



WORLD LEADERS SOCIETY · 2026 EDITION

THE

WLS 100

The 100 leaders reshaping the 21st century

100

GLOBAL LEADERS

8

CATEGORIES

44

COUNTRIES

8

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25 Nominations, credits and legal notice

The 100 leaders reshaping the 21st century

Global leadership is undergoing a profound transformation. In the face of the 21st century's great fractures (climate, democracies under strain, the AI revolution, persistent inequality), a new generation of leaders is emerging, determined to reconcile economic performance, societal responsibility and innovation. The WLS 100, in its inaugural 2026 edition, spotlights 100 women and men whose decisions, influence and commitments are shaping the contours of a more just and ambitious world.

Established giants stand alongside rising figures. Our selection covers CEOs who have transformed their industries, heads of state redefining governance, and social entrepreneurs unlocking access to healthcare, education and capital for millions. Among the profiles tracked by our editorial team: Jensen Huang (NVIDIA), whose vision lifted his company to the world's largest market capitalization on the back of AI; Bernard Arnault (LVMH), architect of modern luxury; Sam Altman (OpenAI) and Dario Amodei (Anthropic), whose models are reshaping the relationship between humans and machines.

But the WLS 100 is not a wealth ranking. Alongside economic decision-makers, Muhammad Yunus, Nobel Peace laureate and inventor of micro-credit, now leads Bangladesh's interim govern-

ment; Christiana Figueres continues to shape climate diplomacy after architecting the Paris Agreement; Malala Yousafzai carries on her fight for girls' education; Paul Kagame and William Ruto are steering their countries, Rwanda and Kenya, toward a green and digital economy.

Our 2026 selection emphasizes geographic and sectoral diversity, across eight categories spanning six continents. Alongside established figures, new voices tracked by our editorial team: Vanessa Nakate, Ugandan climate activist; Kate Kallot, deploying satellite AI for African farmers through Amini; Léon Marchand, hero of the Paris 2024 Olympics.

The WLS 100 is built on a rigorous methodology. Applications are evaluated by an independent committee against four criteria: measurable impact, the ability to embody responsible leadership, international reach, and societal commitment. No fee is charged to apply or nominate. Self-nominations are accepted. The goal is not to celebrate wealth or fame, but to recognize those who, through the rigor of their decisions and the depth of their commitment, are paving a path for the generations ahead.

To explore the full list, browse profiles and review the detailed criteria, discover the 100 profiles below. Nominations for the 2027 edition are now open.

How the WLS 100 is built

Profiles are evaluated by an independent committee of five to seven members from academia, international institutions and civil society. No fee or sponsorship is accepted for inclusion. Self-nominations are accepted and assessed against the same criteria. All information comes from public sources; the individuals featured are not members or partners of the association and were not contacted regarding their selection.

Four criteria

MEASURABLE IMPACT

Quantifiable outcomes attributable to the leader's decisions.

RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP

Decisions weighed against societal and environmental responsibility.

INTERNATIONAL REACH

Influence that extends beyond the leader's home country or sector.

SOCIETAL COMMITMENT

Documented engagement in causes beyond immediate self-interest.

Eight categories

●	Business & Entrepreneurship	<i>Leaders redefining the rules of the global economy, from luxury to AI, telecoms to inclusive finance.</i>	13 PROFILES
●	Public Service & Governance	<i>Heads of state and public decision-makers shaping the century's policies: democracy, climate, digital sovereignty.</i>	13 PROFILES
●	Social Impact & NGOs	<i>Social entrepreneurs, humanitarians and activists transforming the lives of millions every day.</i>	13 PROFILES
●	Technology & Innovation	<i>The architects of the digital and AI revolutions: Silicon Valley, Europe, Asia, Africa.</i>	13 PROFILES
●	Sustainability & Climate	<i>Those driving the global ecological transition, from climate finance to the voice of indigenous peoples.</i>	12 PROFILES
●	Sport & Leadership	<i>Athletes who have become entrepreneurs, activists and moral figures of their era.</i>	12 PROFILES
●	Culture, Media & Arts	<i>Writers, filmmakers, artists and creators shaping the global cultural narrative.</i>	12 PROFILES
●	Finance & Investment	<i>The architects of global finance: central banks, hedge funds, development banks, crypto.</i>	12 PROFILES

Business & Entrepreneurship

Leaders redefining the rules of the global economy, from luxury to AI, telecoms to inclusive finance.



Jensen Huang

CEO & Co-founder · NVIDIA

UNITED STATES · NORTH AMERICA

Born in Taiwan and raised in the United States, Jensen Huang co-founded NVIDIA in 1993 to reinvent graphics computing. Three decades on, the company he still leads supplies the processors behind much of the world's artificial intelligence, from hyperscale data centers to research labs. Under his direction, NVIDIA has become one of the most valuable companies on earth, and Huang, instantly recognizable in his leather jacket, has emerged as one of the most closely followed executives in technology, courted by governments and industry from Silicon Valley to Taipei.

WHY THIS SELECTION *Few executives have a more measurable impact on the global economy: NVIDIA's chips now shape the trajectory of artificial intelligence on every continent.*



Bernard Arnault

Chairman & CEO · LVMH

FRANCE · EUROPE

Trained as an engineer at École polytechnique, Bernard Arnault took over his family's construction business before turning to luxury in the mid-1980s. By bringing together Louis Vuitton, Dior, Moët Hennessy and dozens of other houses, he built LVMH into the world's largest luxury group, present on every continent with more than 200,000 employees. His model, which pairs creative autonomy for each house with craftsmanship and long-term investment, helped cement Paris as the capital of global luxury. A leading patron of the arts, he founded the Fondation Louis Vuitton and backed the restoration of Notre-Dame.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He embodies long-term industrial leadership, projecting European craftsmanship worldwide while investing in culture and heritage.*



Mukesh Ambani

Chairman · Reliance Industries

INDIA · ASIA

Heir to the group founded by his father Dhirubhai, Mukesh Ambani has built Reliance Industries into India's largest private conglomerate, spanning refining, petrochemicals, retail and telecommunications. The 2016 launch of Jio reshaped the Indian market, bringing mobile internet to hundreds of millions of people at some of the lowest prices in the world and attracting investors such as Google and Meta. He is now steering the group toward renewable energy and green hydrogen, positioning Reliance at the center of India's digital and industrial transformation.

WHY THIS SELECTION *His impact is measured at the scale of a nation of more than a billion people: the mass digital access he made possible has transformed India's economy.*



Ana Botín

Executive Chair · Banco Santander

SPAIN · EUROPE

The fourth generation of a banking dynasty, Ana Botín became executive chair of Banco Santander in 2014, succeeding her father Emilio. Educated in the United States and trained at JPMorgan before running Santander UK, she leads one of Europe's largest banks, serving more than 150 million customers across Spain, the United Kingdom, Latin America and the United States. She has driven the group's digital transformation and championed responsible finance, with a strong focus on financial inclusion and on higher education through the bank's long-running university programs.

WHY THIS SELECTION *She combines responsible leadership with global reach, placing financial inclusion and education at the heart of a worldwide bank's strategy.*



Aliko Dangote

CEO & Founder · Dangote Group

NIGERIA · AFRICA

Starting with a trading business in cement and sugar in Kano in the late 1970s, Aliko Dangote built the largest industrial conglomerate in West Africa. Dangote Group is the continent's leading cement producer,

with plants in about ten countries, and has expanded into sugar, salt and food processing. His refinery outside Lagos, among the largest in the world, aims to end Nigeria's reliance on imported fuel. Regularly ranked as Africa's wealthiest person, he also directs his foundation toward health, nutrition and education across the continent.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He shows that large-scale industrialization can be built on the African continent, with measurable impact on jobs, infrastructure and energy sovereignty.*



Melanie Perkins

CEO & Co-founder · Canva

AUSTRALIA · OCEANIA

As a student in Perth, Melanie Perkins noticed how hard her classmates found professional design software and set out to build something anyone could use. After an early venture in school year-

books, she co-founded Canva in 2013 with Cliff Obrecht and Cameron Adams. The platform, which lets users create presentations, graphics and documents in minutes, now serves more than 150 million people every month and ranks among Australia's most successful technology companies. The co-founders have pledged to give away the vast majority of their wealth.

WHY THIS SELECTION *She proves that a technology company can pair global growth with an exemplary workplace culture and a leading philanthropic commitment.*



Tope Awotona

CEO & Founder · Calendly

NIGERIA · NORTH AMERICA

Born in Lagos and raised partly in the United States, Tope Awotona began his career in software sales before turning to entrepreneurship. After several ventures that failed to take off, he poured his savings into Calendly, founded in Atlanta in 2013. The scheduling tool became a daily fixture for millions of professionals and grew into a company valued at several billion dollars while turning profitable early on. His path from immigrant salesman to founder of a global software company has made him one of the most cited examples of self-made success in American technology.

