Executive Summary

A Model Strategic Framework for the African Union (2026-2063)

June 2026



The African Green Industrial Pivot: Unlocking Resilience and Acceleration to 2063

SAIIA SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
AFREC African Energy Commission
AUDA-NEPAD AFRICAN UNION DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
SYNERJIES INTERNATIONAL & STRATEGIC STUDIES | MEA
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A Model Strategic Framework for the African Union

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Africa is positioned at a transformative threshold

The continent navigates a critical fork in its long-term trajectory, either extending legacy extractive systems or leveraging its strengths to shape autonomous, regenerative energy futures anchored in resilience, equity, and technological sovereignty.

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THE PARADOX



60%

OF **WORLD'S BEST SOLAR** RESOURCES



600 Million

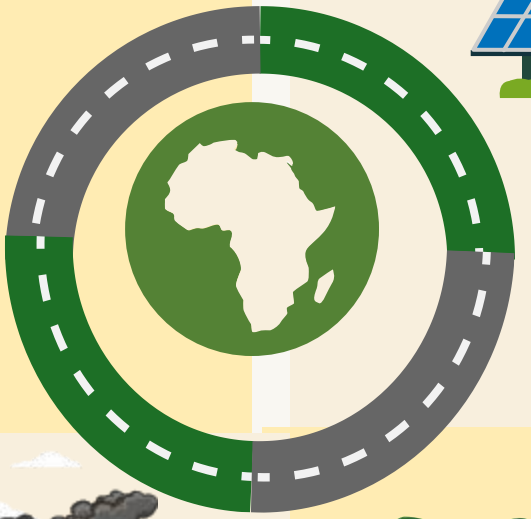
WITHOUT ELECTRICITY

over 600 million Africans still without access to electricity

THE CHOICES

GREEN WASHING







EXPORT RENEWABLE ENERGY



EXTRACTIVE PAST

Continued raw material extraction, export dependence, pollution, jobs lost, little value added.



SOVEREIGN GREEN FUTURE

Local value addition, green jobs, energy access, industrialisation, innovation, and shared prosperity

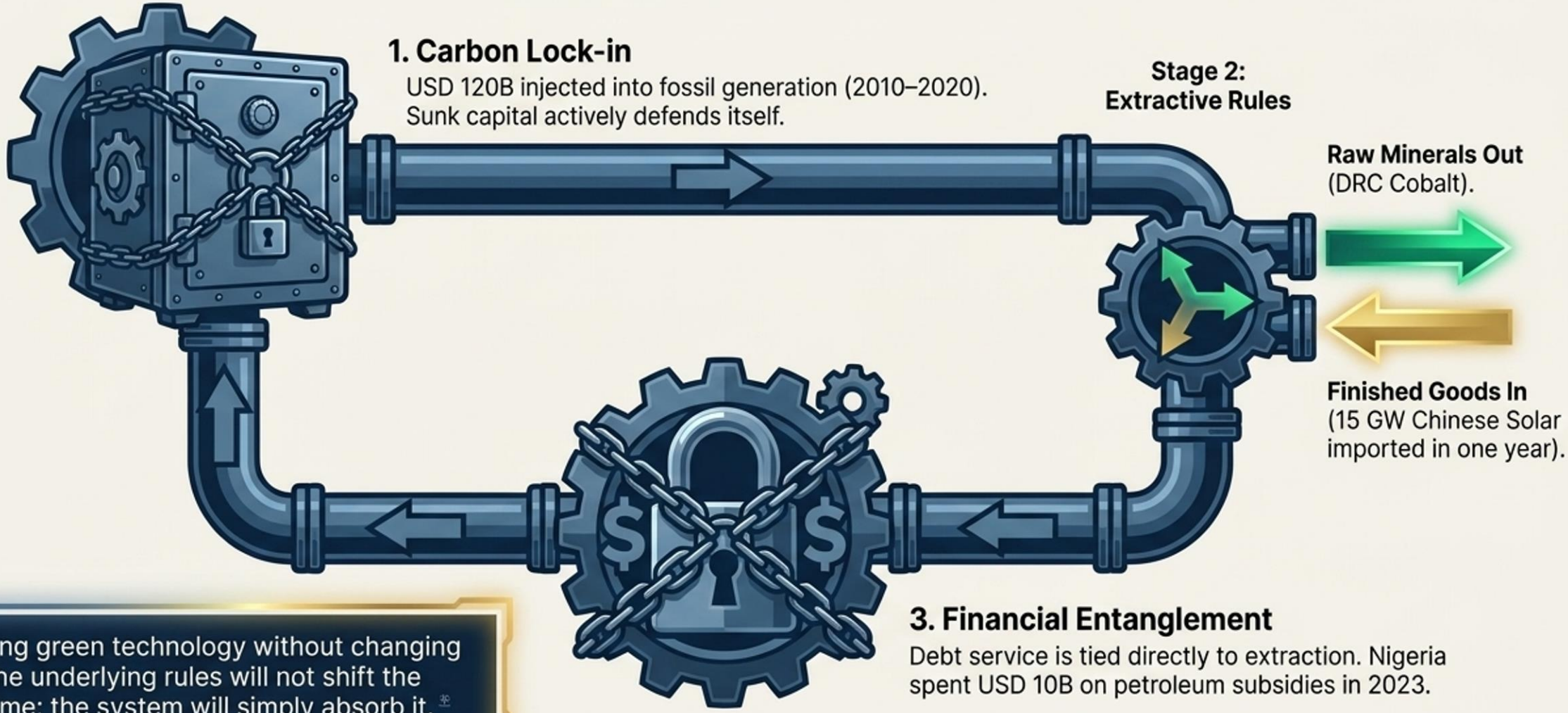
The system is not broken. It is performing as designed.

Our current development model is the "incumbent fossil-industrial complex" designed for extraction, not development. It is an industrial ecosystem, not a collection of isolated problems. The question is whether the energy systems will work with the feedback and information or against transforming the African green industrialisation ecosystem (AGIE)

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THE SYSTEM IS NOT BROKEN. IT IS PERFORMING EXACTLY AS DESIGNED.

The Incumbent Fossil-Industrial Complex



1. Carbon Lock-in

USD 120B injected into fossil generation (2010–2020). Sunk capital actively defends itself.

Stage 2: Extractive Rules

Raw Minerals Out (DRC Cobalt).

