Report

Support Mission for EU SMEs at the Japan-Africa Business Forum 2021

29 June – 16 July 2021

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The event was organised by the African Development Bank (AfDB), co-organised by the Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO), the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), in partnership with the African Diplomatic Corps in Tokyo. The EU-Japan Centre participated as a co-organiser for the matchmaking session.
Following the signature of the Partnership on sustainable connectivity and quality infrastructure between the EU and Japan in 2019, and following the publication of substantial data showing a growing trend for EU-Japan business cooperation in emerging markets, the EU-Japan Centre has undertaken new initiatives in this field.

After a successful seminar and the publication of two reports on this topic, the EU-Japan Centre took part for the first time in a matchmaking event during the Third Japan-Africa Business Forum (JABF 2021) with the aim to connect EU SMEs with Japanese companies to discuss joint projects in Africa. The EU-Japan Centre has substantial experience in organising matchmaking events between EU and Japanese companies via the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) and it is now extending its expertise to promote new business opportunities outside the EU and outside Japan. The EU-Japan Centre is currently preparing the creation of a new helpdesk to support and promote EU-Japan joint projects in emerging markets.

Firstly, the Centre conducted webinars and a virtual matchmaking event to connect EU SMEs with Japanese companies. During the event, the Centre provided individual matchmaking support to EU SMEs and facilitated meetings with Japanese companies. The Centre also provided mass promotion and increased visibility of opportunities for EU SMEs regarding EU-Japan business cooperation in Africa.

Next steps include follow-up with the mission participants to connect them with Japanese companies if requested. The Centre will organise or co-organise similar events to foster EU-Japan business cooperation in Africa, Southeast Asia and Latin America (e.g. EU-Africa Business Forum, Asia Smart City Conference). The Centre will also launch a new helpdesk to support the connection between EU SMEs and Japanese companies in emerging markets. Success stories about EU-Japan business cooperation in emerging markets will be promoted by the EU-Japan Centre via various media (e.g. newsletter, social media, website, Eurobiz magazine).
HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EVENT

The JABF brings together government officials and business leaders, mainly from Africa and Japan, to discuss investment, development and business opportunities in the African continent. The theme of the JABF 2021 was “Shaping a New Africa in the Era of COVID-19” and was divided into two parts: webinars and a virtual matchmaking platform.

As a co-organiser for the matchmaking session, the EU-Japan Centre successfully recruited and supported 9 European SMEs and 1 cluster with pre-existing experience with Africa, and looking for Japanese business or technology partners, or buyers and investors, to help grow their business in Africa. The support mission for EU SMEs was fully organised by the EU-Japan Centre. Partners such as EU Trade Promotion Organisations (TPOs) and the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) were involved in the promotion of the call for applications for EU SMEs. Thanks to a personalised support and collaboration with the organisers, the EU-Japan Centre successfully managed to arrange meetings between the mission participants and Japanese companies about possible joint projects in Africa.

Webinars

Six webinars were organised by the JABF organisers on the following topics: “Light up & Power Africa”, “Feed Africa”, “Industrialise Africa”, “Start-up Session”, “Integrate Africa” and “Improve the Quality of Life of the People of Africa”. The mission participants were free to attend the webinars depending on their interest in the topics.

Matchmaking

The virtual matchmaking session was extended to 5 weeks instead of the scheduled 3 weeks and took place on the EventHub platform. The mission participants all had their individual e-booths inside the EU-Japan Centre’s e-pavilion. The Centre set up each company’s e-booth, proofread each profile’s contents in English and translated a catchphrase to Japanese for each profile. Initially, the mission participants only had access to Japanese companies on the matchmaking platform. After a few days, the organisers changed this feature and gave the mission participants access to all participants, including African companies. The EU SMEs supported by the EU-Japan Centre appreciated this change as they were generally not only looking for potential Japanese business partners and investors, but also for local partners in Africa.

The matchmaking was divided into 2 types of matching support:

1) General matchmaking with visible participants
The mission participants could browse the list of participants registered to the platform, check their profiles and send messages as well as meeting requests. The Centre’s staff recommended a few relevant profiles for each mission participants to increase matching opportunities.

2) Targeted matchmaking with invisible participants
The Centre’s staff was in direct contact with the organisers to match the mission participants with Japanese companies that chose not to be visible on the platform (almost half of the participants). Thanks to this collaboration, a targeted matchmaking was done outside EventHub for a few mission participants that generated interest among highly relevant Japanese companies. This targeted matchmaking was done through phone calls, emails and e-meetings.

CONCLUSION

It was the first time that the EU-Japan Centre took part in the matchmaking session of the Japan-Africa Business Forum. Overall, the European SMEs supported gave excellent feedback on the organisation of the mission. The most relevant meetings for them were the ones arranged by the EU-Japan Centre and the JABF’s organiser outside the matchmaking platform with Japanese companies that chose to remain invisible.