WHY THIS SELECTION *His journey exemplifies entrepreneurial leadership and international success built without networks or seed capital, an inspiration to a generation of founders.*



Strive Masiyiwa

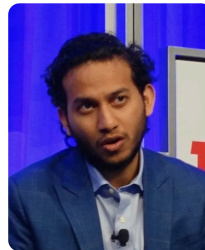
Founder · Econet / Cassava

ZIMBABWE · AFRICA

Strive Masiyiwa founded Econet Wireless in Zimbabwe in the late 1990s and went on to build one of Africa's leading telecommunications and technology groups, operating across dozens of countries.

Based in London, he later created Cassava Technologies, which develops fiber networks, data centers and cloud services for the continent. During the Covid-19 pandemic he served as an African Union special envoy on vaccine access. With his wife Tsitsi, he funds the education of tens of thousands of young Africans through the Higherlife Foundation, and he has become one of the continent's most widely followed business voices.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He embodies an African capitalism focused on infrastructure and education, with an influence that reaches well beyond business.*



Ritesh Agarwal

CEO & Founder · OYO Rooms

INDIA · ASIA

Raised in the state of Odisha, Ritesh Agarwal dropped out of college and founded OYO in 2013 at the age of 19, betting that technology could bring consistent standards to India's fragmented

budget hotels. A recipient of the Thiel Fellowship, he built the start-up into one of the world's largest hospitality chains, present in dozens of countries across Asia, Europe and the United States, with backing from investors including SoftBank. One of the youngest founders to lead a company valued in the billions, he has become a prominent face of India's new generation of entrepreneurs.

WHY THIS SELECTION *His early rise and international expansion illustrate how Indian entrepreneurship can create global players from local needs.*



Luiza H. Trajano

Chair · Magazine Luiza

BRAZIL · SOUTH AMERICA

Luiza Helena Trajano started out as a teenager in her family's store in Franca, in the state of São Paulo, and turned Magazine Luiza from a small provincial retailer into one of Brazil's largest retail groups, with more than a thousand stores and a leading e-commerce platform. Known for her hands-on management and strong company culture, she stepped back from day-to-day leadership to chair the board of a company now run by her son Frederico. She founded Mulheres do Brasil, a movement of more than a hundred thousand women, and is one of the most respected business voices in Latin America.

WHY THIS SELECTION *Beyond her commercial success, she has made social engagement, for women and diversity, a natural extension of her leadership.*



Daniel Ek

CEO & Co-founder · Spotify

SWEDEN · EUROPE

A self-taught programmer from the suburbs of Stockholm, Daniel Ek co-founded Spotify in 2006 with Martin Lorentzon to offer a legal alternative to music piracy. Launched in 2008, the streaming service reshaped the economics of recorded music and now reaches more than 600 million users in over 180 markets, including a large base of paying subscribers. Listed in New York since 2018, the company has expanded into podcasts and audiobooks. Through his investment firm Prima Materia, Ek also backs European deep-technology ventures in fields such as health and defense.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He demonstrates that a European company can hold its own against American giants and durably transform a global cultural industry.*



Lubna Olayan

Chair · Olayan Financing

SAUDI ARABIA · MIDDLE EAST

Educated at Cornell and Indiana University, Lubna Olayan spent more than three decades running Olayan Financing Company, the Saudi arm of the group founded by her father Suliman Olayan, before becoming its chair. She was one of the first women to sit on the board of a listed Saudi company and the first to chair a Saudi bank, the Saudi British Bank. A director of several international corporations, she is regularly named among the most influential women in global business and has opened doors for a new generation of women executives across the Middle East.

WHY THIS SELECTION *A pioneer in the fullest sense, she has lastingly expanded the role of women in the Gulf economy while leading a group of international scope.*



Tony Elumelu

Chairman · Heirs Holdings / UBA

NIGERIA · AFRICA

A banker by training, Tony Elumelu first made his name by turning around a small Nigerian bank and merging it with United Bank for Africa, which he transformed into a pan-African group operating in around twenty countries, with offices in London, Paris, New York and Dubai. Through Heirs Holdings he invests in energy, health-care and financial services. As the leading advocate of Africapitalism, he argues that the private sector must drive the continent's development. His foundation has trained and funded more than 15,000 young African entrepreneurs from every country on the continent, one of the largest programs of its kind worldwide.

WHY THIS SELECTION *His social commitment is measured in thousands of businesses created: he has turned entrepreneurial philanthropy into a concrete lever of development across the continent.*

Public Service & Governance

*Heads of state and public decision-makers
shaping the century's policies: democracy,
climate, digital sovereignty.*



Claudia Sheinbaum

President · Mexico

MEXICO · NORTH AMERICA

A physicist by training with a doctorate in energy engineering, Claudia Sheinbaum spent years in scientific research, including work with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, before entering public life. She served as environment secretary and later as head of government of Mexico City, and in 2024 was elected president of Mexico, the first woman to hold the office in the country's history. Leading Latin America's second-largest economy and a key trading partner of the United States, she has focused on energy transition, infrastructure and social programs, while establishing herself as a prominent voice on the international stage.

WHY THIS SELECTION *A scientist who rose to the highest office, she embodies leadership grounded in expertise, with a reach that extends beyond Mexico and inspires women in politics across Latin America.*



Friedrich Merz

Chancellor · Germany

GERMANY · EUROPE

A lawyer from the Sauerland region, Friedrich Merz served in the European Parliament and then in the Bundestag from the 1990s, where he became one of the CDU's leading voices on economic policy. After more than a decade in the private sector, including as chairman of the supervisory board of BlackRock Germany, he returned to politics, took over his party in 2022 and led the conservatives to victory in the 2025 federal election. As chancellor, he leads Europe's largest economy at a time of pressing questions on competitiveness, defense and European cohesion, and has become a central interlocutor for the continent's partners.

WHY THIS SELECTION *Leading Europe's largest economy, he carries a responsibility whose impact is felt across the continent at a decisive moment for Europe.*



Paul Kagame

President · Rwanda

RWANDA · AFRICA

Paul Kagame came to power in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide, first as vice president and, from 2000, as president, and has overseen Rwanda's reconstruction. Over two decades the country has recorded some of the continent's most sustained growth, built a public administration known for its firm stance against corruption, and elected a parliament with one of the highest shares of women in the world. Kigali has become a hub for conferences, innovation and technology, drawing investors and international institutions. A former chair of the African Union, he led the organization's institutional reform and remains an influential voice on the continent's development.

WHY THIS SELECTION *Rwanda's turnaround within a generation, measurable in development indicators, has made it a reference studied well beyond Africa.*



Keir Starmer

Prime Minister · United Kingdom

UNITED KINGDOM · EUROPE

A human rights barrister who went on to serve as Director of Public Prosecutions for England and Wales, Keir Starmer entered Parliament in 2015. Elected leader of the Labour Party in 2020, he brought it back to power in July 2024 with a large majority after fourteen years in opposition. As prime minister of the United Kingdom, he has placed economic growth, the renewal of public services and institutional stability at the center of his agenda, while seeking closer ties with the European Union and reaffirming the country's role within NATO and on the international stage.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He leads one of the world's major diplomatic and economic powers, with a direct bearing on European and transatlantic balances.*



Jacinda Ardern

Former PM · New Zealand

NEW ZEALAND · OCEANIA

Jacinda Ardern became prime minister of New Zealand in 2017 at the age of 37 and quickly gained international attention for a style of leadership built on empathy and clarity. Her response to the Christchurch attacks in 2019 and her handling of the Covid-19 pandemic drew praise around the world. Re-elected in 2020 with an outright majority, she stepped down in early 2023. She has since pursued her work at Harvard, focusing on leadership and on countering extremist content online, in continuation of the Christchurch Call she launched together with Emmanuel Macron.

WHY THIS SELECTION *She redefined what responsible leadership can look like in a crisis, and her influence on global debates continues well beyond her time in office.*



Javier Milei

President · Argentina

ARGENTINA · SOUTH AMERICA

An economist and longtime television commentator, Javier Milei entered politics late, winning a seat in Congress in 2021 and the presidency of Argentina in 2023. Taking office in a country facing annual inflation above 200 percent, he launched a program of deep public spending cuts, deregulation and a return to fiscal balance. The sharp slowdown in inflation that followed drew the attention of economists and investors worldwide. A frequent presence on the international stage, from Davos to Western capitals, he has become one of the most closely watched leaders in Latin America.

WHY THIS SELECTION *His stewardship of Argentina is producing measurable effects on one of the world's most closely watched economies and feeding an international debate on economic policy.*



Christine Lagarde

President · ECB

FRANCE · EUROPE

A corporate lawyer who rose to chair the global law firm Baker McKenzie, Christine Lagarde joined the French government in 2005 and in 2007 became the first woman to serve as finance minister of a G7 country. She led the International Monetary Fund from 2011 to 2019 before taking the presidency of the European Central Bank, again as the first woman in the role. Steering monetary policy for the euro area and its roughly 350 million citizens, she has navigated the pandemic and the sharpest surge in inflation since the single currency was created. She is regularly ranked among the world's most powerful women.