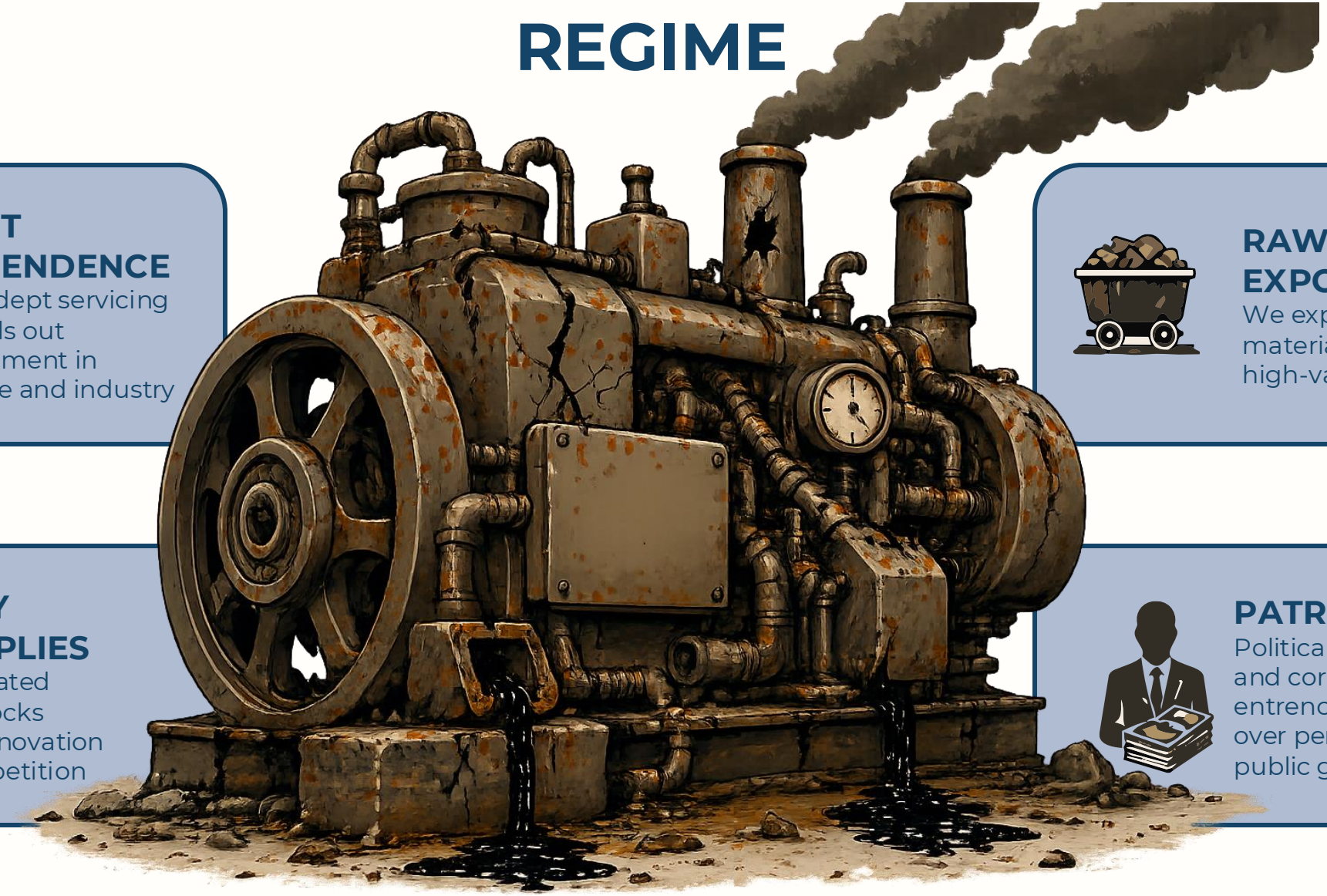
Finished Goods In (15 GW Chinese Solar imported in one year).

3. Financial Entanglement

Debt service is tied directly to extraction. Nigeria spent USD 10B on petroleum subsidies in 2023.

> Adding green technology without changing the underlying rules will not shift the regime; the system will simply absorb it.

THE INCUMBENT AFRICAN ENERGY REGIME



DEBT DEPENDENCE
High dept servicing crowds out investment in people and industry

RAW MATERIAL EXPORT
We export raw materials and import high-value goods.

UTILITY MONOPLIES
Concentrated power blocks access, innovation and competition

PATRONAGE
Political connections and corruption entrench privilege over performance and public good.

Power Dynamics in African Green Industrialisation

Transformative change happens when long-term ‘landscape’ pressures create cracks in the existing ‘regime,’ allowing innovative ‘niches’ to break through and scale.

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LANDSCAPE

Broad exogenous trends putting pressure on the existing regime

DEBT CRISIS

YOUTH BULGE

CLIMATE SHOCKS

TECH COST COLLAPSE

Landscape shapes pressure

REGIME

Dominant system locked in by institutions, infrastructure, and vested interests

FOSSIL – INDUSTRIAL REGIME

COAL PLANT

OIL WELL

CENTRALISED GRID

STATE UTILITY

Regime resists change

NICHES

Protected spaces for new ideas and innovations to emerge and grow

COMMUNITY SOLAR

PAYGO

GREEN HYDROGEN PILOTS

JUA KALI MANUFACTURING

Niches nurture innovation and build alternatives

The Landscape is Shifting

Powerful external forces are creating the conditions for change. We must understand them to act strategically.

LANDSCAPE PRESSURES REDEFINING AFRICA'S ENERGY FUTURES

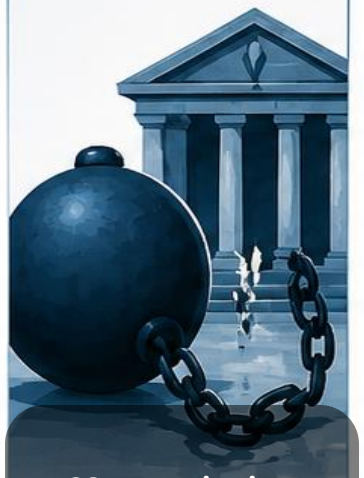
EXTERNAL FORCES DISTABILISING THE OLD REGIME AND OPENING SPACE FOR CHANGE

01 DEMOGRAPHIC DELUGE



Youth unemployment fuels demand for change.

02 DEBT-DRIVEN DEPLETION



28 countries in debt distress, fiscal space crushed.

03 CLIMATE-TRIGGERED FRAGILITY



Droughts cripple hydropower, expose system weakness.

04 GEOPOLITICAL DISCONTINUITIES



Demand for critical mineral revalues African resources.

05 COST CURVE COLLAPSE



Solar is now the cheapest power source, making fossils economically irrational

06 NARRATIVE RESONANCE



African Solution Mindset challenges Old aid models.

The African Green Industrialisation Ecosystem Actors: Who Makes Things Happen?

The African Green Industrialisation Ecosystem (AGIE) is complex. Success depends on strengthening the ‘institutional synapses’ between these actors.

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THE ECOSYSTEM ANATOMY:
INVISIBLE RULES GOVERNING PHYSICAL MATERIALS



THE RULES
(THE HIDDEN HAND)

MATERIALS
Solar PV modules, Lithium batteries, Chinese EXIM loans, Regional interconnectors

ACTORS
State utilities, multinational oil majors, off-grid enterprises, traditional leaders, diaspora investors

REGULATIVE
Utility monopsony blocking direct corporate procurement; 7-12% IRR hurdles.

COGNITIVE
The baseload mindset demanding diesel backups; OECD bankability metrics that misunderstand African realities.

NORMATIVE
Ubuntu collective ownership norms constantly clashing with post-colonial patronage expectations.