The EU-Japan Centre will follow up with the mission participants to see if the contacts made during the event led to further discussions or partnerships. Further assistance in reaching out to Japanese companies can also be provided in the future. The mission participants will also be contacted for future events related to EU-Japan business cooperation in Africa. The EU-Japan Centre will promote success stories and testimonies through various media such as the newsletter, social media, and partners’ publications such as the magazine Eurobiz Japan.

Finally, thanks to a fruitful collaboration during the matchmaking session, the EU-Japan Centre solidified its ties with partners such as the African Development Bank.
## Annex 1: Programme of the Japan-Africa Business Forum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>EVENT</th>
<th>VIRTUAL MATCHMAKING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jun. 29 Tue</td>
<td>16:30-19:00 (JST)</td>
<td>Opening Session &amp; Session 1: Light Up &amp; Power Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Day 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jun. 30 Wed</td>
<td>17:00-19:00 (JST)</td>
<td>Session 2: Feed Africa</td>
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<td><strong>Day 3</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jul. 1 Thu</td>
<td>17:00-19:00 (JST)</td>
<td>Session 3: Industrialise Africa</td>
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<td><strong>Day 4</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jul. 6 Tue</td>
<td>17:00-18:30 (JST)</td>
<td>Africa Innovates: Embracing the Power of Start-ups</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Day 5</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jul. 7 Wed</td>
<td>17:00-19:00 (JST)</td>
<td>Session 5: Integrate Africa</td>
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<td><strong>Day 6</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jul. 8 Thu</td>
<td>17:00-19:10 (JST)</td>
<td>Session 6: Improve the Quality of Life for the People of Africa &amp; Closing Session</td>
<td>Virtual Matchmaking platform open to participants from 29 June to 31 July 2021</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Annex 2: Promotion of the involvement of the EU-Japan Centre during the JABF 2021

The EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation was fully in charge of the recruitment and support of relevant EU SMEs to participate in the matchmaking with Japanese companies during the Japan-Africa Business Forum. A dedicated webpage was created on the EU-Japan Centre's website to promote the opportunity to EU SMEs and recruit participants. The webpage is available here: [https://www.eu-japan.eu/events/b2b-matchmaking-eu-smes-third-japan-africa-business-forum](https://www.eu-japan.eu/events/b2b-matchmaking-eu-smes-third-japan-africa-business-forum)
The official website of the JABF 2021 displayed the European SMEs supported by the EU-Japan Centre during the matchmaking, in both English and Japanese languages.
The official website of the JABF 2021 showed the EU-Japan Centre as a partner for the business matching part of the event.

6. Join the online meeting on the agreed date and time.

Organizer Co-Organizer Partner

(JABF) The Third Japan-Africa Business Forum Secretariat
Mail:cl-jabf[at]c-linkage.co.jp
Annex 3: EU-Japan Centre’s e-pavilion

The Centre’s e-pavilion displayed the following elements:

- a description of its services in both English and Japanese languages,
- access to the mission participants’ profiles,
- a few pictures taken during previous events,
- a video presentation of the EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation,
- a leaflet about the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) in Japanese language,
- a leaflet presenting all participants’ profiles in Japanese language,
- a list of case studies of EU-Japan business cooperation in Africa.
Annex 4: Leaflet created by the EU-Japan Centre presenting the mission participants in English and Japanese
Annex 5: EU participants’ feedback (anonymous)

Six participants out of ten provided feedback. Some extracts are provided below.

**Company A:**
“The event was well organised and managed, with great support from the EU-Japan Centre staff. The EU-Japan Centre supported us in a very proactive, clear and efficient way for the entire duration of the event. Very well done! Our biggest achievement is the opportunity to discover and interact with companies that are difficult to reach with other traditional business channels. We had the opportunity to better understand the different needs/situations of Africa and Japan, from both a business and cultural point of view. I think that Japanese companies already present in Africa represent for us a good chance to spread our technology in the country: there are some activities for which it is preferable to have a local partner. In particular, Japanese construction companies seem to be promising partners for a possible cooperation on our technology.”

**Company D:**
“I was very pleased with the organisation of this event. The online platform was very easy to understand and use. The support provided by the team was complete and to the point: fast and precise answers! I think that the meeting arrangement with local organisations is the most valuable part. Particularly considering the way business is done in Japan, a third party that can ease the initial contact is very much appreciated! The biggest lesson for me is on the cultural approach to be used in Japan. I would also mention that a few of the webinars (particularly on solar off-grid system in Africa) were very interesting for our organisation!”

**Company F:**
What is your biggest achievement during this event? “Finding a potential Japanese cooperation partner in Africa.”
What was the most valuable component of the mission? “Meeting arrangement, because it is very difficult to do it from Europe.”

Feedback on various mission components (5 = best, 1 = lowest rating)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Introductory e-meeting before the start of the event</th>
<th>Communication with the EU-Japan Centre staff during the event</th>
<th>Support provided by the EU-Japan Centre staff during the event</th>
<th>Webinars</th>
<th>User-friendliness of the EventHub platform</th>
<th>Matchmaking / Meetings</th>
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