

Corporate and  
Investment Banking

Your  
story  
matters



# Building payment solutions that put people first.

Key insights from Sibos 2025  
and beyond

That's how we are invested  
in your story.

[cib.absa.africa](https://cib.absa.africa)

Sibos  
Frankfurt





# Overview

Cross-border payment mechanisms are central to Africa's regional integration agenda. At Absa, we see them as the foundation for deeper trade, investment, and financial inclusion. Organised and facilitated by SWIFT, Sibos convenes thousands of leaders from across the global financial ecosystem each year. For Africa, this dialogue is vital: it shapes the standards and platforms that will determine how seamlessly the continent connects with the world's financial flows.

# Foreword

"Sibos 2025 takes place at a pivotal moment for global finance. Post-trade infrastructure is undergoing major transformation through shorter settlement cycles and digital asset integration. Regulatory reform, including the migration to ISO 20022, is setting new standards, while AI, digital currencies, and emerging technologies are testing the limits of interoperability and trust.

For Africa, these shifts carry real consequence. A fit-for-purpose payments ecosystem determines how effectively the continent's economies transact with one another, how accessible financial services become for underbanked communities, and how reliably investors can commit long-term capital. Progress on this front underpins the success of regional trade agreements like the African Continental Free Trade Area and unlocks the scale needed to attract global partners into African markets.

The theme for Sibos 2025, 'The Next Frontiers of Global Finance', reinforces why Africa's perspective matters. The continent represents one of the largest growth opportunities for payments modernisation globally, and its integration journey is a proving ground for how financial innovation can expand inclusion while driving investment-led development. At Absa, we see Africa's voice at Sibos as essential in shaping a frontier that is not only global in scale, but equitable in design."

– **Michael von Fintel**

Head, Financial Institutions,  
Absa CIB

## Proud sponsor of Sibos 2025.

- African Banks Understand Africa Better – And That Matters for the Future of Payments
- In the Race for Faster Cross-Border Payments, Speed Is Not the Only Issue
- The role of custody services in building investor confidence across Africa
- Interoperability as the Bridge: Africa's SMEs Can Thrive in a New Era of Cross Border Trade



# African Banks Understand Africa Better – And That Matters for the Future of Payments

*“African banks are now central to shaping innovative solutions that will determine the continent’s financial future.”*

## Key insights:

- The challenge today is more about integration than inclusion – enabling cross-border and higher-value flows that underpin trade, infrastructure and investment. Africa cannot depend on frameworks designed elsewhere.
- An aspect requiring concerted focus is the documentation standards applied across African markets. To accelerate development and attract broader pools of liquidity, local regulators may need to embrace the use of master agreements.
- In deals where local issuing banks lack the credit standing or international relationships to support cross-border trade, regional intermediaries are stepping in. This is slowly developing into a payment system grounded in the realities of how African economies transact.
- Auction-based allocation and flexible exchange rate regimes are being deployed to improve market depth, but for many banks, meeting hard-currency payment obligations remains unpredictable, especially for import-linked trade.
- The strength of African banks comes not from being shielded from risk, but from knowing how to manage it through local knowledge, proximity and experience. The future of payment infrastructure should build on that foundation.



**Hlumelo Dwesini**

Head, Financial Institutions  
(Africa, Non-Presence),  
Absa CIB



**Reggie Mlangeni**

Head, Global Markets Sales & Structuring,  
Absa CIB



# In the Race for Faster Cross-Border Payments, Speed Is Not the Only Issue

*"The future of cross-border payments won't be defined by how quickly money moves, but by how well the system holds up under pressure."*

## Key insights:

- International payments are the connective tissue of the global economy – enabling trade, investment and capital mobility across borders. Traditional settlement systems remain costly and complex, relying on long chains of intermediaries that add friction and obscure efficiency gains.
- ISO 20022 is more than a technical upgrade; as a new language for money, it enables richer, structured data that supports smarter, more transparent transactions.
- Fragmentation in Africa's payment systems reflects incompatible currencies and regulatory regimes, underscoring the need for aligned protocols and settlement rules.
- Digitisation and AI have brought efficiency gains, but they've also expanded the attack surface for fraud and cyber threats. Speed without security creates new vulnerabilities: real-time settlement must be matched by interoperable cybersecurity frameworks and anomaly detection to prevent accelerated fraud and loss.
- Compliance functions such as AML, KYC and sanctions screening should be treated as core infrastructure, embedded directly into transaction flows to create scale, resilience and regulatory certainty.
- For African markets, the challenge is clear: how to translate global agendas into regionally coherent systems that can handle rising transaction volumes without sacrificing regulatory integrity or market stability.



## Ellen Kumwenda-Mtine

Head of Sales Cash Management,  
Transactional Banking,  
Absa CIB



# The Role of Custody Services in Building Investor Confidence Across Africa

*"The role of custodians is no longer confined to safeguarding assets but has become foundational in enabling seamless, more efficient investment flows, fostering regional integration, and developing African capital markets."*

## Key insights:

- Investor trust across the continent is growing, with many large-scale investors seeing strong bond returns amid structural reforms, triggering a growing interest in the intra-regional approach.
- Our role in the custodian sector has extended so far beyond merely safeguarding assets, especially in the space of a segregated portfolio, everything from trade settlement to asset safekeeping, regulatory compliance to corporate actions management.
- As investor confidence continues to return to African markets, it is clear the continent is entering a pivotal phase of transformation – one that demands strategic, well-structured and collaborative approaches, from government, the private sector and investors themselves.
- Transformed custodian services are critical to building renewed investor confidence in African markets by offering secure, transparent and efficient investment infrastructure and advisory capabilities.
- It's essential that we can provide a client the services needed from the mere consideration of an investment to executing a trade across a given market, to settling the cash in the securities, while ensuring all reporting requirements are met – regardless of the region.



**Sabir Ballim**

Group Head, Investor Services,  
Absa CIB



# Interoperability as the Bridge: Africa's SMEs Can Thrive in a New Era of Cross Border Trade

*"Build the bridge of interoperability, and the new modern generation of scaled, intra-regional traders will become the drivers of the continent's growth."*

## Key insights:

- Africa's widening trade finance gap can be linked to outdated global regulations, systemic de-risking and long-standing institutional biases that marginalise African markets. And while large corporates can navigate this heightened complexity, many African SMEs are left struggling with paper-based processes, siloed payment systems and the ongoing dominance of the US dollar.
- Interoperability standards are the difference between exclusion and inclusion, and the solid basis for a pan-African marketplace. And more importantly, they are a powerful tool to level the playing field for small businesses.
- Through sharper risk assessments, instant reconciliation and trade terms verification at speed, we can spend more time positioning African traders on the global stage – helping them to speak the same language.
- Banks are important role players in the shift towards better payment systems and investment in interoperability – systems and products working together to improve capabilities across the board.
- Africa needs legal recognition of digital documents, alignment on standards and investment in digital infrastructure. If we can secure the standards and capabilities, tokenisation could do for trade what mobile money did for payments.



## Michelle Knowles

Managing Executive for Trade  
and Working Capital  
Absa CIB

That's how we are  
invested in your story.

Your  
story  
matters