THE AFRICAN UNION INSTITUTIONAL ECOSYSTEM

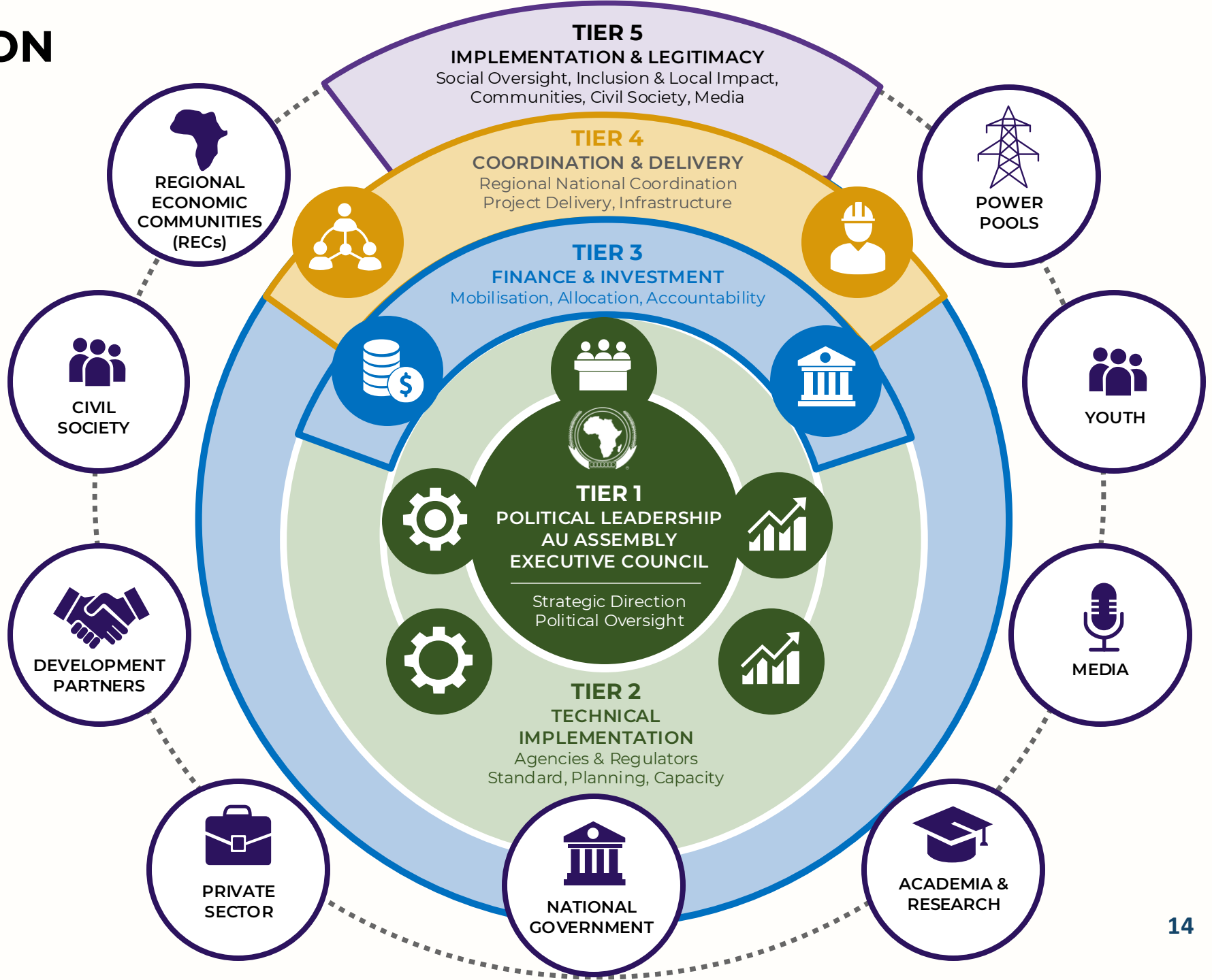
TIER 1
POLITICAL LEADERSHIP
Sets direction, approves policies, ensures accountability

TIER 2
TECHNICAL IMPLEMENTATION
Develops standards, coordinated planning, builds capacity

TIER 3
FINANCE & INVESTMENT
Mobilises resources, invests, monitors financial integrity

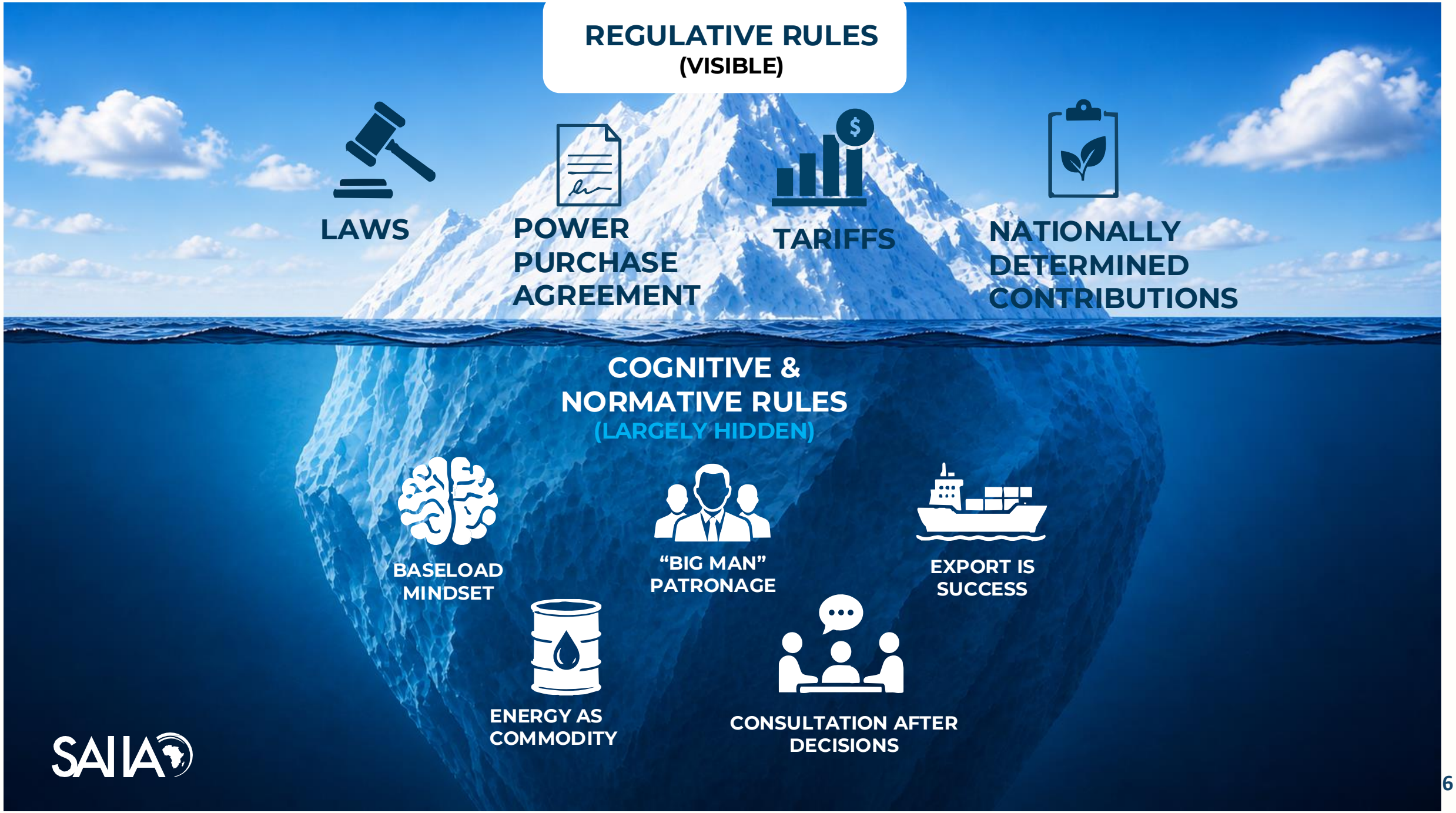
TIER 4
COORDINATION & DELIVERY
Regional National Coordination
Project Delivery, Infrastructure

TIER 5
IMPLEMENTATION & LEGITIMACY
Ensure inclusion, monitors impact, provides feedback & social license

