

The President of the French Republic and Africa (2026)

The end of the old sphere of influence and the search for a new strategic partnership



Blog Post

⚡ A silent historical transition

The Africa Forward Summit, to be held in Nairobi on May 11 and 12, 2026, likely marks a historic turning point in the relationship between France and Africa. For the first time, a summit of this magnitude is taking place outside the traditional Francophone sphere, in an Anglophone capital that has become one of the continent's most dynamic technological and financial hubs.

The symbolism is powerful. By choosing Nairobi and Kenya as co-hosts, Emmanuel Macron implicitly acknowledges a new reality: contemporary Africa can no longer be understood through the old logic of the "sphere of influence" inherited from Françafrique.

The continent has changed. So has the world. Africa is now entering an age of competing sovereignties, continental platforms, digital infrastructures, and global geopolitical rivalries.

⚡ The end of the French postcolonial model

Since his Ouagadougou speech in 2017, Emmanuel Macron has been attempting to redefine the Franco-African relationship around a central idea: the "reinvented partnership." The interview he gave to Jeune Afrique on the occasion of the Nairobi summit confirms this doctrinal shift. The French President explicitly acknowledges:

- ⚡ The historical ambiguities of Françafrique
- ⚡ The exhaustion of the Sahelian security model
- ⚡ The limitations of the CFA franc
- ⚡ The rise of African sovereignty
- ⚡ And the need for France to become "one partner among others"

This recognition already represents a significant break. For several decades, French African policy was largely based on:

- ⚡ Historical networks of influence
- ⚡ Permanent military bases
- ⚡ Security dependencies
- ⚡ And certain political and economic balances inherited from independence

However, these mechanisms have gradually weakened. The withdrawal of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger likely marked the visible end of this historical structure.

⚡ The Sahel as a crisis of legitimacy

The Sahelian crisis extends far beyond purely military issues. For nearly a decade, France was the primary external security power engaged in the fight against jihadist groups in the Sahel. Yet, despite the human and financial sacrifices made, the French presence has gradually lost its political legitimacy in the eyes of a growing segment of African public opinion.

In many African sovereignist discourses, the large military bases have become symbols of a now-contested postcolonial system. The problem was therefore no longer solely one of security. It became political, symbolic, and geopolitical. Contemporary Africa no longer simply desires security partners. It demands:

- ⚡ Infrastructure
- ⚡ Investments
- ⚡ Industrial capacity
- ⚡ Technology transfers
- ⚡ And greater economic sovereignty

🌍 Africa at the heart of new global rivalries

The Nairobi summit also reveals a much deeper transformation: Africa has become a central arena for 21st-century strategic rivalries. Critical African minerals—cobalt, copper, lithium, coltan, graphite, rare earth elements—are now indispensable.:

- ⚡ To energy transitions
- ⚡ To batteries
- ⚡ To digital infrastructure
- ⚡ To artificial intelligence
- ⚡ And to defense industries

Africa is thus ceasing to be perceived as an economic periphery. It is becoming a global strategic infrastructure. This evolution explains the growing presence:

- ⚡ From China
- ⚡ From Russia
- ⚡ From Turkey
- ⚡ From the Gulf States
- ⚡ From India
- ⚡ And the United States on the continent

In this multipolar environment, France can no longer claim to single-handedly organize the balance of power in Africa. It must now persuade others.

🌍 Economic sovereignty becomes central

One of the most important elements of current French discourse probably lies in the recognition of a new African demand: the local processing of strategic resources. For a long time, African economies primarily exported raw materials. Today, African states want:

- ⚡ Transform locally
- ⚡ Industrialize
- ⚡ Gain greater control over value chains
- ⚡ And govern their own economic infrastructures

This evolution is fundamental. Contemporary sovereignty no longer rests solely on borders or armies. It now depends on the ability to control:

- ⚡ Financial flows
- ⚡ Payments
- ⚡ Data
- ⚡ Digital infrastructure
- ⚡ Strategic resources
- ⚡ And value chains

🚩 Governing the flows of the 21st century

It is precisely in this space that new sovereign African architectures are emerging. Digital payments, traceability mechanisms, KYC infrastructures, resource certification, carbon platforms, and tokenization systems are gradually becoming major instruments of public power. The question is no longer simply about extracting resources. It becomes:

- ⚡ How to govern them
- ⚡ How to certify them
- ⚡ How to secure the flows
- ⚡ How to integrate communities
- ⚡ And how to retain more economic value locally

In this transformation, architectures like AXIS appear particularly revealing of the ongoing changes.

🚩 AXIS and Africa's infrastructure

AXIS is no longer solely driven by technological considerations. The program is gradually becoming part of a broader vision: that of sovereign infrastructures capable of organizing contemporary African strategic flows:

- ⚡ Resource tokenization
- ⚡ Value chain traceability
- ⚡ Digital certification
- ⚡ Sovereign payments
- ⚡ Blockchain compliance
- ⚡ Carbon governance
- ⚡ Monitoring of mining and agricultural flows






These mechanisms reflect a profound transformation of African economies. Resources are gradually ceasing to be solely raw materials exported abroad. They are becoming strategic assets integrated into digital architectures capable of ensuring:

- ⚡ Transparency
- ⚡ Traceability
- ⚡ Governance
- ⚡ Compliance
- ⚡ And local value creation

Gold, carbon, and tomorrow agricultural supply chains and strategic minerals, can now be integrated into sovereign continental digital systems. Digital technology thus becomes an infrastructure of sovereignty.

🚩 An Africa that has entered the age of systems

Ultimately, Africa Forward Nairobi 2026 may reveal a much broader reality. Africa is gradually entering a new historical age: that of platforms, integrated infrastructure, and sovereign systems. The central question is no longer simply that of development in the classical sense. It becomes:

-  Who controls the flows?
-  Who governs the infrastructure?
-  Who controls the data?
-  Who organizes the value chains?
-  Who structures African transactional systems?

In this new environment, states capable of building sovereign architectures will possess a major strategic advantage. 21st-century Africa will likely be governed less by the old logics of territorial influence than by the control of invisible infrastructures:

-  Payments
-  Data
-  Energy
-  Connectivity
-  Traceability
-  Platforms
-  And Artificial Intelligence

The real challenge then becomes this: how to build African sovereignties capable of participating in digital globalization without becoming dependent on the infrastructures of other powers?