WHY THIS SELECTION *Few officials have exercised such lasting influence on global economic governance, from the IMF to the ECB, with a reach that extends far beyond Europe.*



Maia Sandu

President · Moldova

MOLDOVA · EUROPE

An economist trained in Chişinău and at Harvard, with experience at the World Bank, Maia Sandu served as Moldova's minister of education and briefly as prime minister before being elected president in 2020, the first woman to hold the office. Re-elected in 2024, she has made European integration the defining thread of her tenure: Moldova secured EU candidate status in 2022 and has opened accession negotiations. Leading a small country bordering Ukraine in a region shaped by war, she has championed stronger institutions, the fight against corruption and her country's anchoring in Europe's democratic community.

WHY THIS SELECTION *Leading a small and exposed country, she shows that determined leadership can shape Europe's future far beyond her nation's demographic or economic weight.*



Duma Boko

President · Botswana

BOTSWANA · AFRICA

A human rights lawyer educated at the University of Botswana and at Harvard, Duma Boko led the opposition for years before guiding the Umbrella for Democratic Change coalition to victory in the 2024 elections. The result marked the first change of ruling party since independence in 1966, and the peaceful handover was hailed across Africa as a model of democratic maturity. As president of a country known for its stability and its careful management of diamond wealth, he has set out to diversify the economy, tackle youth unemployment and strengthen the institutions of one of the continent's oldest democracies.

WHY THIS SELECTION *His rise to office showed that an exemplary democratic transition is possible in southern Africa, with a resonance that reaches far beyond Botswana's borders.*



Nayib Bukele

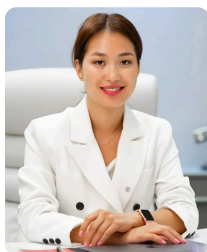
President · El Salvador

EL SALVADOR · CENTRAL AMERICA

An advertising entrepreneur before entering politics, Nayib Bukele served as mayor of Nuevo Cuscatlán and then of San Salvador before winning the presidency of El Salvador in 2019 at the age of 37, out-

side the two parties that had dominated the country for decades. His security policy produced a dramatic fall in homicides in a nation once ranked among the most violent in the world, earning him exceptionally high approval ratings and re-election in 2024. He also made El Salvador the first country to adopt bitcoin as legal tender, and his direct, social-media-driven style is studied across Latin America.

WHY THIS SELECTION *His measurable and closely watched results on public safety have turned a small Central American nation into a case study for governments around the world.*



Bolor-Erdene Battengel

Founder · Mongolian Women's Fund

MONGOLIA · ASIA

A graduate of Oxford in public policy, Bolor-Erdene Battengel was not yet thirty when she took charge of Mongolia's communications and information technology authority, later serving as vice minister for digital development. She led E-Mongolia, the platform that brought hundreds of public services online and transformed how citizens deal with government, including in the most remote parts of the country. Founder of Girls Code, which teaches programming to girls from rural areas, and of the Mongolian Women's Fund, she now pursues her work on digital inclusion and women's empowerment with international institutions, including the World Bank.

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WHY THIS SELECTION *She proves that a young leader can concretely transform an entire country's access to public services while carrying Mongolia's voice into international forums.*



J.C. Monterrey Gómez

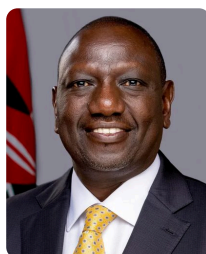
VP COP30 · Panama / UNFCCC

PANAMA · CENTRAL AMERICA

Panama's special representative for climate change and head of the country's delegation in the UN climate negotiations, Juan Carlos Monterrey Gómez has become one of the most noted voices at

the annual climate conferences, where he speaks for vulnerable nations and presses major economies for concrete commitments. He helped secure recognition of Panama as one of the few carbon-negative countries in the world, thanks to its forests. Elected vice president of the COP30 Bureau, hosted by Brazil, he is among the youngest officials ever to hold the role, and a symbol of a new generation of Latin American negotiators on the international climate stage.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He shows that a negotiator from a small country can shape the global climate agenda, embodying a generation for which the climate is the foremost responsibility.*



William Ruto

President · Kenya

KENYA · AFRICA

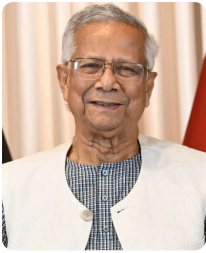
William Ruto became president of Kenya in 2022 after nearly a decade as deputy president, and has since made climate finance the signature of his international diplomacy. Hosting the first Africa Climate

Summit in Nairobi in 2023, he pushed for a reform of the global financial system and for Africa to be treated as a partner in the green transition rather than a casualty of it. A former minister with a doctorate in plant ecology, he champions a Kenyan grid powered largely by renewable energy.

WHY THIS SELECTION *His ability to rally African leaders around a shared climate agenda and to carry that voice into global forums reflects measurable impact and genuine international reach.*

Social Impact & NGOs

Social entrepreneurs, humanitarians and activists transforming the lives of millions every day.



Muhammad Yunus

Head Interim Govt · Bangladesh / Grameen

BANGLADESH · ASIA

A Vanderbilt-trained economist, Muhammad Yunus reshaped the fight against poverty by lending small sums, without collateral, to some of the poorest people in Bangladesh, most of them women. Grameen Bank, which he founded in 1983, inspired microcredit programs across the globe and earned him and the bank the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006. A champion of the social business model, he took charge of Bangladesh's interim government in 2024, with a mandate to steer the country back toward elections.

WHY THIS SELECTION *Few leaders can claim an idea replicated on five continents; his move from social innovation to public responsibility makes him a defining figure of societal commitment.*



Malala Yousafzai

Founder · Malala Fund

PAKISTAN · ASIA

Raised in Pakistan's Swat Valley, Malala Yousafzai was still a schoolgirl when her defense of girls' education, carried on despite threats to her life, made her a global figure. In 2014 she became the youngest Nobel Peace Prize laureate in history. Through the Malala Fund, which she co-founded, she backs local activists and education programs in countries where girls are most likely to be kept out of school. An Oxford graduate, she presses heads of state and international institutions to guarantee twelve years of free, safe schooling for every girl.

WHY THIS SELECTION *She embodies a societal commitment born of personal courage that became a global cause, with concrete results on the ground and direct influence on education policy.*



José Andrés

Founder · World Central Kitchen

SPAIN · EUROPE

Born in Spain and based in the United States since the early 1990s, José Andrés built a Washington restaurant group that helped introduce Americans to tapas. His larger legacy, though, lies far from the dining room: World Central Kitchen, founded in 2010 after the Haiti earthquake, sends chefs and volunteers to feed communities in the wake of hurricanes, earthquakes and war, from Puerto Rico to Ukraine. Hundreds of millions of meals later, he has rewritten the playbook for emergency humanitarian relief.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He proves that professional craft can become a first-rate humanitarian tool, with impact measured in meals served and a presence on every continent.*



Denis Mukwege

Surgeon · Panzi Hospital

DR CONGO · AFRICA

A gynecologist who trained in France, Denis Mukwege founded Panzi Hospital in Bukavu, in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, in 1999. There he has treated tens of thousands of women subjected to sexual violence used as a weapon of war, pairing reconstructive surgery with psychological care, legal support and economic reintegration. Awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2018 and the Sakharov Prize in 2014, the doctor known as the man who repairs women carries their cause to the United Nations and to parliaments around the world.

WHY THIS SELECTION *His holistic care model, now an international reference, and his steady advocacy against impunity make him an example of responsible leadership in the service of the most vulnerable.*



Tedros A. Ghebreyesus

Director-General · WHO

ETHIOPIA · AFRICA

A former health minister and foreign minister of Ethiopia, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus became the first African to lead the World Health Organization in 2017 and was re-elected in 2022. A malaria researcher with a doctorate in community health, he steered the UN agency through the Covid-19 pandemic, helped coordinate the COVAX vaccine-sharing initiative and championed the negotiation of an international pandemic agreement. His agenda centers on universal health coverage and on a global health system better prepared for the next crisis.

WHY THIS SELECTION *Leading the most universal health institution in existence, he carries a rare collective responsibility and makes a steady case for health equity between rich and poor nations.*



Yulia Navalnaya

Chair · Anti-Corruption Foundation

RUSSIA · EUROPE

An economist by training, Yulia Navalnaya spent years away from the spotlight, alongside her husband Alexei Navalny. After his death in custody in 2024, she took up the leadership of his movement and now chairs the Anti-Corruption Foundation he founded. Speaking from exile, she has addressed the European Parliament, the Munich Security Conference and Western governments, calling for the release of political prisoners and for a democratic, peaceful Russia. She also chairs the Human Rights Foundation, which supports dissidents worldwide.

WHY THIS SELECTION *She gives a face and continuity to Russia's civil society in exile, a societal commitment carried at considerable personal risk and heard well beyond her country.*



María Corina Machado

Opposition Leader · Vente Venezuela

VENEZUELA · SOUTH AMERICA

An industrial engineer by training, María Corina Machado has campaigned for free elections in Venezuela for more than two decades. She co-founded the election-monitoring group Súmate, won a seat in the National Assembly in 2010 and went on to build the Vente Venezuela movement, winning the opposition's 2023 primary by an overwhelming margin. Her work for a peaceful democratic transition earned her the Sakharov Prize in 2024 and the Nobel Peace Prize in 2025, making her one of Latin America's most recognized civic leaders.