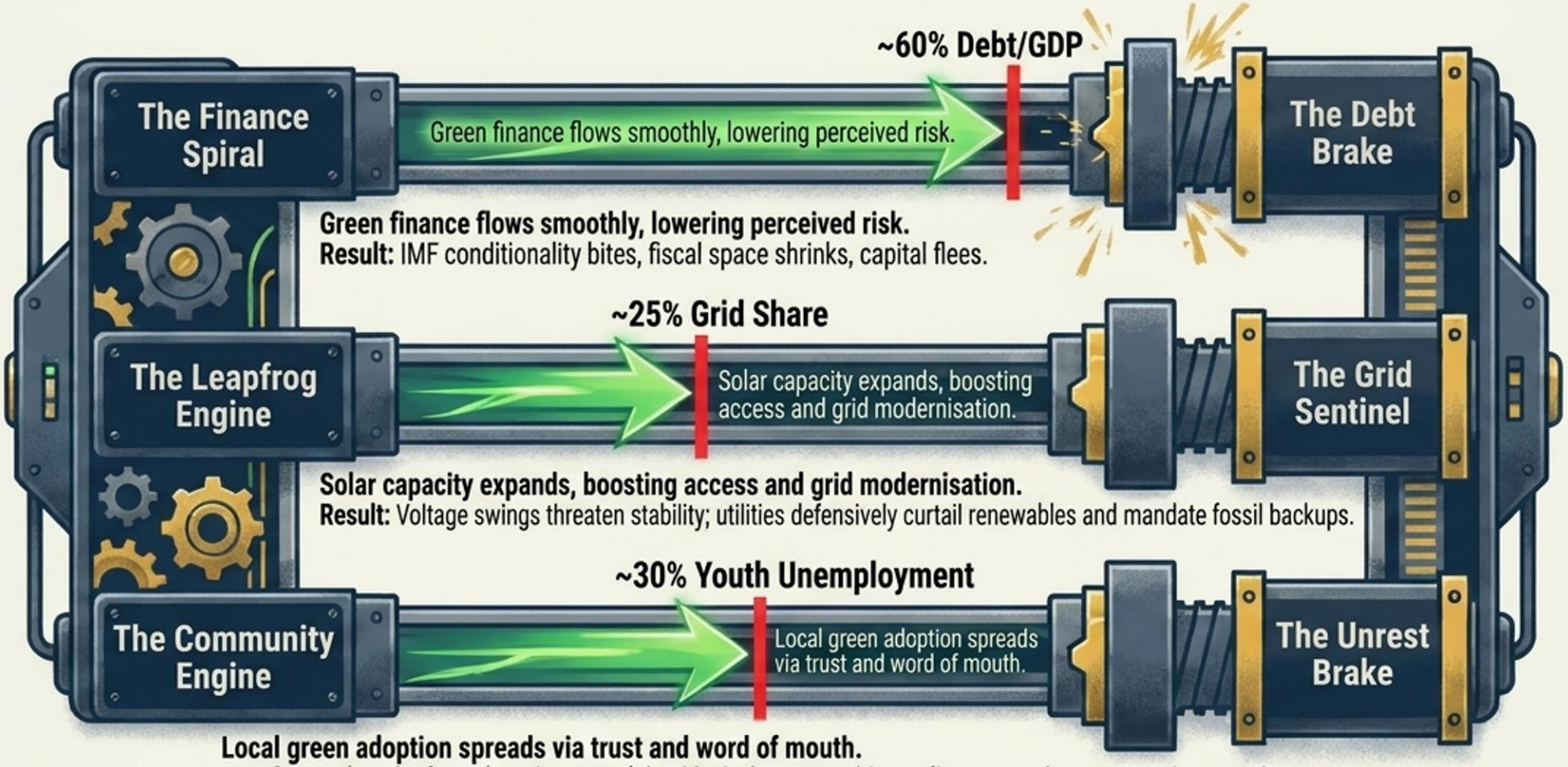


The Rules of the Game (Hidden Hand)

Our progress is blocked by ‘rules’, some are laws, but the most powerful are the unspoken beliefs and habits that keep the old system in place.


REGULATIVE RULES
(VISIBLE)
LAWS
POWER PURCHASE AGREEMENT
TARIFFS
NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTIONS
COGNITIVE & NORMATIVE RULES
(LARGELY HIDDEN)
BASELOAD MINDSET
"BIG MAN" PATRONAGE
EXPORT IS SUCCESS
ENERGY AS COMMODITY
CONSULTATION AFTER DECISIONS

The Thresholds: Where linear transition plans fail



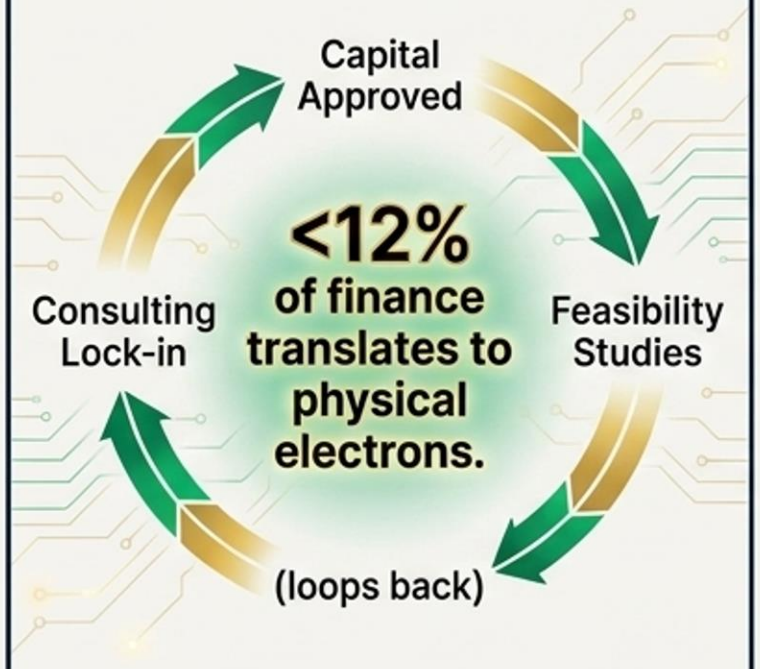
Green finance flows smoothly, lowering perceived risk.
Result: IMF conditionality bites, fiscal space shrinks, capital flees.

Solar capacity expands, boosting access and grid modernisation.
Result: Voltage swings threaten stability; utilities defensively curtail renewables and mandate fossil backups.

Local green adoption spreads via trust and word of mouth.
Result: Displaced informal workers spark backlash, forcing sudden policy reversals to protect legacy jobs.

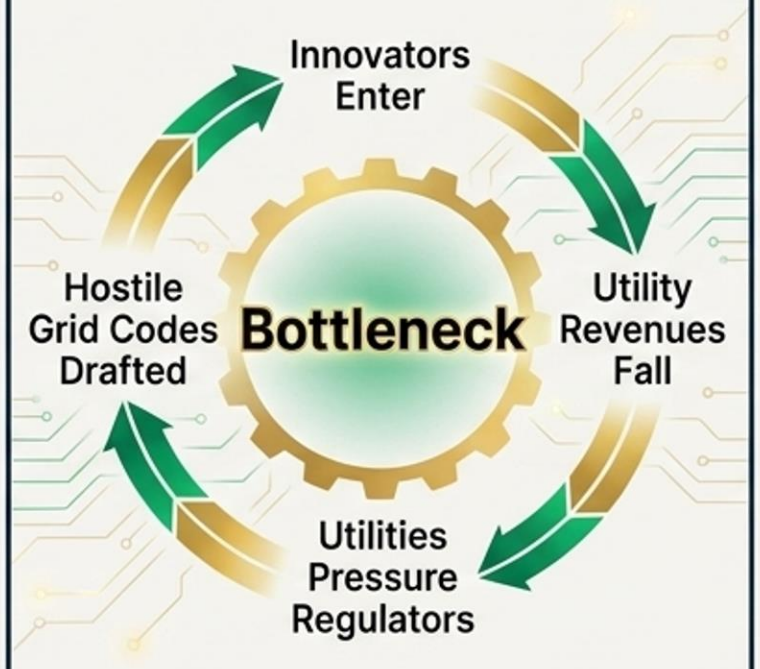
Navigating the systemic traps blocking green capital

The Feasibility Trap



Money circulates endlessly in consulting rather than construction.

