FOREWORD

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African countries have been collectively making numerous efforts to develop their economies since independence. The Lagos Plan of Action that was developed under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity in 1981 was the first continent-wide initiative that was aimed at heralding the economic independence of Africa in parallel with its political independence. This was followed by the New Partnership for Africa's Development that was endorsed by the African Union at the dawn of the new millennium to promote a comprehensive and integrated sustainable development initiative for the revival of Africa through a constructive partnership. As a continuation of the Pan African drive for self-determination, freedom, progress and collective prosperity, the African Union, at its 50th anniversary, adopted Agenda 2063 as an endogenous, shared strategic framework for inclusive growth and sustainable development for Africa's transformation.

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These three regional development initiatives have their own specificities in terms of their strategic focus. However, they all share and reflect the collective aspirations of Africans to get rid of poverty and achieve a more healthy and secured wellbeing for their people. A more detailed look at the process that led to their development also shows that there has been a progressively growing sense of ownership and endogenisation of the regional initiatives. Agenda 2063 notes that humanity today has the capacities, technology and know-how to ensure a decent standard of living and human security for all inhabitants of our earth. It also recognises the critical importance of having world-class infrastructure and human capital developed through quality education. Understanding existing and emerging knowledge and technology systems with their attendant positive and negative consequences is a critical first step for African countries to make the right policy and planning decisions. In this regard, this book makes a valuable contribution in enhancing our understanding of the key elements of developing transformational infrastructure for sustainable development.

Creating jobs and making development more inclusive are the two prominent challenges that are faced by all countries in the twenty-first century. These challenges are significantly pronounced in Africa, where there is a high level of poverty and unemployment. This book shows that the kind of infrastructure we develop today will determine the number of jobs we create and the economic and environmental wellbeing we provide for the coming decades. More specifically, it advocates for the promotion of distributed renewable energy systems and development of distributed economy networks that create jobs and add value at the local level as a preferred development path for African countries. I believe this path could also be a valuable vehicle for the economic empowerment of women at the local level besides contributing to social inclusivity and environmental sustainability. Shifting the overall focus of development from growth to wellbeing economy resonates well with the needs and aspirations of Africans.

This book, as an intellectual product of African scholars, makes a valuable contribution to the realisation of the objectives of Africa's Agenda 2063 on industrialisation, urbanisation, energy, and the environment. I encourage all African policymakers, planners, and academics to make good use of the knowledge in this book and make Africa the shining star of global sustainability in the twenty-first century.