WHY THIS SELECTION *Her perseverance in mobilizing citizens on a large scale through peaceful means, and the international recognition it has earned, speak directly to the criteria of responsible leadership and global reach.*



Sangu Delle

Founder & CEO · CarePoint

GHANA · AFRICA

A Ghanaian entrepreneur with law and business degrees from Harvard, Sangu Delle first built Golden Palm Investments, an investment firm, before turning to healthcare. CarePoint, the group he founded and leads, is building a network of clinics and hospitals across several African countries and has already served more than a million patients. Named to the Forbes 30 Under 30 list, he is also the author of a book profiling a new generation of African entrepreneurs and their ambitions for the continent.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He shows that private capital can widen access to care across the continent, an impact measured in patients treated that pairs economic performance with responsibility.*



Wendy Kopp

CEO · Teach For All

UNITED STATES · NORTH AMERICA

Fresh out of Princeton, Wendy Kopp turned her senior thesis into Teach For America, an organization that places recent graduates as teachers in the country's most underserved schools. Nearly two decades later she co-founded Teach For All to carry the idea beyond the United States: the network now brings together independent partner organizations in more than sixty countries, from Europe to Africa and Asia. The author of two books on educational equity, she remains one of the most influential voices on teacher development and leadership in education.

WHY THIS SELECTION *By turning a national initiative into a global network of education leaders, she combines international reach with a lasting societal commitment to the most vulnerable children.*



Nndidi Nwuneli

Founder · LEAP Africa

NIGERIA · AFRICA

A graduate of Wharton and Harvard Business School, Nndidi Nwuneli founded LEAP Africa in 2002 to build a generation of ethical, effective young leaders in Nigeria. She went on to co-found Sahel

Consulting and AACE Foods, both focused on transforming West Africa's agricultural and food value chains. The author of well-regarded books on social innovation and food entrepreneurship in Africa, and a World Economic Forum Young Global Leader, she now leads the ONE Campaign, which advocates for investment in the continent.

WHY THIS SELECTION *From youth leadership to food security, she builds lasting institutions rather than one-off projects, the hallmark of responsible leadership with measurable impact.*



Mo Ibrahim

Founder · Mo Ibrahim Foundation

SUDAN · AFRICA

A Sudanese-born engineer, Mo Ibrahim made his fortune by proving that mobile telephony could thrive in Africa: Celtel, the operator he founded in 1998, connected millions of subscribers across more

than a dozen countries before its sale in 2005. He then created the foundation that bears his name, devoted to governance and leadership on the continent. Its Ibrahim Index of African Governance has become a standard reference, and the Ibrahim Prize, worth five million dollars, honors former heads of state who governed well and left office democratically.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He has put entrepreneurial success in the service of a demanding idea, good governance as the engine of development, and measures its progress year after year.*



Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

Former President · Liberia

LIBERIA · AFRICA

An economist whose career took her through Harvard, the World Bank and the United Nations, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf became the first woman elected head of state in Africa in 2006. Over twelve years she led Liberia's reconstruction after a devastating civil war, secured relief on most of the country's debt and steered the nation through the Ebola epidemic. A Nobel Peace Prize laureate in 2011 and winner of the Ibrahim Prize, she founded a presidential center devoted to advancing women's leadership across Africa.

WHY THIS SELECTION *A trailblazer for a generation of African women leaders, she oversaw a peaceful democratic transition and now devotes her international standing to opening doors for the women who follow.*



Ajay Banga

President · World Bank

INDIA · NORTH AMERICA

Born in India and educated at the Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad, Ajay Banga rose through Nestlé, PepsiCo and Citigroup before running Mastercard for a decade, turning it into a major force in digital payments and financial inclusion. Since 2023 he has presided over the World Bank Group with a mandate to make the institution faster and bolder in tackling poverty and climate change, including a flagship effort to bring electricity to hundreds of millions of people across Africa.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He brings a private-sector culture of execution to the world's leading development institution, with numerical targets and impact expected on the scale of entire continents.*

Technology & Innovation

*The architects of the digital and AI revolutions:
Silicon Valley, Europe, Asia, Africa.*



Demis Hassabis

CEO & Co-founder · Google DeepMind
UNITED KINGDOM · EUROPE

A chess prodigy who was designing video games as a teenager, Demis Hassabis studied computer science at Cambridge and neuroscience at UCL before co-founding DeepMind in 2010, acquired by Google

four years later. His laboratory reshaped artificial intelligence with AlphaGo, which defeated Go champion Lee Sedol, and then AlphaFold, which predicted the structure of nearly every known protein and earned him a share of the 2024 Nobel Prize in Chemistry. He now leads Google DeepMind and Isomorphic Labs, a company applying AI to drug discovery.

WHY THIS SELECTION *Few leaders have, within a decade, changed both an industry and a scientific discipline; his impact is measured in millions of protein structures made freely available to researchers worldwide.*



Sam Altman

CEO · OpenAI
UNITED STATES · NORTH AMERICA

Sam Altman left Stanford to launch his first start-up and later ran the accelerator Y Combinator before taking the helm of OpenAI in 2019, four years after co-founding the research laboratory. The

release of ChatGPT in late 2022 turned generative artificial intelligence into a global phenomenon used by hundreds of millions of people, and made him one of the executives most sought out by governments debating how to regulate the technology. He argues for a gradual rollout of increasingly capable AI systems under internationally agreed rules.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He brought generative AI into the daily lives of hundreds of millions of people within months, a measurable impact with few recent equivalents, paired with sustained engagement with regulators worldwide.*



Lisa Su

CEO · AMD
UNITED STATES · NORTH AMERICA

Born in Taiwan and holding a doctorate in electrical engineering from MIT, Lisa Su spent more than a decade at IBM pushing the limits of semiconductor design before joining AMD in 2012. Appointed chief

executive in 2014, when the company was in deep trouble, she bet on a new processor architecture, won back the PC, server and gaming-console markets, and positioned the group at the heart of the race to build chips for artificial intelligence. Under her leadership, AMD's market value has grown many times over.

WHY THIS SELECTION *Her turnaround of AMD ranks among the most remarkable in recent technology history, a measurable impact matched by a leading role in an industry now strategic to the world economy.*



Thomas Pesquet

Astronaut & CEO · ESA / NOVESPACE
FRANCE · EUROPE

An aerospace engineer and former airline pilot, Thomas Pesquet joined the European astronaut corps in 2009. Across the Proxima and Alpha missions he spent close to four hundred days aboard the

International Space Station, became its first French commander and completed six spacewalks. His photographs of Earth and his following on social media have made him a science communicator reaching millions. A Goodwill Ambassador for the FAO who also supports UNICEF, he now heads Novespace, the company that operates weightless parabolic flights for research and training.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He embodies European scientific excellence and channels it into societal engagement, from climate awareness to children's causes, with a reach that extends well beyond the space community.*



Satya Nadella

CEO · Microsoft

INDIA · NORTH AMERICA

Born in Hyderabad, India, Satya Nadella joined Microsoft in 1992 and rose through its engineering ranks to lead the cloud business before becoming the company's third chief executive in 2014. He refocused Microsoft on cloud computing and artificial intelligence, reshaped its culture around a growth mindset and completed landmark acquisitions, from LinkedIn to GitHub, alongside a strategic partnership with OpenAI. Under his leadership the company's market value has surpassed three trillion dollars. He is the author of *Hit Refresh*, a memoir about leading change.

WHY THIS SELECTION *His transformation of Microsoft is studied as a model of responsible leadership: a rebuilt culture, measurable results and an influence that shapes the planet's digital infrastructure.*



Liang Wenfeng

Founder · DeepSeek

CHINA · ASIA

A graduate of Zhejiang University, Liang Wenfeng first co-founded High-Flyer, one of China's largest quantitative investment funds, before establishing the DeepSeek laboratory in 2023. In January 2025, the release of its R1 reasoning model, published with open weights and trained for a fraction of the cost of its American rivals, sent shock waves through financial markets and the artificial intelligence industry. Rarely seen in public, he demonstrated that engineering efficiency could matter as much as raw computing power in the race to build frontier models.

WHY THIS SELECTION *Within weeks he altered the economic assumptions of an entire industry: a measurable impact and international reach that few founders achieve so quickly.*



Dario Amodei

CEO & Co-founder · Anthropic

UNITED STATES · NORTH AMERICA

A Princeton-trained physicist, Dario Amodei moved into machine learning at Baidu and Google before leading research at OpenAI, where he contributed to the GPT-2 and GPT-3 language models. In 2021 he co-founded Anthropic with his sister Daniela and several colleagues, convinced that safety must guide the development of the most powerful AI systems. The company, maker of the Claude assistant, has introduced methods such as constitutional AI and public risk-evaluation policies that now inform the wider debate. He is among the most influential voices on AI governance.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He has put responsibility at the core of a frontier laboratory's business model, treating safety as a matter of leadership rather than mere compliance, with direct influence on regulators.*



Patrick Collison

CEO & Co-founder · Stripe

IRELAND · EUROPE

Born in Limerick, Patrick Collison won Ireland's Young Scientist competition at sixteen and, with his brother John, sold a first start-up while still a student. In 2010 the brothers founded Stripe, whose online payment tools now serve millions of businesses and process more than a trillion dollars a year. Valued at around 95 billion dollars, the company has also launched Frontier, an advance purchase commitment to accelerate carbon removal. Outside Stripe, he co-founded the Arc Institute, a nonprofit biomedical research organization, and is a prominent advocate of the study of scientific progress.

