EUSL/AFSL);
- Vocational systems and enterprise tracking (through SDEP);
- Risk absorption and working capital facilitation (through EMN);
- Compliance with international financing standards, including INFF protocols, ESG baselines, and performance-based climate reporting.

This integration is not aspirational. It is institutional. GSIA has been mandated to consolidate these roles so that no actor operates in institutional isolation.

7.2 GSIA as Compliance Backbone
Every funding instrument operating under the ACTESA or SDEP umbrella is routed through GSIA governance protocols. This includes:

- **Due diligence procedures** for implementation partners;
- **Allocation reporting** for public or donor-backed contributions;

- **Performance audits** tied to measurable KPIs;
- **Real-time tracking** of outcomes tied to revenue, employment, environmental and gender equity goals.

In practical terms, this means that all actors—whether ministries, trade federations, or financial institutions—operate under a harmonised reporting and compliance logic. This satisfies both domestic accountability and international investor expectations, without creating new bureaucratic overhead.

7.3 Data Integrity and Financing Risk Management

Under GSIA's oversight, monitoring is not separated from governance—it is part of it. All operational data, from training enrolment to loan repayment to infrastructure performance, is subject to live reporting mechanisms. The systems used (such as FlexSus) are technical tools—but they are governed by GSIA policy. This ensures that data is not only available, but institutionally verifiable.

For the financial sector—especially those issuing or underwriting thematic bonds—this provides rare clarity:

- Capital is deployed within a traceable, governed structure;
- KPIs are not retroactively reported, but continuously monitored;
- Risk is not left to assumption but evidenced in real time.

This gives GSIA a unique role—not as a data collector, but as a compliance guarantor, ensuring that every stakeholder, from the African Development Bank to domestic ministries, has access to the same evidence base.

7.4 Enabling Investor Confidence Through Structural Ethics

One of the defining features of GSIA is its ability to align financial logic with development ethics. In too many systems, impact and revenue are treated as competing interests. Under GSIA's governance, they are structurally reconciled. For example:

- A micro-loan issued under EMN to a certified AFSL member is not only a financial transaction—it is also a verified step toward Agenda 2074's employment and inclusion goals.
- A thematic bond issued under ACTESA is not evaluated solely by return—but by its performance against decarbonisation and regional trade expansion indicators.
- Donor funding is not treated as subsidy, but as catalytic capital governed under transparency and de-risking protocols.

This institutional ethic is not merely rhetorical—it is operationalised through enforceable governance codes that are visible, documented, and enforced.

7.5 A Governance Platform Built to Scale

GSIA was not built for a single country or project. Its structure is regional, its mandate continental, and its instruments globally compatible. As such, it becomes the ideal platform for:

- Structured partnerships with UNDP and AfDB, where frameworks such as INFF and GRDP can be localised and monitored within a coherent governance envelope;
- Cross-border implementation, where trade, capital, and compliance do not stop at national lines;

- Credible negotiation with private and institutional investors, who require both developmental integrity and operational sophistication.

Closing Perspective
What GSIA offers is not a substitute for national authority. It is an institutional intermediary that protects the credibility of national systems while enabling the scale and discipline required for market-compatible, climate-aligned development finance.

In a financing environment increasingly sensitive to governance quality, GSIA provides not only oversight—but structural confidence. It is the system through which accountability becomes a shared condition, not a deferred liability.

7.6 Integrating the INFF: From Framework to Function
The Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) was introduced as a national tool—designed to assist governments in aligning diverse capital flows with their development priorities. It was never intended to replace fiscal sovereignty, but rather to strengthen it through transparency, discipline, and planning integrity. Yet, despite its promise, the INFF remains underdeveloped across much of the African continent. In COMESA, Zambia has made progress, and a handful of other states have shown interest—but what remains absent is a structure through which INFF can be meaningfully deployed at regional scale.

This is precisely where the SDEP and ACTESA Power Play programmes enter. These are not simply financing initiatives. They are implementation systems—capable of absorbing capital, structuring obligations, and aligning project flows with national and regional development objectives. Through them, GSIA proposes a logical, operational extension of INFF principles across COMESA—not by policy fiat, but by functional demonstration.

In other words, rather than treating INFF as an institutional ambition, we treat it as a structural opportunity: a shared public financing logic that can be governed, verified, and scaled across the region, using SDEP and Power Play as its practical foundation.

7.7 Toward a COMESA INFF: A Regional Framework Built on Operational Capacity
It is our position that INFF should not remain confined to national boundaries—particularly in regions where trade, infrastructure, and development financing are inherently cross-border. The COMESA region, comprising 21 member states, already shares several key instruments: a customs union, trade protocols, regional development agencies, and common funding mechanisms. What it now requires is a shared financial coordination layer—one that connects national decision-making with regional investment flows.