Regulatory Capture



Decentralised entrants are systematically blocked by incumbent-written rules.

The Traditional Veto



Projects fail despite formal legality because customary land control is ignored.

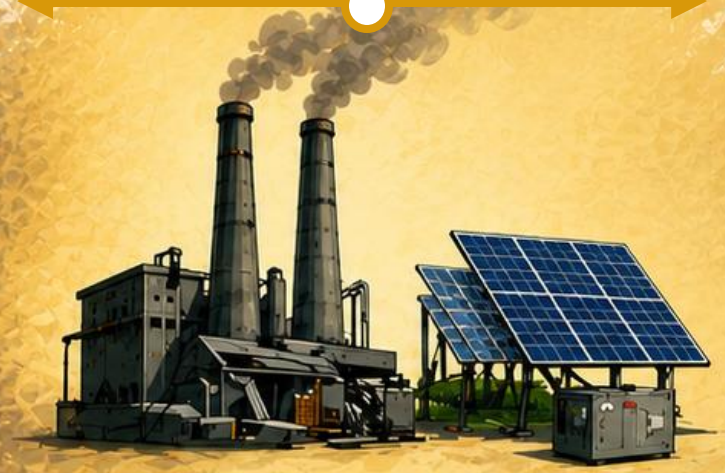
The Contested Regime

The old regime is not dead. It fights to survive.
A messy "grey space" of compromise and contradiction exists between the old and the new.