WHY THIS SELECTION *From Ireland he built part of the global economy's plumbing and directs his influence toward long-term causes, from climate to science, combining measurable impact with societal engagement.*



Juliana Rotich

Co-founder · Ushahidi / BRCK

KENYA · AFRICA

A Kenyan technologist, Juliana Rotich co-founded Ushahidi in 2008, a crowd-sourced mapping platform first built to document post-election violence in Kenya and since deployed in dozens of countries, from the Haiti earthquake to humanitarian crises worldwide. She went on to co-found BRCK, which designs rugged connectivity hardware for underserved regions, and helped establish Nairobi's iHub, the incubator of East Africa's technology scene. A TED Senior Fellow, she has also led financial innovation programs at Safaricom, the operator behind M-Pesa.

WHY THIS SELECTION *Her tools, built in Africa for the world, changed how citizens document crises: measurable impact and international reach that grew out of societal commitment.*



Kai-Fu Lee

CEO & Founder · Sinovation / 01.AI

TAIWAN · ASIA

Born in Taiwan and educated in the United States, where he earned a Carnegie Mellon doctorate in speech recognition, Kai-Fu Lee held senior roles at Apple and Microsoft, where he founded the company's Beijing research lab, before serving as president of Google China. In 2009 he launched Sinovation Ventures, which has backed hundreds of Chinese start-ups, and in 2023 founded 01.AI, a laboratory building large language models. The author of the bestseller *AI Superpowers*, he is one of the few experts heard with equal attention in Beijing and Silicon Valley.

WHY THIS SELECTION *A bridge between the two leading AI powers, he has informed the global debate on the technology's economic and societal stakes for fifteen years, a rare reach in a fragmented field.*



Kate Kallot

Founder & CEO · Amini

ESTONIA · AFRICA

After senior roles at Intel, Arm and NVIDIA, where she led emerging-market and developer-community efforts, Kate Kallot founded Amini in 2022. The Nairobi-based start-up combines satellite imagery, ground sensors and artificial intelligence to close Africa's environmental data gap, giving smallholder farmers, insurers and supply chains a way to measure climate risk and soil health for the first time. She argues that technology for the continent should be designed on the continent, and has made data sovereignty a central part of the company's mission.

WHY THIS SELECTION *She tackles a blind spot in development, the lack of reliable environmental data on Africa, with a technological approach that could benefit millions of farmers.*



Fred Swaniker

Founder & CEO · African Leadership Group

GHANA · AFRICA

Born in Ghana and raised across several African countries, Fred Swaniker has devoted his career to building the continent's next generation of leaders. A Stanford MBA graduate, he founded the African Leadership Academy in South Africa, followed by the African Leadership University and ALX, which train tens of thousands of young Africans each year in technology and entrepreneurship. Recognised by the World Economic Forum as a Young Global Leader, he champions the ambition of developing millions of ethical, entrepreneurial leaders for Africa.

WHY THIS SELECTION *His education model has already produced cohorts of entrepreneurs and executives across the continent, with a measurable effect on youth employment and an influence that reaches well beyond Africa.*



Reshma Saujani

Founder · Girls Who Code

UNITED STATES · NORTH AMERICA

A lawyer by training and the daughter of Indian refugees who fled Uganda, Reshma Saujani founded Girls Who Code in 2012 to close the gender gap in technology. The organisation has since reached more than 500,000 girls and young women through clubs, summer programmes and college initiatives across the United States and beyond. The author of *Brave, Not Perfect*, she later launched Moms First, an initiative advocating for working mothers, and her TED talk on bravery over perfection has been viewed millions of times.

WHY THIS SELECTION *She turned a cause, women's place in technology, into a measurable and replicable movement, while carrying a broader societal case for equality and support for working mothers.*

Sustainability & Climate

Those driving the global ecological transition, from climate finance to the voice of indigenous peoples.



Christiana Figueres

Former Exec. Sec. · UNFCCC
COSTA RICA · CENTRAL AMERICA

A Costa Rican diplomat from a family steeped in public service, Christiana Figueres led the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change from 2010 to 2016. Taking over after the Copenhagen summit had ended in disappointment, she rebuilt trust among nearly 200 nations and steered the process to the Paris Agreement in 2015. Co-founder of Global Optimism and co-author of *The Future We Choose*, she now hosts the podcast *Outrage + Optimism* and remains one of the most influential voices for collaborative, ambitious climate action.

WHY THIS SELECTION *Few leaders can point to an outcome as concrete as a universal climate agreement; her leadership style, built on listening and stubborn optimism, remains a reference for multilateral diplomacy.*



Andrew Forrest

Chairman · Fortescue / Minderoo
AUSTRALIA · OCEANIA

Australian entrepreneur Andrew Forrest founded Fortescue and built it into one of the world's largest iron ore producers. He is now steering the company toward green hydrogen and renewable energy, with a commitment to eliminate direct emissions from its operations by 2030. Together with Nicola Forrest he established the Minderoo Foundation, one of Australia's largest philanthropic organisations, which campaigns against modern slavery and plastic pollution and for ocean health. Holding a doctorate in marine ecology, he carries these causes into international forums.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He embodies an industrialist putting his own assets to work for decarbonisation, with quantified targets and large-scale philanthropy that shapes global debates.*

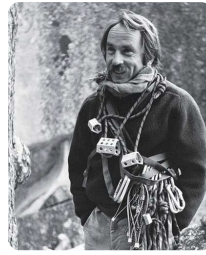


Emmanuel Faber

Chair · ISSB
FRANCE · EUROPE

The former chief executive of Danone, which he made the first listed French company to adopt "entreprise à mission" status, Emmanuel Faber has chaired the International Sustainability Standards Board since 2022 under the IFRS Foundation. Under his leadership the ISSB issued its first two global standards for sustainability and climate-related disclosures, now being adopted by dozens of jurisdictions worldwide. A graduate of HEC Paris, he argues for an accounting model that captures natural and human capital alongside financial performance.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He is building a common language for sustainability reporting, a structural lever for steering global capital, and doing so with a rigour recognised by regulators and companies alike.*



Yvon Chouinard

Founder · Patagonia
UNITED STATES · NORTH AMERICA

A climber and self-taught blacksmith who began by forging pitons, Yvon Chouinard founded Patagonia in 1973 and turned the outdoor apparel brand into a laboratory for responsible business: recycled materials, repair services and 1 percent of sales donated to environmental causes. In 2022 he transferred ownership of the company, valued at around 3 billion dollars, to a trust and a non-profit dedicated to fighting climate change. Author of *Let My People Go Surfing*, he has inspired a generation of purpose-driven entrepreneurs.

WHY THIS SELECTION *His 2022 decision redefined what a founder can do with success; for fifty years he has shown that environmental commitment and commercial performance can go hand in hand.*



Teresa Ribera

Executive VP · European Commission
SPAIN · EUROPE

A lawyer and senior Spanish civil servant, Teresa Ribera served as deputy prime minister and minister for the ecological transition, driving Spain's rapid coal phase-out and renewable energy expansion. Since late 2024 she has been Executive Vice-President of the European Commission, responsible for a clean, just and competitive transition, and also oversees the Union's competition policy. Previously director of the IDDRI think tank in Paris, she is among the most experienced figures in European climate diplomacy.

WHY THIS SELECTION *She carries the practical implementation of the Green Deal at continental scale, linking climate ambition with social justice and industrial competitiveness.*



Hindou O. Ibrahim

President · AFPAT
CHAD · AFRICA

A member of Chad's Mbororo pastoralist community, Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim co-founded and now leads the Association of Peul Women and Indigenous Peoples of Chad. For more than two decades she has defended indigenous rights and pressed for traditional knowledge to be integrated into climate policy, particularly around the Lake Chad basin. She addressed the signing ceremony of the Paris Agreement, serves as a UN Sustainable Development Goals Advocate appointed by the Secretary-General, and brings the voice of the communities most exposed to climate change into major international forums.

WHY THIS SELECTION *She connects the Sahel to global negotiations and reminds decision-makers that climate solutions also rest on indigenous knowledge, a rare and tangible contribution to the international debate.*



Vanessa Nakate

Climate Activist · Rise Up Movement

UGANDA · AFRICA

Born in Kampala, Vanessa Nakate began a solitary climate strike outside Uganda's parliament in 2019 before founding the Rise Up Movement to amplify African activists' voices. She rose to international prominence by insisting that Africa, the continent least responsible for emissions yet among the most affected, be heard in the global climate conversation. A UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador and author of *A Bigger Picture*, she speaks at United Nations climate conferences and has launched a programme installing solar panels and clean cookstoves in Ugandan schools.