We therefore propose the formal emergence of a COMESA INFF—not as a supranational fiscal authority, but as a harmonised governance platform through which regional programmes like SDEP and ACTESA Power Play can report, verify, and manage their financial flows in a unified manner. Each country retains its fiscal independence. What changes is the method through which transparency, eligibility, and policy alignment are reported and validated.

GSIA would serve as the institutional custodian of this model, ensuring that each participating country can localise the INFF logic to its national systems while participating in a common ledger of development finance, tied to the execution of regional priorities.

7.8 Accountability Without Overreach: Defining Stakeholder Roles

A properly governed INFF model must assign responsibility with clarity, without creating institutional friction. In the COMESA INFF system as envisioned under GSIA, each actor plays a defined, non-conflicting role. National governments remain the architects of policy priorities. Development institutions such as UNDP and AfDB continue to provide standards, performance benchmarks, and upstream structuring tools. GSIA operates as the compliance and coordination platform—ensuring that reporting, fund flow, and implementation are consistent with both national mandates and regional strategies.

Private investors, often excluded from traditional INFF models due to perceived opacity, gain structured access to a transparent governance layer. They are not asked to fund unknown projects under vague ESG claims, but are offered clear instruments, performance metrics, and shared rules of engagement. In this model, INFF becomes more than a fiscal tool. It becomes a contractual framework for shared accountability, accessible to both public and private capital alike.

7.9 A Strategic Shift: From National Finance Logic to Regional System Governance

As ACTESA Power Play transitions from planning to deployment, and as SDEP expands its vocational-to-enterprise systems across more states, the limitations of nationally bounded INFFs become apparent. Capital flows do not respect borders; infrastructure does not halt at customs lines; and enterprise formation is increasingly shaped by regional ecosystems. To address this, INFF must be repositioned—not as a national accounting tool, but as a regional governance structure that permits coherent investment, visible impact, and credible monitoring.

COMESA, unlike many regional blocs, already possesses the foundational instruments for such coordination. What is needed is a practical vehicle to activate them. Through GSIA, and via the operational structure of SDEP and ACTESA Power Play, this can now be delivered.

Rather than creating parallel structures, we propose to ground the COMESA INFF within systems that already exist, are already funded, and are institutionally legitimate. In this way, we ensure that INFF does not become another policy ambition that outpaces implementation. It becomes a functioning instrument of shared financial sovereignty—measurable, accountable, and capable of attracting the capital necessary to meet the ambitions of Agenda 2063, Agenda 2074, and the continent's broader trade and infrastructure transitions.

8. Agenda 2074: A Fifty-Year Framework for Bankable Change

In a financing landscape saturated with short-term programmes, overlapping donor priorities, and fragmented development cycles, Agenda 2074 emerges as a rare alternative: a coherent, long-term, and legally structured framework capable of absorbing investment, aligning systems, and driving structural transformation over half a century.

It is not a thematic agenda. It is a constitutional logic.

Unlike the more programmatic nature of Agenda 2030 or the policy blueprinting of Agenda 2063, Agenda 2074 was built from the outset as a bankable governance framework—intended not only to guide public-sector planning, but to offer private-sector actors, multilateral banks, and institutional investors a dependable long-term roadmap for engagement. This is not rhetorical positioning. It is precisely what has drawn investor attention to ACTESA Power Play and its affiliated systems. Investors do not seek inspiration. They seek structure. And Agenda 2074 offers it.

A Successor Agenda, Not a Competing One
Agenda 2074 does not replace existing frameworks. It provides their long-term operational consolidation. It is the **successor agenda** to:

- **Agenda 2030**, whose Sustainable Development Goals it translates into investment-ready instruments;
- **Agenda 2063**, whose African-led vision it localises through enforceable systems;
- Sector-specific strategies including the Paris Agreement, Addis Ababa Action Agenda, AfCFTA protocols, and emerging national INFFs.

In this way, Agenda 2074 does not add to the policy burden. It **relieves it**, by harmonising multiple frameworks into a legally defensible, fiscally traceable, and ethically guided structure.

Institutional Anchors: UCE and UACE
Agenda 2074 is not implemented through vague declarations. It is institutionalised through the **Unity Center of Excellence (UCE)** and the **Unity Academy Center of Excellence (UACE)**. These two structures provide both research validation and workforce preparation at scale.

The UCE's 18 applied divisions function as think-tanks and policy engines across strategic sectors—ranging from food systems and peacebuilding to digital transformation and climate resilience. Their work provides the evidence base for both programmatic decisions and policy advocacy within and beyond COMESA.

Meanwhile, UACE serves as the educational engine, focusing on post-graduate research and PhD-level knowledge production. This is where the **structural intelligence of Agenda 2074 is maintained, interrogated, and advanced**. It ensures that Agenda 2074 is not frozen in time, but remains responsive, grounded in African realities, and informed by continuous research.

