



COMMUNIQUÉ

UUBO General Counsel Summit 2025

In association with Lex Mundi

Date: 29 July 2025

Location: Lagos, Nigeria

Theme: *Confronting Complexity. Igniting Innovation. Reinventing Resilience.*

The inaugural **UUBO General Counsel Summit 2025**, in association with Lex Mundi, convened general counsel, legal operations leaders, regulators, and international experts for a high-impact day of strategic dialogue. In an era of volatility and legal complexity, the Summit provided a cross-sector platform for exploring how GCs can lead with clarity, resilience, and foresight.

Highlights from the Agenda

Opening Remarks

The Summit opened with remarks from Aniekan Ukpanah, Senior Partner at Udo Udoma & Belo-Osagie and Chairman of the Lex Mundi Board. He welcomed delegates and emphasised the importance of collaboration in navigating legal complexity. Framing the event as a local expression of Lex Mundi's global GC programme, he highlighted the evolving role of General Counsel as strategic leaders and risk stewards. Reflecting on the Summit theme, "Confronting Complexity. Igniting Innovation. Reinventing Resilience," he encouraged participants to engage with openness and purpose, and affirmed the Summit's goal of fostering practical, forward-looking dialogue among legal decision-makers.

Keynote Address

Resilience in a Multipolar Era – Strategic Outlook for General Counsel, 2025–2026

Dr Tayo Aduloju, CEO of the Nigerian Economic Summit Group, delivered a powerful keynote mapping the geopolitical and macroeconomic shifts confronting African businesses and legal institutions. Using data from the World Bank, IMF, and UNCTAD, he highlighted how Africa's position in global trade and investment is being redefined by South-South cooperation, China's economic gravitational pull, and the rise of regional integration efforts such as AfCFTA. He warned of persistent paradoxes—high GDP growth but low per capita income and institutional fragility—and called for a recalibration of legal and regulatory frameworks to anchor inclusive development and mitigate systemic risk.

For GCs, the call to action was clear: adopt a VUCA-ready mindset (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity) and build legal teams with the agility to anticipate and respond to shock, while remaining grounded in sound governance and institutional clarity.

Operational Resilience in High-Risk Markets

Managing Security, Compliance, and Incident Response

Tim Cox, CEO of Control Risks, examined the anatomy of crisis through real-world disruption scenarios—cyberattacks, currency devaluation, political unrest, and sudden regulatory enforcement. Using the Nigerian market as a case study, he explored recent enforcement trends including FX-related licence revocations, AML crackdowns, and cybersecurity breach reporting mandates.

Tim emphasised the critical role of GCs in ensuring preparedness through business continuity planning, local legal engagement, stakeholder communication, and simulation training. His central message: “Every unresolved issue becomes a liability during crisis—proactive legal risk management must be embedded, not reactive.”

The GC Risk Agenda

Evolving Trends in AI Governance, Data Protection, and Breach Response

Moderated by Jumoke Lambo, this session brought together global and Nigerian experts to unpack the new frontier of digital risk.

Andy McDonnell, Director of Innovation at Lex Mundi, outlined how GCs are using AI-powered tools (e.g., CoCounsel, Harvey, Lexis+AI) for everything from contract lifecycle management to risk analytics. He stressed the rise of “agentic AI” and the need for legal departments to understand both the opportunities and risks of large language models—particularly in regulated sectors.

Huw Beverley-Smith, Partner at Faegre Drinker, explored evolving obligations under the EU Digital Package, including cyber-resilience rules and coordinated breach notification protocols. He urged GCs to drive alignment between AI governance, privacy, and regulatory compliance functions.

Nkem Nweke, Growth Advancement Partner at Lagos Business School, connected these risks to broader digital transformation trends in Africa—highlighting the need for legal teams to champion ethical AI, robust data frameworks, and digital literacy across business functions.

Godson Oghenechuko, a Partner at Udo Udoma & Belo-Osagie, provided strategic insights into the current and emerging trends in data protection within Nigeria. His presentation addressed the evolving data protection landscape, regulatory oversight, prevalent triggers for investigations, and other pivotal factors influencing the Nigerian data protection environment.

