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India–Africa Partnership Gains Fresh Momentum as India and African Union Discuss Early Convening of the Fourth Forum Summit

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Recent Developments:

- India and the **African Union** have renewed discussions on the early convening of the **Fourth India–Africa Forum Summit (IAFS-IV)**, following high-level engagement around the 2026 BRICS Summit in New Delhi. The latest discussions underline India's intention to revitalise the institutional mechanism for its Africa partnership.
- The fourth summit was originally scheduled for **May 2026 in New Delhi**, but the proposed schedule was subsequently deferred, and a new date has not yet been formally announced. India and the African Union remain engaged on reconvening the summit.
- The IAFS-IV assumes significance because the last summit was held in **2015**, creating a substantial gap in the highest-level institutional dialogue between India and African countries.
- India's renewed focus comes amid expanding cooperation in **trade, investment, development partnership, health, digital technology, defence, maritime security, renewable energy and multilateral diplomacy**.

India–Africa Forum Summit:

Institutional Framework:

- The **India–Africa Forum Summit** is the principal institutional platform for strengthening cooperation between India and African countries in partnership with the **African Union**.
- The first summit was held in **New Delhi in 2008**, followed by the second summit in **Addis Ababa in 2011** and the third summit in **New Delhi in 2015**. The 2015 summit adopted the **Delhi Declaration 2015** and the **India–Africa Framework for Strategic Cooperation**.
- The forum covers **political dialogue, economic cooperation, trade, investment, development partnership, technology transfer, capacity building and people-to-people relations**, reflecting India's broader approach towards South–South cooperation.
- The prolonged interval since 2015 makes the fourth summit important for reviewing existing commitments, identifying emerging priorities and establishing a renewed institutional roadmap.

African Union:

Structure and Objectives:

- The **African Union (AU)** is the continent-wide organisation comprising **55 member states** and was officially launched in **2002** as the successor to the **Organisation of African Unity**, which existed from 1963 to 1999.
- Its broader objective is to promote **African integration, cooperation, peace, development and economic transformation**, including through the long-term framework of **Agenda 2063**.

- The AU provides an important institutional partner for India because engagement through continental mechanisms complements India's bilateral relations with individual African countries.

India–Africa Relations:

Diplomatic and Development Partnership:

- India has substantially increased high-level political engagement with Africa through ministerial and leadership visits, diplomatic missions, development partnerships and capacity-building programmes.
- India has expanded its diplomatic footprint in Africa, while institutions such as the **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme** provide training and capacity-building opportunities to African officials and professionals.
- India's development partnership emphasises **demand-driven cooperation, capacity building, technology transfer and local ownership**, rather than a donor-recipient model.

Trade and Investment:

- India–Africa economic relations have expanded across **pharmaceuticals, agriculture, automobiles, information technology, telecommunications, infrastructure, energy and manufacturing**.
- According to the Ministry of External Affairs, bilateral trade reached **USD 81.99 billion in FY 2024–25**, comprising approximately **USD 42.6 billion of Indian exports** and **USD 39.2 billion of imports**.
- India's cumulative investment in Africa has reached approximately **USD 80 billion between 1996 and 2025**, placing India among Africa's major investors.
- India has also extended more than **190 lines of credit exceeding USD 10 billion to 41 African countries**, supporting infrastructure and development projects.

Health and Pharmaceuticals:

- India is an important supplier of **generic medicines** to African markets and has developed strong partnerships in pharmaceuticals and healthcare.
- Cooperation has expanded towards **local pharmaceutical manufacturing, healthcare capacity building and technology transfer**, including engagement with countries such as Nigeria, Tanzania, Senegal and South Africa.
- India's experience in affordable medicines and digital health provides scope for strengthening **health security and universal health coverage** in Africa.