WHY THIS SELECTION *Before turning thirty, she shifted the centre of gravity of the climate debate toward the most vulnerable countries, with global reach and concrete action on the ground.*



Sunita Narain

Director General · CSE India

INDIA · ASIA

Indian environmentalist Sunita Narain has led the Centre for Science and Environment in New Delhi for more than two decades and edits the magazine *Down To Earth*. Her research on air quality, water management and pollution has shaped Indian public policy, including the switch of Delhi's public transport to compressed natural gas. She has long argued for an equitable division of climate responsibility between rich and developing nations. A recipient of the Padma Shri, she has been named among *Time* magazine's 100 most influential people.

WHY THIS SELECTION *She has shown that independent, rigorous research can move policy in a nation of 1.4 billion people, while establishing equity as a central notion in the global climate debate.*



Selina Leem

Climate Negotiator · Marshall Islands

MARSHALL ISLANDS · OCEANIA

Born in the Marshall Islands, a Pacific archipelago that rises barely two metres above sea level, Selina Leem became the youngest delegate at COP21 in Paris at 18, speaking alongside minister Tony de Brum as the Agreement was adopted. She has since represented small island states in climate negotiations and international forums, reminding audiences that the 1.5 degree target is a matter of survival for her country. A poet and storyteller, she blends personal testimony with advocacy to keep global attention on the nations most exposed to rising seas.

WHY THIS SELECTION *She gives a face and a voice to the countries that contributed least to warming and suffer most from it, with a persistence that has earned the respect of seasoned negotiators.*



Carlos Alvarado

Former President · Costa Rica

COSTA RICA · CENTRAL AMERICA

President of Costa Rica from 2018 to 2022, Carlos Alvarado made his country a global reference for climate action, launching a national decarbonisation plan aimed at net zero emissions by 2050.

During his term Costa Rica received the United Nations Champions of the Earth award and co-led an international coalition to protect 30 percent of the planet's land and oceans by 2030. A former journalist and novelist, he now teaches at Tufts University's Fletcher School and speaks at international forums on the ecological transition.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He showed that a small country can set the global pace on decarbonisation, with a quantified roadmap and environmental diplomacy recognised far beyond Central America.*



Isabella Lövin

Former Deputy PM · Sweden / WWF

SWEDEN · EUROPE

A journalist and author before entering politics, Isabella Lövin first drew attention with an acclaimed book on overfishing, then served in the European Parliament before co-leading Sweden's Green Party.

As climate minister and deputy prime minister, she championed the climate law committing Sweden to net zero emissions by 2045, among the most ambitious targets in the world, and previously served as minister for international development cooperation. She continues to advocate for ocean protection and a just transition in European and global forums.

WHY THIS SELECTION *She wrote one of the world's most demanding climate commitments into law and embodies a way of governing where environmental responsibility takes precedence over short-term calculation.*



J.C. Monterrey G.

VP COP30 · Panama / UNFCCC

PANAMA · CENTRAL AMERICA

A Panamanian diplomat of the younger generation, Juan Carlos Monterrey Gómez serves as Panama's special representative for climate change and leads his country's delegation in international negotiations. Founder of the organisation Climate Resilient, he was elected a vice-president of COP30, a rare responsibility for a negotiator in his early thirties. He speaks for one of the few nations that absorb more carbon than they emit, and argues for nature protection and climate finance to sit at the heart of global agreements.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He represents a new generation of negotiators from the Global South, combining technical expertise, national credibility and the ability to make smaller countries heard in global forums.*

Sport & Leadership

Athletes who have become entrepreneurs, activists and moral figures of their era.



LeBron James

Player & Entrepreneur · Lakers / SpringHill

UNITED STATES · NORTH AMERICA

Raised in Akron, Ohio, LeBron James entered the NBA at 18 and became the league's all-time leading scorer, winning four championships with three different teams and three Olympic gold medals. Off the court he co-founded the SpringHill Company with Maverick Carter and has invested across a wide range of businesses. His foundation opened the I Promise School in Akron for at-risk children, with support extended to their families. Followed by more than 150 million people on Instagram, he carries real weight in American public conversation.

WHY THIS SELECTION *Beyond the records, he has turned his fame into a vehicle for social and economic action, from education to entrepreneurship, with a global reach few athletes can match.*



Simone Biles

Gymnast · USA Gymnastics

UNITED STATES · NORTH AMERICA

Born in Ohio and trained in Texas, Simone Biles is the most decorated gymnast in history, with eleven Olympic medals, seven of them gold, and some thirty world championship medals. Several skills in the sport's code of points bear her name. By stepping back from several finals at the Tokyo Games to protect her mental health, she opened a worldwide conversation about athlete wellbeing, then returned to the summit in Paris in 2024. Her influence now extends well beyond the gymnastics hall.

WHY THIS SELECTION *She has redefined sporting excellence while showing a rare form of responsible leadership, placing athlete health at the centre of the global conversation on elite sport.*



Lionel Messi

Footballer · Inter Miami

ARGENTINA · SOUTH AMERICA

Trained in Rosario and at FC Barcelona, where he spent two decades, Lionel Messi has won a record eight Ballon d'Or awards and captained Argentina to the 2022 World Cup title. After a spell at Paris Saint-Germain, he joined Inter Miami in 2023, and his arrival transformed the audience for football in the United States. The most followed athlete on Instagram, with more than 500 million followers, he supports children's access to education and healthcare through his foundation and has been a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador since 2010.

WHY THIS SELECTION *His longevity at the top and his ability to move entire markets, from European football to Major League Soccer, come with a long-standing humanitarian commitment.*



Lewis Hamilton

F1 Driver · Ferrari

UNITED KINGDOM · EUROPE

Seven-time Formula 1 world champion, a record he shares with Michael Schumacher, Lewis Hamilton holds the most race wins and pole positions in the sport's history. The first Black driver in Formula 1, he joined Ferrari in 2025 after more than a decade with Mercedes. He created the Hamilton Commission to improve Black representation in British motorsport, then founded Mission 44, a charity supporting young people from under-represented backgrounds. Knighted in 2021, he also campaigns for a more sustainable and inclusive motorsport.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He has used a dominant position in a closed sport to open its doors, through concrete, funded programmes, while remaining a global sporting figure.*



Kylian Mbappé

Footballer · Real Madrid

FRANCE · EUROPE

Trained in Bondy and at Monaco, Kylian Mbappé won the World Cup with France at 19 in 2018 before becoming Paris Saint-Germain's all-time top scorer. Captain of the national team, he joined Real Madrid in 2024. His foundation, Inspired by KM, supports young people from modest backgrounds in their academic and professional projects, and he has made his home town a symbol of the suburbs that succeed. Followed by more than 120 million people on Instagram, he ranks among the most influential French athletes in the world.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He projects a worldwide image of success rooted in the French suburbs and uses his fame to open doors for a new generation.*



Serena Williams

Entrepreneur · Serena Ventures

UNITED STATES · NORTH AMERICA

Raised on the public courts of Compton, California, Serena Williams won 23 Grand Slam singles titles, a record for the Open era, and four Olympic gold medals, dominating women's tennis for more than two decades before retiring in 2022. Founder of Serena Ventures, she has invested in more than a hundred start-ups, most of them led by women and founders from under-represented groups. She has also launched a fashion label and supports education and community programmes through her foundation, remaining one of the most recognisable figures in world sport.

WHY THIS SELECTION *She has converted an extraordinary sporting career into an investment lever for founders who are often overlooked, with a measurable effect on the diversity of the start-up ecosystem.*



Kirsty Coventry

President · IOC

ZIMBABWE · AFRICA

Zimbabwean swimmer Kirsty Coventry won seven Olympic medals, including back-to-back titles in the 200 metres backstroke, making her the most decorated African athlete in Olympic history.

After competing, she chaired the International Olympic Committee's athletes' commission and served as Zimbabwe's minister of sport. Elected IOC president in 2025, she is the first woman and the first African to lead the organisation. Her agenda centres on the integrity of sport, the role of athletes in governance and the development of sport across Africa.

WHY THIS SELECTION *She represents a historic change at the head of the Olympic movement and brings an athlete's legitimacy to an institution that touches billions of people.*



Léon Marchand

Swimmer · FFN

FRANCE · EUROPE

Born in Toulouse to a family of swimmers, Léon Marchand trained in the United States at Arizona State University under Bob Bowman, the former coach of Michael Phelps. At the Paris 2024 Games

he won four individual gold medals and a relay bronze, becoming the face of the Games for the French public. He holds the world record in the 400 metres individual medley, which he took from Phelps in 2023, and has been crowned world champion several times. He embodies a new generation of French athletes with global reach.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He gave France one of the great sporting stories of the decade and, through discipline and modesty, shows young people a form of leadership by example.*



Victor Wembanyama

Basketball · Spurs

FRANCE · NORTH AMERICA

Developed at Nanterre and with Metropolitans 92, Victor Wembanyama was selected first overall in the 2023 NBA draft by the San Antonio Spurs. Standing 2.24 metres tall with mobility unpre-

cedented for his size, he was named Rookie of the Year after his first season and quickly established himself among the league's best defenders. A silver medallist with France at the Paris 2024 Games, he has become, at 22, one of the most followed athletes in the world and embodies the growing influence of French basketball on the global stage.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He is redefining what a basketball player can do on the court and offers a whole generation a model of work and curiosity, with a global audience.*



Letsile Tebogo

Sprinter · Botswana Athletics

BOTSWANA · AFRICA

From Kanye in Botswana, Letsile Tebogo first drew attention by winning the world under-20 100 metres title twice, then took silver over 100 metres at the 2023 World Championships in Budapest. At the

Paris 2024 Games he won gold in the 200 metres, earning Botswana its first Olympic gold medal and becoming the first African champion in the event. His homecoming prompted a national public holiday. Named World Athletics male athlete of the year, he embodies the rise of African sprinting on the world stage.