INCUMBENT FOSSIL REGIME

- SUNK COST
- POLITICAL PATRONAGES
- UTILITY MONPOLIES

THE GREY SPACE



CHINESE COAL WITH SOLAR CO-LOCATION



DIESEL-SOLAR HYBRIDS

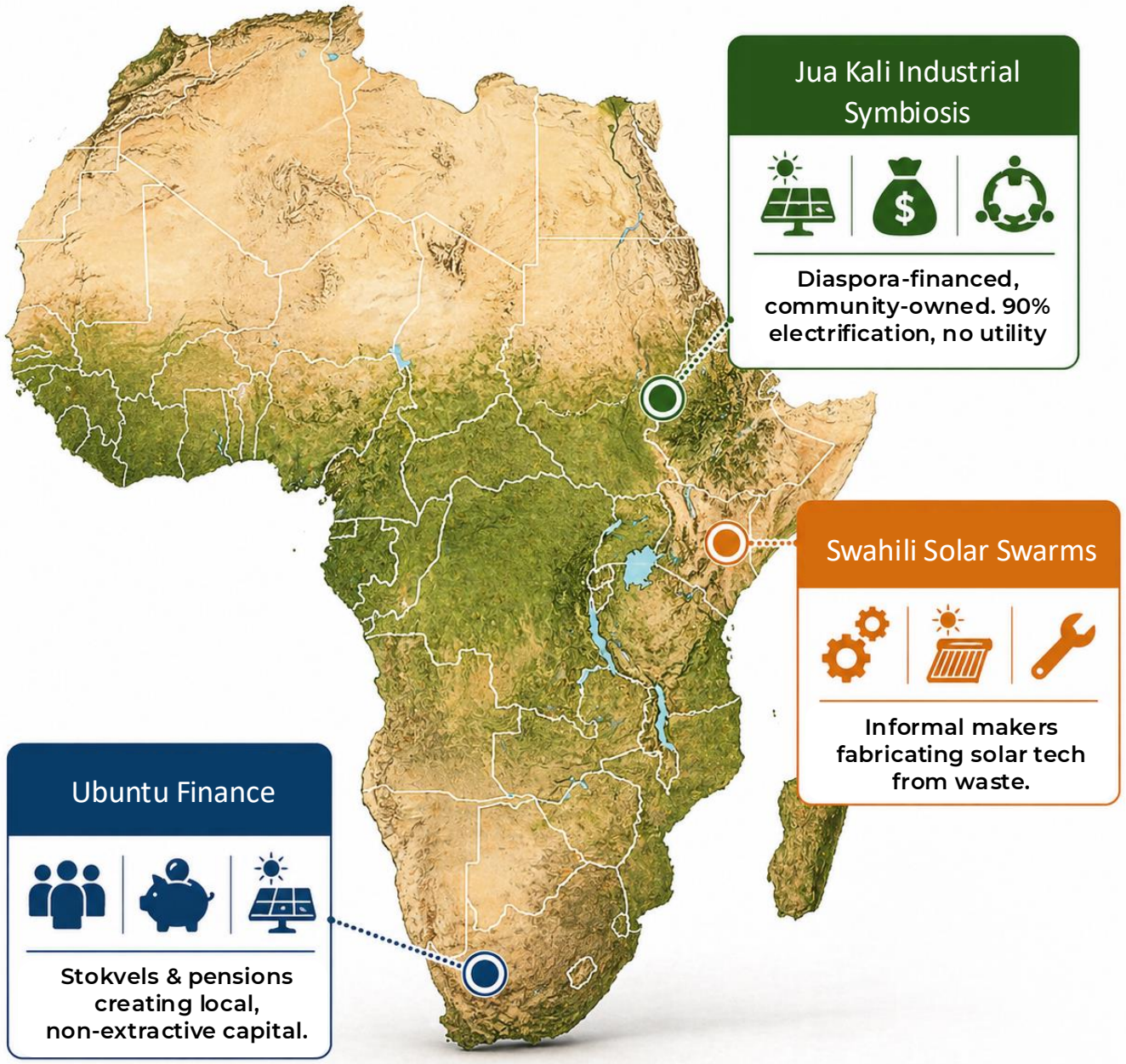
EMERGING GREEN REGIME

- DISTRIBUTED ENERGY
- COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP
- REGIONAL INTEGRATION

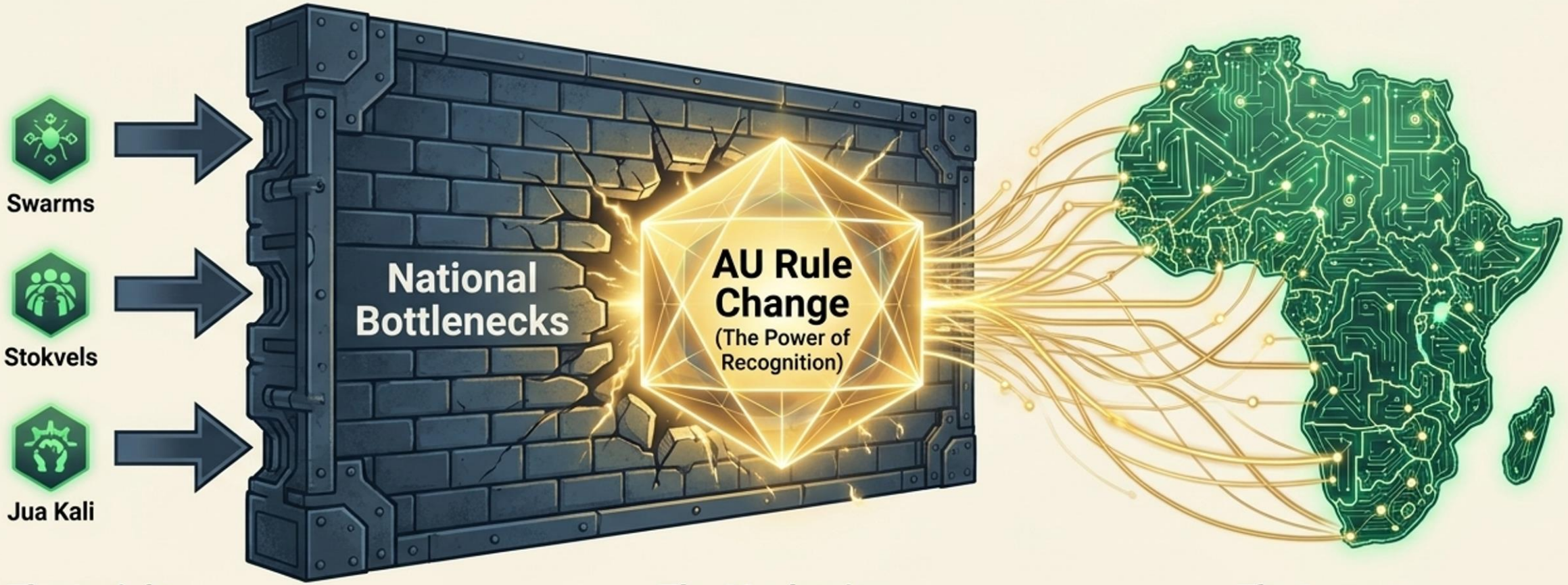
DEFENDING THE PAST — CONTESTED FUTURE — BUILDING THE FUTURE

Seeds of Change: Disruptive Niche Initiatives at the Margins

Across the continent, niches are proving that alternatives work. These are not just projects; they are the blueprints for the new regime.



The AU Strategic Pivot: Rewriting the rules of recognition



The Insight

The AU cannot out-spend the debt brake across 55 states. Its true leverage lies in changing the rules of recognition.

The Mechanism

By changing what counts (as infrastructure, an operator, or collateral), the AU legitimises grassroots niches.

The Impact

Isolated local phenomena interoperate, bypass national dysfunction, and scale laterally into a continent-wide regime replacement.

Institutionalising the breakout: Disarming the traps

Systemic Traps	AU Institutional Niches
1. The Feasibility Trap	**1. AFREC Renewable-Energy Data Commons** Makes energy statistics open-source and real-time, instantly starving the endless feasibility-study economy of its rationale.
2. The Grid Sentinel	**2. AFREC Distributed-Energy Registry (DER)** Licenses sub-1MW systems via IMEI numbers, making off-grid assets visible to national power pools and counting them toward NDCs.
3. The Traditional Veto	**3. AU Traditional-Authority Energy Licences** Allows chiefdoms to hold micro-utility licences as legal persons, converting the customary land veto into an equity enabler.

The Vision: A New Development Regime

We are not just building green energy. We are building a new, sovereign, regenerative development model for Africa. This is a civilisational project.



The AU Model Strategic Framework – Regime Replacement

A Model Strategic Framework for the African Union: The Six Pillars of the New Energy Regime

The new energy regime is built on six transformative pillars, six governance principles, and seven strategic imperatives. Each one an inversion of the old, extractive logic.

SIX PILLARS FOR AFRICA'S SUSTRAINABLE ENERGY FUTURES

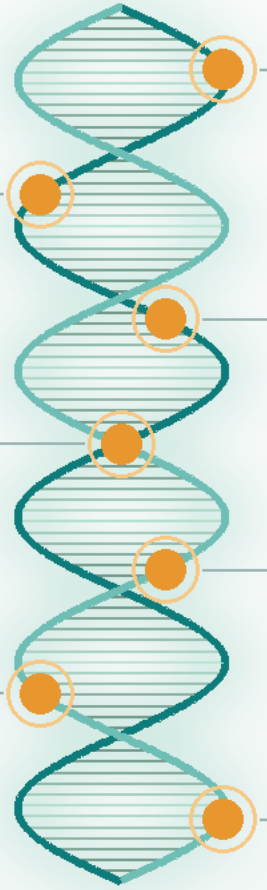


The Governance DNA: Principles in Action

These six pillars are animated by seven core principles that guide every decision.

SEVEN PRINCIPLES

A Just Energy Transition



01 **Systemic Understanding**

Energy Democracy 02

03 **Transformative Policy Innovation**

Collaboration 04

05 **Self-Reliance**

Learning 06

07 **Respect for People & Planet**

Strategic Imperatives: Flipping the Regime

To build the new, we must break the old. These six imperatives are our strategic plan of action.

Strategic Imperatives: 2025–2063

SEVEN PRIORITIES, THREE HORIZONS: 2025–2030 | 2030–2040 | 2040–2063

01 **Systems-aware biophysical grounding**

Map resources, supply chains, and stakeholders; design within real limits.

02 **Resource-constrained transition planning**

Deploy renewables that respect material and environmental limits.

03 **Local innovation and technology sovereignty**

Build African R&D, manufacturing, skills, and finance.

04 **Energy democracy and social equity**

Community ownership, inclusive finance, and gender equity.

05 **Economic paradigm shift**

Decouple growth from exponential resource consumption.

06 **Resilience and anticipatory governance**

Foresight, early warning, and adaptive policy cycles.

07 **Cultural and behavioural transformation**

Sufficiency, stewardship, and universal energy literacy.

How the imperatives unfold across the horizons (1 of 2)

IMPERATIVE	2025–2030	2030–2040	2040–2063
Biophysical grounding	Life-cycle assessments; circular economy and recycling pilots; critical mineral supply chain mapping	Continent-wide circular infrastructure; standardised LCA and mineral certification; community-based governance	Fully circular renewable industrial ecosystems; global leadership in sustainable mining and recycling
Resource-constrained planning	Region-specific deployment scenarios; efficiency and decentralised low-tech renewables; demand-side management	Mainstream constrained scenario planning; decentralised renewables with grid integration at scale	Energy systems within planetary boundaries; community-managed renewables mainstreamed
Technology sovereignty	R&D hubs; open-source platforms; small-scale local manufacturing; skills and contextualised finance	Scale Indigenous manufacturing; African-led IP and technology transfer; open innovation ecosystems	Renewable technology innovation and export leadership; Indigenous knowledge integrated with advanced technology
Energy democracy	Pilot community-owned projects; inclusive financing; gender equity; regional power pools	Community ownership as a core pillar; equitable access to capital and decision-making	Ownership and social equity embedded in all energy infrastructure; universal access and participation

How the imperatives unfold across the horizons (2 of 2)

IMPERATIVE	2025–2030	2030–2040	2040–2063
Economic paradigm shift	Resource-balanced frameworks in plans; public dialogues on decoupling; circular economy pilots	Frameworks in budgets and indicators; progressive energy taxation and consumption limits	Circular and regenerative economic activity as the norm
Anticipatory governance	Capacity for anticipatory governance; early-warning systems; decentralisation and reform	Governance networks; resource-sharing and conflict resolution; adaptive policy cycles	Fully adaptive, resilient governance; integrated, responsive, and inclusive energy markets
Cultural transformation	Education campaigns; civil society and media partnerships; sustainability in curricula	Sufficiency and conservation values normalised; community stewardship; intergenerational justice	Sufficiency, stewardship, and justice mainstreamed; universal energy literacy and prosumer culture

Same direction, different clocks: every imperative advances on all three horizons at once.