Defence and Maritime Security:

- India contributes significantly to **United Nations peacekeeping operations in Africa** and has supported training and capacity building for African defence institutions.
- Defence cooperation includes **joint exercises, military training, maritime security, anti-piracy operations, defence equipment and humanitarian assistance**.
- The **Africa–India Field Training Exercise** and the **India–Africa Defence Ministers' Conclave** provide institutional mechanisms for expanding defence cooperation. India and African countries have also recognised maritime security as an important area of common interest.

Energy, Climate and Sustainability:

- Africa is an important partner for India's **energy security and clean-energy transition**, particularly through cooperation in renewable energy, solar power and sustainable infrastructure.
- African participation in India-led initiatives such as the **International Solar Alliance**, **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure** and **Global Biofuels Alliance** creates opportunities for coordinated action

on climate resilience and energy transition.

- Recent India–Africa strategic discussions have also emphasised **renewable energy expansion, interconnected electricity grids, energy storage and institutional capacity building**.

People-to-People Relations:

- The Indian diaspora in Africa contributes to **commercial, cultural, educational and social linkages**, strengthening the historical foundations of the partnership.
- Educational exchanges, scholarships, training programmes, tourism and digital connectivity can further deepen people-to-people relations.
- Such links provide a foundation for a partnership that extends beyond government-to-government engagement.

Significance of Africa for India:

Economic and Resource Security:

- Africa provides expanding markets for Indian enterprises and offers opportunities for diversification of **trade, investment and global value chains**.
- African countries possess significant reserves of **critical minerals**, including cobalt, lithium, manganese and graphite, which are increasingly important for batteries, renewable energy technologies and India's green transition.
- Diversifying sources of energy and strategic minerals can strengthen India's **economic resilience and supply-chain security**.

Strategic and Maritime Importance:

- Africa's eastern coastline overlooks the **Indian Ocean**, connecting the Middle East, Africa, South Asia and Europe through vital maritime routes.
- Cooperation with African littoral states can strengthen India's capacity to address **piracy, maritime terrorism, trafficking, illegal fishing and other transnational maritime threats**.
- Greater engagement with African countries also complements India's wider **Indo-Pacific and Indian Ocean** strategy.

Global South and Multilateral Governance:

- Africa is central to India's effort to strengthen the collective voice of the **Global South** in international institutions.
- India played an important role during its **G20 Presidency in 2023** in securing the African Union's permanent membership of the G20, providing Africa with a formal role in global economic governance.
- India and African countries share interests in **reforming global governance institutions, strengthening multilateralism and improving representation of developing countries**.

Challenges and Way Forward:

Key Challenges:

- India–Africa trade remains below its potential because of **logistical constraints, limited market information, tariff and non-tariff barriers, financing difficulties and inadequate connectivity**.
- Competition from other external powers, particularly in infrastructure, natural resources, technology and defence, requires India to offer **competitive, sustainable and locally relevant partnerships**.
- The long gap between IAFS summits has weakened the regularity of the highest-level institutional mechanism and highlights the need for more predictable follow-up mechanisms.

Way Forward:

- India should use the **IAFS-IV** to establish measurable timelines for development projects, expand trade and investment facilitation, strengthen digital and physical connectivity and deepen cooperation in critical minerals and clean energy.
- Future engagement should prioritise **co-development, local capacity building, technology transfer and African development priorities**, while avoiding a purely transactional approach.
- Greater coordination between bilateral initiatives, the African Union, regional economic communities and multilateral institutions can make India's Africa policy more coherent and outcome-oriented.

Value Addition for UPSC:

Mains Enrichment:

- **Core principle:** India's Africa policy is increasingly moving from a traditional development-assistance approach towards **partnership, co-development and capacity building**.
- **Strategic convergence:** Africa is simultaneously important for India's **economic diversification, energy security, maritime security, Global South diplomacy and multipolar world order**.
- **Conclusion:** A revitalised India–Africa Forum Summit can provide political direction to an expanding partnership and transform existing sectoral cooperation into a **long-term, mutually beneficial and institutionally sustainable strategic partnership**.