WHY THIS SELECTION *His victory changed the horizon of an entire nation and proves that a talent developed in Africa can dominate a discipline long claimed by others, with an influence that goes beyond sport.*



Jannik Sinner

Tennis · ATP Tour

ITALY · EUROPE

Born in South Tyrol, where he first excelled as a skier, Jannik Sinner became the first Italian to reach world number one in tennis in 2024. He has won several Grand Slam titles, including the

Australian Open, the US Open and Wimbledon, and led Italy to back-to-back Davis Cup victories. His power and consistency have fuelled a defining rivalry with Carlos Alcaraz. Reserved off the court, he has set up a foundation supporting young people and has become the face of a resurgent Italian tennis.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He illustrates a sporting leadership built on consistency and composure, with a global reach that has revived an entire country's interest in tennis.*



Caitlin Clark

Basketball · Indiana Fever

UNITED STATES · NORTH AMERICA

Caitlin Clark has reshaped the business of women's basketball in the span of a few seasons. At the University of Iowa she became the leading scorer in the history of NCAA Division I college basketball,

men or women, with a fearless long-range game and playmaking that drew record television audiences. Selected first in the 2024 WNBA draft by the Indiana Fever and named Rookie of the Year, she has brought unprecedented crowds and viewership to the league and become one of the most recognizable athletes in the world.

WHY THIS SELECTION *Her impact is measurable in record audiences and new revenue for an entire sport, and she carries a global profile earned very young with discipline and a team-first ethic.*

Culture, Media & Arts

*Writers, filmmakers, artists and creators
shaping the global cultural narrative.*



Bong Joon-ho

Director · Parasite

SOUTH KOREA · ASIA

South Korean director Bong Joon-ho brought his country's cinema to the center of the global conversation. After *Memories of Murder*, *The Host* and *Snowpiercer*, his film *Parasite* won the

Palme d'Or at Cannes in 2019 and then four Academy Awards in 2020, including Best Picture, the first ever for a film not in English. Blending social satire, suspense and dark humor, he moves between Seoul and Hollywood, where he made *Okja* and *Mickey 17* with international casts, while remaining fiercely attached to his own voice.

WHY THIS SELECTION *Few artists have shifted the boundaries of a global industry with a single work; his reach also carries a clear-eyed reflection on contemporary inequality.*



Chimamanda N. Adichie

Author · Independent

NIGERIA · AFRICA

Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is among the most widely read literary voices of her generation. Raised in Nsukka and educated in the United States, she rose to prominence with

Purple Hibiscus, *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah*, translated into dozens of languages. Her TED talks, including *We Should All Be Feminists* and *The Danger of a Single Story*, have reached tens of millions of viewers and shaped public debate on identity and gender. She also runs an annual writing workshop in Lagos for emerging African writers.

WHY THIS SELECTION *She gave global debates on equality and on how Africa is represented a shared vocabulary, while investing concretely in the next generation of writers in her home country.*



Ai Weiwei

Artist & Activist · Independent

CHINA · EUROPE

Born in Beijing, Ai Weiwei is one of the most widely recognized figures in contemporary art, working across sculpture, architecture, photography and film. Shaped by a decade in New York in the

1980s, he collaborated with Herzog & de Meuron on the Beijing National Stadium, the Bird's Nest of the 2008 Olympic Games. Monumental installations such as *Sunflower Seeds* at Tate Modern, and documentaries including *Human Flow* on the global refugee crisis, examine power, memory and freedom of expression. Now based in Europe, he exhibits in leading museums worldwide.

WHY THIS SELECTION *His work ties creation to civic responsibility on a planetary scale, giving lasting visibility to questions of migration and freedom of expression.*



Mo Abudu

CEO & Founder · EbonyLife Media

NIGERIA · AFRICA

Founder and chief executive of EbonyLife Media, Mo Abudu built one of Africa's most influential entertainment companies from Lagos. A former human resources executive, she first became known for her

talk show *Moments with Mo*, then launched EbonyLife TV and a film studio behind several of Nigeria's biggest box-office hits, including *The Wedding Party*. Partnerships with Netflix, Sony Pictures Television and the BBC have carried African stories, told by Africans, onto screens around the world, and she has also opened EbonyLife Place, an entertainment and lifestyle venue in Lagos.

WHY THIS SELECTION *She proves that an African creative industry can produce, finance and export its own stories, opening doors for thousands of local talents along the way.*



Steven Bartlett

CEO & Podcaster · Diary of a CEO

UNITED KINGDOM · EUROPE

British entrepreneur Steven Bartlett has become one of the most listened-to voices in business. He founded the social media marketing agency Social Chain at twenty-two and took it public, then launched *The*

Diary of a CEO in 2017, a podcast now among the most followed in the world for its long-form conversations on leadership, health and psychology. The youngest investor ever to join the BBC's *Dragons' Den*, he is also a bestselling author and the founder of *Flight Story*, a media and investment group backing early-stage companies.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He turned the conversation about leadership into a format that reaches millions of listeners, while investing in a new generation of European founders.*



Burna Boy

Musician · Spaceship Ent.

NIGERIA · AFRICA

Born Damini Ogulu in Port Harcourt, Burna Boy carried Afrobeats to the top of the global stage. A self-described heir to Fela Kuti, whose first manager was his grandfather, he blends afrobeat, dance-

hall, reggae and hip-hop on albums such as *African Giant* and *Twice as Tall*, which won a Grammy Award in 2021. The first African artist to headline sold-out stadium shows in the United States and the United Kingdom, he has collaborated with major pop and rap figures and made Lagos a musical capital heard on every continent.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He opened entire markets to African music and showed that an artist from the continent can set the codes of global pop without giving up his roots.*



Vivian Tu

Finance Creator · Your Rich BFF

UNITED STATES · NORTH AMERICA

A former trader at JPMorgan, Vivian Tu left Wall Street to make personal finance understandable for millions. As Your Rich BFF, she has explained since 2021 on TikTok, Instagram and YouTube how to negotiate a salary, start investing or read a tax form, in plain language aimed first at women and young professionals often left out of financial conversations. Her book *Rich AF* became a New York Times bestseller, and she is counted among the most influential creators of her generation, with a community of several million followers.

WHY THIS SELECTION *She gives an audience long ignored by finance the concrete tools of economic autonomy, with a teaching impact measurable across millions of lives.*



Percival Everett

Author · James

UNITED STATES · NORTH AMERICA

Percival Everett, novelist and professor at the University of Southern California, has built over four decades an uncategorizable body of more than thirty books. His novel *Erasure* inspired the film *American Fiction*, which won an Academy Award in 2024. With *James*, a retelling of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* from the perspective of the enslaved Jim, he won the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. His wit, formal command and reflection on race and language place him among the major voices of contemporary literature.

WHY THIS SELECTION *His work shifts the way American history is read, with a rigor and freedom that reach well beyond literature into global public debate.*



Bobi Wine

Musician & Politician · NUP Uganda

UGANDA · AFRICA

Singer turned politician, Bobi Wine, born Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, grew up in a working-class neighborhood of Kampala and became one of East Africa's most popular musicians, known as the Ghetto President. Elected to Uganda's parliament in 2017, he went on to lead the National Unity Platform, the country's main opposition party, and ran for president in 2021. An Oscar-nominated documentary about his journey brought his story to audiences worldwide. Through music and organizing, he has given voice to the aspirations of one of the youngest populations on the planet.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He embodies the move from the stage to civic engagement and gives an international voice to the aspirations of a young African majority.*



Trevor Noah

Comedian · Independent

SOUTH AFRICA · AFRICA

South African comedian and host Trevor Noah grew up in Johannesburg under apartheid, a childhood he recounted in *Born a Crime*, a bestseller translated into many languages. After establishing himself at home, he took over *The Daily Show* in the United States in 2015 and hosted it for seven years before returning to worldwide stand-up tours and Netflix specials. A repeat host of the Grammy Awards ceremony, he supports education for young South Africans through his foundation and remains one of the most widely followed commentators on world affairs.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He translates the world's divisions into a language shared by millions and reinvests his fame in education in South Africa.*



Priyanka Chopra Jonas

Actress & UNICEF · UNICEF

INDIA · ASIA

Actress, producer and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, Priyanka Chopra Jonas is one of the few performers to have built a leading career in both Bollywood and Hollywood. Crowned Miss World in 2000, she starred in a string of Indian hits including *Mary Kom* and *Bajirao Mastani*, then became the first South Asian actress to lead an American network drama with *Quantico*. Her company Purple Pebble Pictures backs regional Indian cinema, and her long-standing work with UNICEF on children's and girls' rights takes her into the field around the world.