The Role of Foresight in the African Union

To effectively guide renewable energy industrialisation, the framework must be flexible and responsive to changing dynamics and shocks, with policies that adapt to evolving technologies, market demands, and climate impacts rather than rigid directives.

Institutionalising strategic foresight: From reactive to Proactive

Policies must flex with shocks: iterative cycles, stress-testing, and rapid adjustment rather than rigid directives.

01

LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT

Leaders actively champion foresight and integrate it into core decision-making.

02

DEDICATED FORESIGHT UNITS

Institutional anchoring and expertise inside the AU and key ministries.

03

CULTURES OF LEARNING

Experimentation is encouraged; decision-makers test and refine new approaches.

04

COORDINATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Cross-sectoral networks and multistakeholder platforms deepen regional collaboration.

Anticipatory capacity turns long-term policy from aspiration into working discipline.

Policy Recommendations and Implementation Pathways

Four policy recommendations directly support AFREC's strategic objectives, promote institutional building, call for embedding community engagement, and underscore the necessity for sovereignty, financing, foresight and anticipatory governance.

01

RENEWABLE ENERGY INDUSTRIALISATION FUND

Catalytic pooled finance to de-risk cross-border renewables



02

MINERALS SOVEREIGNTY & CAPITAL MARKETS

Localised valuation, pan-African mineral exchange



03

ENERGY FORESIGHT HUB

Continental data, scenario planning, anticipatory governance



04

COMMUNITY ENERGY OWNERSHIP

Communities as co-owners of the energy transition



01 AU-AFREC Renewable Energy Industrialisation Fund (REIF)

A catalytic pooled financing mechanism to mobilise and de-risk cross-border renewable investment, foster industrial development, and strengthen energy security through diversified, reliable systems.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS: 1–3 YEARS

The AUC, AFREC, and the regional economic communities establish and operationalise REIF, mobilising blended finance from member states, the AfDB, private investors, and the African diaspora. AFREC leads technical assistance so member states can develop bankable solar, wind, hydro, and green hydrogen projects, with advisory services and investor communication.

MEDIUM TERM: 3–10 YEARS

Regional power pools coordinate cross-border infrastructure integration for grid stability and efficient power trade. REIF scales investment across priority corridors while building institutional capacity for project development and financial management.

EXPECTED OUTCOME **USD 500 million to USD 2 billion in blended capital de-risking regional corridors.**

02 African Minerals Sovereignty and Capital Markets Initiative

Led by the AUC, AFREC, and AMREC-PARC: localise mineral valuation, embed African-grounded ESG standards, and build sovereign, transparent financial platforms, moving from passive supplier to rule-setter and value capturer.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS: 1–3 YEARS

Establish a Continental Digital Minerals Exchange under AMREC-PARC standards and mandate adoption across member states. Launch the feasibility study for a blockchain-enabled, mineral-backed digital currency, issue AMREC-certified green mineral bonds, and build the AMREC-PARC Unit.

MEDIUM TERM: 3–10 YEARS

Scale AMREC-PARC standards continent-wide, operationalise the exchange with full regional integration, pilot the mineral-backed currency in selected trade corridors, and run the AMREC-PARC Observatory for Strategic Foresight for adaptive mineral policy.

EXPECTED OUTCOME

African exchanges capture more of global mineral value; AMREC-PARC becomes a global ESG benchmark.

03 AFREC Energy Foresight Hub

A continent-wide foresight infrastructure for anticipatory governance: real-time data aggregation, long-range scenario planning, climate risk modelling, and capacity-building across member states.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS: 1–3 YEARS

AFREC establishes the Hub on the AEIS platform with real-time data, climate risk modelling, and scenario planning. Training in energy foresight, systems modelling, and policy simulation launches with AUDA-NEPAD Policy Bridge Tank, African universities, and think tanks, alongside data-sharing and interoperability standards including AfCFTA portals.

MEDIUM TERM: 3–10 YEARS

AI-enabled forecasting and geospatial technologies enhance monitoring; energy justice metrics (access, affordability, gender equity) are embedded in planning. The Hub becomes the recognised platform for continental energy intelligence, informing integration, adaptation, and investment.

EXPECTED OUTCOME **From reactive governance to future-oriented energy architecture that de-risks investment.**

04 AFREC Community Energy Ownership Initiative

Positions communities as beneficiaries, co-owners, and co-producers of the transition through equity-sharing mandates, decentralised delivery models, and gender-inclusive capacity building.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS: 1–3 YEARS

Launch by 2026 with a 20% local equity mandate in large-scale renewable projects. Develop a Community Equity Policy Framework with legal mechanisms, financing tools, and equity governance structures, and mobilise catalytic funding to support community buy-ins and de-risk decentralised investment.

MEDIUM TERM: 3–10 YEARS

Regional training hubs open with African technical universities and youth and women's energy networks. A Knowledge Platform documents and scales replicable community-led models, and community ownership is mainstreamed across member states with measurable impacts.

EXPECTED OUTCOME **Electricity access for over 300 million Africans by 2030 through inclusive, decentralised systems.**

The 2025–2030 Green Industrialisation Sprint Plan

The 2030 Target

50 GW
new capacity financed.

300 million
people connected.

1. AU-AFREC REIF

Launch a USD 500M to 2BN blended-finance vehicle to pool resources and de-risk cross-border infrastructure corridors.

2. Minerals Sovereignty

Implement AMREC-PARC standards and launch a Continental Digital Minerals Exchange to ensure Africa sets rules rather than takes prices locally.

