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Can Africa turn its resource wealth into prosperity?

Professor Amin Karimu Photo: Supplied

What stands between Africa's extraordinary resource wealth and broad-based prosperity? Drawing on his research, University of Cape Town (UCT) Professor Amin Karimu's inaugural lecture will examine how natural resources, institutions, energy and finance interact to shape Africa's development, and consider how renewable energy, climate and green finance, and private investment can support a more sustainable and inclusive development path.

Professor Karimu will deliver his inaugural lecture, "Can Africa turn its wealth into prosperity?" on Thursday, 1 October 2026 at 17:00 SAST in the Mafeje Room, Bremner Building, lower campus.

Africa possesses extraordinary natural and human resources – including minerals, oil and gas, fertile land, renewable-energy potential and rich biodiversity. Yet these resources have not consistently translated into improved living standards for many people across the continent.

"I chose the topic because it is a question that has stayed throughout my academic career and guided my research, engagement with policy makers and capacity building initiatives," said Karimu, a professor of economics at UCT. He is also affiliated with the Environmental Policy Research Unit (EPRU) in the School of Economics.

"Why does a continent with so much wealth and potential still struggle to translate these into better lives for its people? Over the years, my research has explored different sides of this question, from energy and natural resources to institutions, finance, firm and household welfare, and more recently, climate and green finance."

Over the years, Karimu has realised that these different sides of the question are not separate research interests, but different pieces of the same puzzle. "Africa is endowed with abundant of natural resources, including a vast renewable energy potential and a young talented population. But having these resources is not enough on their own to promote sustainable development and shared prosperity for the people. What matters is how we use these resources to create opportunities, provide productive jobs and support lasting improvements in the lives of the people," he said.

Karimu has worked with international and development organisations to strengthen the link between academic research and practical policy challenges. He also plays an active role in building research networks across Africa. Within the Environment for Development initiative, he coordinates the Natural Capital Collaborative, hosted at EPRU, which brings together researchers working on water, biodiversity, sustainable agriculture and forestry. More recently, his research has focused on financing Africa's green transition and the opportunities it presents for sustainable development.

- Members of the media wishing to attend the lecture are requested to RSVP via email.

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