WHY THIS SELECTION *Her reach, exceptional across continents, is placed in the service of sustained field work for children and girls.*



Ma Yansong

Architect · MAD Architects

CHINA · ASIA

Founder of MAD Architects in Beijing, Ma Yansong is one of China's most internationally recognized architects. Trained at Yale and a former member of Zaha Hadid's office, he champions an organic architecture inspired by the landscapes of classical Chinese painting, an approach he calls the Shanshui City. The Absolute Towers near Toronto, the Harbin Opera House and the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art in Los Angeles bear his fluid signature, now found in some twenty countries through cultural, residential and landscape projects across Asia, Europe and North America.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He exports a vision of the city born in China and grounded in nature and emotion, in a field where influence had long flowed mostly the other way.*

Finance & Investment

*The architects of global finance: central banks,
hedge funds, development banks, crypto.*



Larry Fink

CEO · BlackRock

UNITED STATES · NORTH AMERICA

Co-founder and chief executive of BlackRock, Larry Fink leads the world's largest asset manager, overseeing more than ten trillion dollars on behalf of pension funds, governments and individual savers. Starting from a small bond team in 1988, he built a group present on every continent, whose Aladdin technology platform and iShares ETF range underpin a significant share of global finance. His closely watched annual letter to chief executives has helped place governance, retirement and long-term thinking at the center of the economic debate.

WHY THIS SELECTION *Few private decision-makers weigh as heavily on how the world's savings are allocated; his voice steers debates on governance and retirement well beyond finance.*



Ray Dalio

Founder & CIO · Bridgewater

UNITED STATES · NORTH AMERICA

Founder of Bridgewater Associates, Ray Dalio started the firm from his New York apartment in 1975 and built it into the world's largest hedge fund, managing money for sovereign wealth funds and pension plans on every continent. His approach, built on explicit principles and a culture of radical transparency, is set out in *Principles*, a bestseller translated worldwide, and in later work on debt cycles and the changing world order. Through Dalio Philanthropies he supports ocean exploration and education.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He codified a way of deciding and learning that has been adopted far beyond finance, and he devotes part of his fortune to long-term causes.*



Tidjane Thiam

Prime Minister · Côte d'Ivoire

CÔTE D'IVOIRE · AFRICA

Prime Minister of Côte d'Ivoire, Tidjane Thiam embodies a rare path between international high finance and African public service. A graduate of École polytechnique and Mines Paris, and a former McKinsey partner, he held ministerial responsibilities in Abidjan in the 1990s before leading Prudential, becoming the first Black chief executive of a FTSE 100 company, and then Credit Suisse from 2015 to 2020. A member of the International Olympic Committee, he returned to Ivorian political life and now heads the government of one of West Africa's largest economies.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He brings global experience in finance and governance to the running of a state, at a moment when West Africa is seeking new models of growth.*



Masayoshi Son

CEO & Founder · SoftBank

JAPAN · ASIA

Founder and chief executive of SoftBank, Masayoshi Son is one of the boldest investors of the digital age. Educated at Berkeley, he started SoftBank in 1981 as a software distributor and turned it into a telecommunications and investment conglomerate. His early bet on Alibaba remains one of the most profitable in history, and his hundred-billion-dollar Vision Fund reshaped the financing of start-ups worldwide, from Uber to the chip designer Arm, acquired in 2016. He is now directing his resources toward artificial intelligence and the infrastructure it requires.

WHY THIS SELECTION *His long-term bets have shaped whole sections of the global digital economy, and he is now committing very large sums to the infrastructure of artificial intelligence.*



Jane Fraser

CEO · Citigroup

UNITED STATES · NORTH AMERICA

Chief executive of Citigroup, Jane Fraser is the first woman to lead a major Wall Street bank. Born in Scotland and educated at Cambridge and Harvard Business School, with earlier stints at Goldman Sachs and McKinsey, she joined Citi in 2004 and ran its private bank, its Latin American operations and its global consumer business before taking the top job in 2021. She has since led a deep transformation of the group, exiting retail banking in many countries, simplifying the organization and refocusing it on its strongest businesses.

WHY THIS SELECTION *She is carrying out one of the decade's most ambitious bank restructurings with method, and opening the way for other women at the top of global finance.*



Akinwumi Adesina

President · African Dev. Bank

NIGERIA · AFRICA

President of the African Development Bank since 2015, Akinwumi Adesina has put agriculture, energy and regional integration at the heart of the continent's development finance. An agricultural economist trained in the United States, he served as Nigeria's minister of agriculture, and his reforms there earned him the World Food Prize in 2017. At the Bank he launched the High 5 priorities to light up, feed, industrialize and integrate Africa, secured a historic increase in the institution's capital and mobilized tens of billions of dollars in investment.

WHY THIS SELECTION *His work translates into power capacity, harvests and concrete infrastructure for millions of Africans, with a voice heard in every major financial forum.*



Samaila Zubairu

CEO · Africa Finance Corp.

NIGERIA · AFRICA

Chief executive of Africa Finance Corporation since 2018, Samaila Zubairu leads one of the continent's foremost infrastructure finance institutions. A chartered accountant by training and former

chief financial officer of Dangote Cement, he helped structure major Nigerian industrial projects before joining AFC, a multilateral institution based in Lagos. Under his leadership it has more than doubled its assets and invested over twelve billion dollars in power, transport, telecommunications and industry across some thirty countries, including the Lobito rail corridor, while drawing new capital from Asia, the Gulf and Europe.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He shows that an African institution can finance the continent's infrastructure at scale and bring global investors into projects with measurable impact.*



Cathie Wood

Founder & CEO · ARK Invest

UNITED STATES · NORTH AMERICA

Founder and chief executive of ARK Invest, Cathie Wood built an asset manager devoted entirely to disruptive innovation. After more than three decades in finance, including at AllianceBernstein,

she launched ARK in 2014 on a conviction that was then unusual: concentrate portfolios on technologies capable of transforming whole industries, from artificial intelligence and genomics to autonomous vehicles. Her exchange-traded funds, led by ARK Innovation, and her openly published research earned her global recognition and a large following of individual investors.

WHY THIS SELECTION *She opened thematic investing and financial research to a broad public, with a transparency that remains rare in her industry.*



Noel Quinn

CEO · HSBC

UNITED KINGDOM · EUROPE

Chief executive of HSBC, Noel Quinn has spent most of his career inside one of the world's largest banking groups. He joined a British bank later absorbed by HSBC in the late 1980s and rose through the

ranks, running commercial banking in Asia and then worldwide, before taking the top job in 2019. He refocused the group on its strongest markets, from Hong Kong to the Middle East, simplified its structure and committed the bank to a net-zero pathway, reinforcing its role as a financial bridge between the West and Asia.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He steered one of the largest balance sheets on the planet through the pandemic and geopolitical tension, taking clear strategic positions on climate and on Asia.*



Adena Friedman

CEO · Nasdaq

UNITED STATES · NORTH AMERICA

President and chief executive of Nasdaq, Adena Friedman is the first woman to run a major global exchange. She joined Nasdaq as an intern in 1993, rose through its ranks, left to serve as chief financial

officer of the investment firm Carlyle, then returned and took charge in 2017. She has transformed a stock market into a global technology company, supplying trading systems, anti-financial-crime software and market data to institutions in dozens of countries, while Nasdaq continues to host the listings of the world's most valuable technology companies.

WHY THIS SELECTION *She redefined what an exchange is in the twenty-first century and showed that a market infrastructure could become a global technology player, led by a woman.*



Agustín Carstens

General Manager · BIS

MEXICO · NORTH AMERICA

General Manager of the Bank for International Settlements, the Basel institution known as the central bank of central banks, Agustín Carstens is one of the most respected voices in global finance.

Trained at the University of Chicago, he served as deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund, finance minister of Mexico and then governor of the Mexican central bank for seven years. Since arriving at the BIS in 2017, he has made innovation, central bank digital currencies and financial stability shared priorities for the world's leading monetary authorities.

WHY THIS SELECTION *He embodies a discreet but decisive form of international monetary cooperation, and from an emerging economy has exerted rare influence over the world's major central banks.*



Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala

Director-General · WTO

NIGERIA · AFRICA

Director-General of the World Trade Organization, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala is the first woman and the first African to lead the institution. An economist trained at Harvard and MIT, she spent twenty-five

years at the World Bank, rising to managing director, and twice served as Nigeria's finance minister, where she led major reforms and negotiated relief on the country's debt. A former chair of the board of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, she argues from Geneva for a global trading system that serves development, public health and the climate transition.

WHY THIS SELECTION *At the heart of a trading system under strain, she carries an African and female voice whose authority rests on concrete results delivered at every stage of her career.*

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Nominations for the 2027 edition are open

Self-nominations are accepted. Nominate at worldleaderssociety.org/wls-100.

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WEBSITE

worldleaderssociety.org

EMAIL

contact@worldleaderssociety.org

SOCIAL MEDIA

LinkedIn [world-leaders-society](#) · Instagram [@worldleaderssociety](#)





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worldleaderssociety.org

contact@worldleaderssociety.org

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