3. Foresight Hub

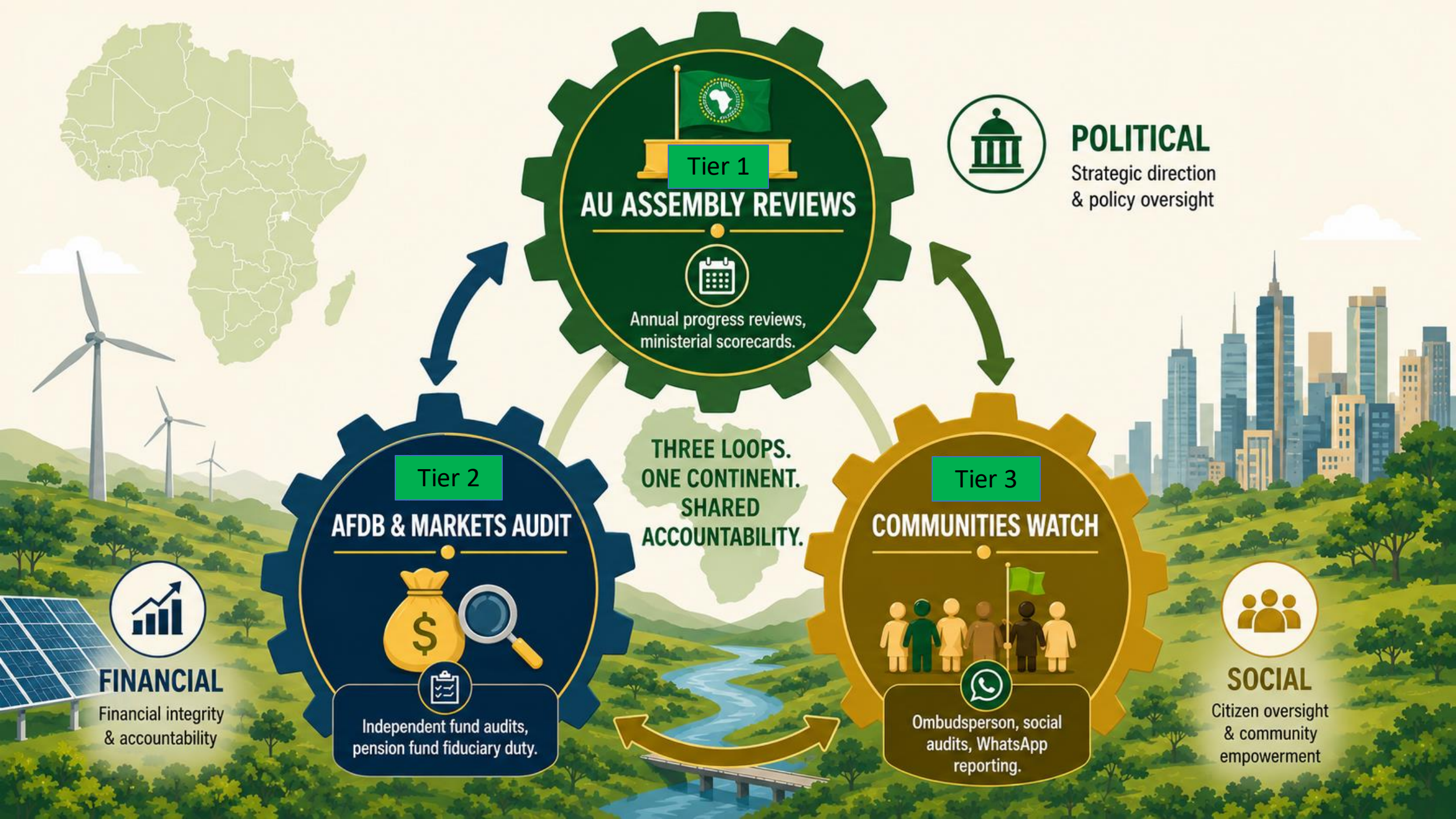
Establish real-time data, climate-risk modelling, and scenario capacity to anticipate shocks (Anticipatory Governance).

4. Community Ownership

Mandate 20% local equity in large-scale projects, transitioning communities from bystanders to co-producers.

Accountability: Flipping the Regime, Not Just Rhetoric

To enable real change, we need accountability at the political, financial, and social levels.


Tier 1
AU ASSEMBLY REVIEWS
Annual progress reviews, ministerial scorecards.
POLITICAL
Strategic direction & policy oversight
Tier 2
AFDB & MARKETS AUDIT
Independent fund audits, pension fund fiduciary duty.
FINANCIAL
Financial integrity & accountability
THREE LOOPS. ONE CONTINENT. SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY.
Tier 3
COMMUNITIES WATCH
Ombudsperson, social audits, WhatsApp reporting.
SOCIAL
Citizen oversight & community empowerment

Key Performance Indicators: Tracking Transformation

We will measure what matters: the fundamental shift of the system, not just megawatts installed.

Key Performance Indicators: Tracking Transformation

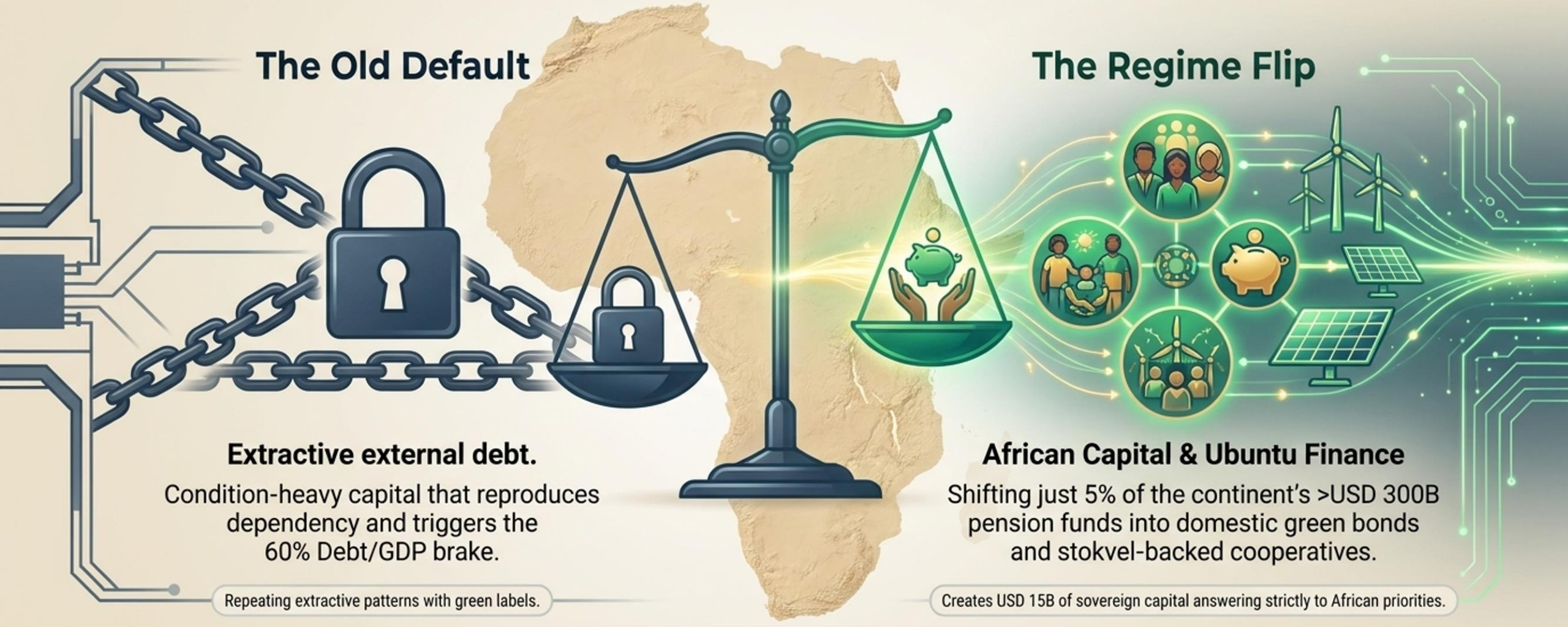
We will measure what matters: the fundamental shift of the system, not just megawatts installed.

INDICATOR
Cooperative-owned capacity
Minerals beneficiated locally
Women-owned kWh assets
Youth employed in RE sector
Grid code adoption (Africa specs)

The Choice is Ours

The choice is between futures of extraction and dependency or that of sovereignty, prosperity, and regeneration.

The Decisive Signal: Unlocking sovereign African capital



The Old Default

Extractive external debt.

Condition-heavy capital that reproduces dependency and triggers the 60% Debt/GDP brake.

Repeating extractive patterns with green labels.

The Regime Flip

African Capital & Ubuntu Finance

Shifting just 5% of the continent's >USD 300B pension funds into domestic green bonds and stokvel-backed cooperatives.

Creates USD 15B of sovereign capital answering strictly to African priorities.

The ultimate indicator of a successful regime flip is not just the megawatts installed, but who owns the infrastructure. True green industrialisation is a civilisational project of sovereignty, prosperity, and regeneration.

THANK YOU

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