Positioning Africa Globally: From Periphery to Platform
Perhaps most significantly, Agenda 2074 serves as an **endgame agenda**—a framework by which Africa ceases to be the object of development and becomes its platform.

It creates the policy space for:

- The **African Unity 2063 programme and its 10+5 flagship initiatives** to be not only funded, but institutionally verified;
- The **SDEP model** to be replicated beyond COMESA into continental implementation;
- Partnerships with Northern and Southern counterparts to move from transactional to transformational terms;
- And Africa's institutional architecture—from AfDB to UCE—to emerge as global standards of inclusive, resilient, and investable development design.

This is not only an internal transformation. It is a **repositioning of Africa within global systems**, with Agenda 2074 as the constitutional framework that gives that repositioning both credibility and continuity.

Closing Perspective

In a time when capital looks for long-term signals, and when institutions are judged not by the scale of their ambition but by the structure of their execution, Agenda 2074 stands out—not only because of its duration, but because of its **design integrity**.

It provides the legal, ethical, and institutional infrastructure to link climate, equity, and enterprise into a single governance logic.

For those who seek not another project, but a platform—Agenda 2074 is the foundation.

9. A Formal Proposition: Structural Partnership, Not Technical Alignment

This proposal is presented not as a gesture of interest, nor as a preliminary concept to be workshopped. It is a structured and intentional proposition, grounded in institutional mandates, legally sound planning frameworks, and a clear financial architecture that has already secured traction among regional and international stakeholders.

We do not seek validation of an idea. We seek formal engagement with a system that has been designed to function—and is now ready to scale.

The question facing us is not whether to build new frameworks, but how to integrate the ones that already exist into a coherent, governable whole. UNDP, AfDB, COMESA, and a growing number of national governments have each made meaningful advances in financial readiness. The INFF, the Green and Resilience Debt Platform, the Trade Financing Facility—these initiatives are analytically sound. They are also policy-aligned and increasingly recognised for their value in building confidence among multilateral partners.

But they remain, in their current form, incomplete.

None of them, alone or together, constitute a full delivery system. None currently provide a closed feedback loop from education to enterprise, from capital to compliance, or from programme financing to verified public impact. They do not operationalise the transition from intention to institution. And without this, even the most advanced platforms risk remaining structurally fragile—technically impressive, but financially under-absorbed.

It is this structural incompleteness we now address.

The system we offer is not a substitute. It is a consolidation. Through the combined operational logic of SDEP, the capital structuring of ACTESA Power Play, the fiduciary governance of GSIA, and the regional integration logic of Agenda 2074, we present a framework that can activate—within existing mandates—the full range of public and private capital currently sitting at the margins of deployment.

Yet even a system of this kind, no matter how well structured, depends on three essential preconditions for activation.

The first is already in place. The Social Development and Empowerment Programme (SDEP) is operational, with implementation initiated in three member states. Its vocational pipeline is built, its enterprise certification model through AFSL is established, and its educational-to-financing pathways are now tested and documented. It serves not only as a demonstration model, but as the human infrastructure of the transition—a workforce scaled for system change, not subsidy dependence.

The second condition is now prepared, but requires formal political acceptance. The ACTESA mandate update, developed in close dialogue with ACTESA leadership and supported in principle by COMESA organs, is the legal adjustment required to enable Power Play to operate at the scale and across the sectors that investors demand. This mandate update is not speculative. It exists. What remains is the institutional commitment from COMESA to adopt it. The support of UNDP for this adjustment is understood to be in place. The internal consensus within ACTESA itself has already been articulated. The remaining step is procedural—and it must now be taken.

The third condition is one of timing and coordination. The launch of ACTESA Power Play, scheduled for early 2027, has been deliberately timed to pre-empt the full-scale impact of new oil and pipeline infrastructure in Uganda and the surrounding region. This is not a political positioning. It is a structural necessity. Once extractive capital infrastructure is activated, it will consume large portions of national attention, fiscal bandwidth, and investor priority. If the productive, inclusive economy—built through vocational transition, SME empowerment, and climate-aligned trade—is to compete on equal terms, its capital system must be in place before the diversion of policy focus becomes irreversible.

In this context, the proposition before UNDP is both timely and specific.

We are not requesting endorsement of a project. We are offering a formal partnership in the execution of a regional financing and development system, one that is institutionally embedded, strategically bankable, and compatible with the standards and platforms already advanced by UNDP and its multilateral partners.

The framework is governed, the instruments are defined, and the pathway to scale is no longer hypothetical. What remains is the choice to activate—together—a system whose logic already aligns with your existing commitments, but whose structure offers what no current platform alone can deliver: a full-spectrum delivery ecosystem, built for a 50-year transformation cycle and accountable to the continent it serves.