

By Ferdinand Ekeoma

Special Adviser to the Governor, Dr. Alex Otti

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In a strategic move to showcase its economic potential, attract investments and strengthen its global business connections, the Abia State Government is gearing up to host the 2026 edition of AfrICANDO, the U.S.–Africa Trade and Investment Conference and Expo from **November 17 to 19, 2026**, at the International Conference Centre, Umuahia.



**Dr. Alex Otti, Governor (left), and
Pastor Caleb Ajagba, Ph.D., Chief
of Staff, Abia State**

The event, which will bring together government officials, business leaders, investors, policymakers, development institutions and other stakeholders from the United States and Africa, is expected to provide Abia with an international platform to present its investment opportunities and position itself as an emerging destination for trade, innovation and industrial development.

AfrICANDO 2026 is being hosted by the Abia State Government through the Abia State Diaspora Commission and co-organised by the Foundation for Democracy in Africa (FDA) and the Abia Global Chamber of Commerce.

The conference, which returns to the African continent, is themed “Deepening U.S.–Africa Commercial Ties in the Era of AfCFTA.” It is designed to strengthen commercial cooperation, promote cross-border trade and investment, and explore opportunities arising from the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

The conference will provide a unique opportunity for Abia State to showcase its economic potential to the international community, establish strategic partnerships and attract investors to its productive sectors.

AfrICANDO 2026 will feature plenary sessions, policy forums, sector-specific workshops, business-to-business matchmaking, exhibitions and the Medal of Glory Awards (MOGA) Gala Dinner. The activities are expected to facilitate meaningful engagement among public and private-sector stakeholders while encouraging partnerships capable of generating sustainable economic benefits.

Key sectors to be featured include agriculture, consumer goods, energy, financial services, healthcare, manufacturing, transportation and logistics, academic science and technology, and artificial intelligence. Participants will explore practical ways to accelerate the implementation of AfCFTA, expand U.S.–Africa trade and investment, improve the export readiness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and promote innovation, manufacturing and the creative industry.

The conference is also expected to provide opportunities for entrepreneurs and business owners to identify new markets, connect with potential investors, gain insights into international trade regulations and establish commercial relationships with counterparts in the United States and other African countries.

SMEs and civil society organisations will have opportunities to build business linkages and partnerships with U.S. companies, thereby contributing to the expansion of trade, investment and cultural relations between both regions.

It is important to add that beyond the conference sessions, the event is expected to create opportunities for investors and business leaders to assess the state's economic environment, engage relevant stakeholders and explore possible areas of collaboration.

The event will also offer sponsorship, advertising and exhibition opportunities for businesses, corporate organisations and development institutions seeking visibility among government officials, investors and industry leaders from Africa and the United States.

With its emphasis on trade facilitation, investment promotion and international partnerships, AfrICANDO 2026 is expected to strengthen Abia State's engagement with the global business community and create opportunities for local enterprises to access wider markets.

The hosting of the conference aligns with the broader objective of positioning Abia as a competitive destination for business, investment and industrial growth, while showcasing the state's capacity to host international engagements.

As preparations gather momentum, the three-day conference is expected to place Umuahia at the Centre of conversations on U.S.–Africa commercial relations and provide a platform for Abia State to demonstrate its economic strengths, connect local businesses with international opportunities and deepen its participation in the expanding African and global marketplace.