



The Blueprint for a Regenerative Fashion Future

African Fashion Coalition

Declaration

Before circularity became language, it was practice.

Before sustainability became strategy, it was survival.

Before fashion became industry, it was community.

This is our starting point. And Africa already has the answer.

We are the farmers, dyers, weavers, artisans, tailors, makers, designers, creatives and catalysts who have run circular systems for generations, long before the world had a word for any of it. We have watched our own practice renamed as innovation and sold back to us at a markup. We are done watching.

Africa sells the world roughly 15 billion dollars of raw textiles each year and buys back more than 23 billion in finished clothing and footwear.¹ We grow it, and someone else sews it, names it, prices it, and sells it home to us. The resources are ours. The value is theirs. We are celebrated as a source of inspiration and shut out of the industry we inspire. That is not a gap in talent. It is a gap in ownership, and it was built that way on purpose.

The future the industry is scrambling toward already lives here, in our markets, our hands, our history. What is missing was never our vision. It is the world's willingness to learn from it. The question is no longer whether change is necessary. The question is who will lead it.

Africa is ready.

What We Stand For

¹UNESCO, *The Fashion Sector in Africa: Trends, Challenges and Opportunities for Growth* (2023). Africa exports textiles worth about USD 15.5 billion a year and imports textiles, clothing and footwear worth about USD 23.1 billion a year. unesco.org



Craftsmanship is infrastructure.

Culture is intellectual property.

Circularity is not a trend but lived tradition.

Economic growth must create shared prosperity.

Fashion must operate within planetary boundaries.

Communities should participate in the value they help create.

Africa has the right and responsibility to shape the future of global fashion.

What We Reject

We reject the role written for us - suppliers of raw material, owner of nothing.

We reject the idea that our heritage is a resource to mine and our culture a pattern to lift, with no name credited and no one paid.

We reject a trade that ships the world's overproduction to our shores under the language of donation, and then leaves us to deal with the injustice that is waste colonialism.

We reject being asked to absorb the cost of consumption we did not drive and do not profit from.

We reject the polite fiction that innovation is born in studios and laboratories, while the circular systems we have practiced for generations are filed away as the past.

We reject summits, frameworks and pledges that study us, quote us, photograph us, and changes nothing.

We reject the place the industry keeps for us, a permanent seat at the edge of a table we helped build.

We reject the idea of designing systems that extract value from us then claim ownership over what was ours.

**Manifesto Pillars:**

These are the foundations we build on. Not aspirations to grow into, but ground we already stand on.

Pillar 1: Fashion as Cultural Heritage and Living Knowledge

Pillar 2: Circularity as Foundation, Not Trend

Pillar 3: Community-Led Creation and Inclusive Prosperity

Pillar 4: Cultural Sustainability and Intellectual Property Protection Principle

Pillar 5: Waste Justice and Global Accountability

Pillar 6: Local Production and Economic Sovereignty

Pillar 7: Climate-Responsive and Regenerative Innovation

Pillar 8: Market Access and Platform Power

Pillar 9: Infrastructure And Systems

Pillar 10: Conscious Consumption and Behavioural Change

What We Want

For too long, Africa has been discussed in the language of potential and the time for potential has passed. We hold the creativity, knowledge, entrepreneurial energy, cultural wealth, craft traditions and the circular systems the future of fashion is reaching for. What has been missing was never vision. It's investment, infrastructure, ownership, and an equitable share of the value created from African ideas, materials, labour and culture.

So what we want is ownership and industry. Power over the value of our ideas, our materials and our craftsmanship.

If there is one place to begin, it is here. Keep the value from leaving. The craft, the circularity, the climate work and the culture all depend on Africa building and owning the industry that turns its materials into finished goods. When we commit to protecting and nurturing that together, the rest becomes possible.



United, and in the spirit of Ubuntu this is a call:

To governments. Stop exporting our natural resources in its raw state and importing it back as finished garments. Build the policy and the financing that keeps processing, manufacturing and brand value on the continent. Reward the people who make, not only the people who ship.

To investors. Fund the systems, not the moment - infrastructure, education, capacity building, technology, logistics, intelligence and craft enterprises that outlasts collections and fashion weeks. We need patient capital.

To brands. Attribution is not optional and inspiration is not a licence. If you build on African design, name the source, share the value, and bring the community into equitable ownership.

To manufacturers and retailers. Own what you make until the end of its life. Pay to repair and recover the clothing you send here, through the kind of producer levy that traders in Accra have already put on the table.² – extended producer liability. Stop calling your waste our problem.

To cultural institutions and media. Stop covering us as a story about the future. We are writing it. Credit African voices as authors, not subjects.

To African designers, makers and leaders. Claim it. our knowledge, our materials, our markets, our future. Work together, not in silos. Let us build together. The world is looking for a model of regeneration. We are not waiting to be invited into that conversation. We are already leading it.

This manifesto recognises Africa's opportunity to lead the global transition towards responsible fashion. By leveraging the continent's creativity, entrepreneurial talent, and traditions of circularity, Africa can redefine fashion systems to be regenerative, equitable, and rooted in human dignity. Rather than replicating extractive industrial pathways, this manifesto calls for a distinctly African fashion future that restores ecosystems, empowers communities, and positions fashion as a driver of planetary and social regeneration.

²The Borgen Project, "The Impact of Textile Waste in Ghana" (2023). Kantamanto traders submitted a proposal to the European Environment Bureau calling on clothing producers to pay a per-item fee toward managing textile waste. borgenproject.org

LAGOS
FASHION
WEEK



THE
**EARTHS
HOT
PRIZE**

The question was never whether Africa belongs in the future of fashion. The question is whether the future of fashion is ready to learn from Africa. It will be built with us, by us and for us.