Drawing on her extensive experience, Jumoke Lambo, Managing Partner at Udo Udoma & Belo-Osagie and head of the firm’s data protection practice, closed the session by articulating actionable steps for minimising data breach risks. She further elaborated on the pivotal actions GCs must prioritise when responding to a breach, emphasising practical implementation..

Collectively, the panellists challenged GCs to stop viewing AI as simply a tech issue and instead, embrace it as a governance and strategy imperative, while establishing the proper framework for responsible use.

Cross-Border M&A: Lex Mundi Panel

Deals, Risks, and Regulation – Insights and Realities Across Borders

Moderated by Eric Staal, this marquee panel featured Jacob Oben (Bennani & Associés), Seth Asante (Bentsi-Enchill), Ezra Davids (Bowmans South Africa), Aleem Tharani (Bowmans Kenya), Christine Sijuwade (UUBO), and Dan Coppel (Faegre Drinker).

From Ghana's ministerial merger discretion to South Africa's public interest test and Nigeria's FCCPC-led reforms, panellists explored the shifting regulatory landscape and what it means for dealmakers. Christine Sijuwade noted that Nigerian deals are experiencing valuation volatility, regulatory uncertainty, and greater scrutiny on national security, while blended finance and local currency solutions are gaining traction.

Panellists agreed that legal due diligence is being reshaped—not just in scope but in tempo and depth—with investors demanding qualitative risk analysis, earlier regulatory engagement, and multidisciplinary legal input.

This session also served as a networking hub for cross-border counsel to connect, compare strategies, and reaffirm the value of Lex Mundi as a trusted coordination platform.

GC Panel Discussion

Steady Hands in Stormy Weather – Navigating Risk, Delivering Impact

Moderated by Ozofu Ogiemudia, this panel gathered senior legal leaders including John Aga (Seplat Energy), Yemisi Adegboye (Standard Chartered), Osose Aziba (BAT), and Festus Onyia (UUBO).

Discussions focused on building legal team resilience, managing sectoral volatility, and cultivating institutional memory. From managing internal investigations to steering post-acquisition legal transition, panellists shared practical frameworks for navigating turbulence with composure and impact.

Executive Fireside Chat

The GC Every C-Suite Executive Wants: From Risk Manager to Strategic Gamechanger

Moderated by Folake Elias-Adebowale, this candid discussion with Femi Badeji (FCMB) and Seun Oni (AG Leventis) unpacked what truly earns a GC strategic credibility. Key themes included: legal-commercial fluency, translating risk into executive decision paths, and giving CEOs “the takeaway, not the thesis.”

Panellists reinforced the GC's role as a commercial co-pilot and changemaker—and emphasised the evolving role of external counsel in helping GCs frame strategic recommendations, not just legal positions.

Closing Reflections and Networking

The Summit concluded with remarks from Aniekan Ukpanah, UUBO Senior Partner and Lex Mundi Chair, highlighting the importance of trusted collaboration and legal foresight across Africa's evolving markets. Delegates reconnected during the closing cocktail, exchanging ideas, strategies, and cross-border opportunities forged in shared purpose.

Conclusion

The **UUBO General Counsel Summit 2025**, in association with Lex Mundi, affirmed the GC's expanding mandate in an era of legal, geopolitical, and digital transformation. As the

legal function rises to meet a multipolar world, this platform reinforced the need for strategic agility, regional collaboration, and bold, risk-informed leadership.

Acknowledgement and Next Steps

We extend our sincere thanks to all speakers, panellists, and delegates who contributed their insights and energy to the success of the inaugural **UUBO General Counsel Summit 2025**, in association with Lex Mundi. Your participation reflects the strength and ambition of Africa's legal leadership community. This Summit was conceived as a platform for candour, connection, and capability-building—focused not on theory, but on empowering General Counsel to lead with clarity and confidence through complexity.

If you would like us to curate a bespoke training session for your organisation based on our practice area expertise and the topics discussed during the Summit, or if you require our legal services more broadly, please email gcs summit@uubo.org. We would be delighted to develop tailored content that addresses your organisation's specific needs and challenges.

As we look ahead, we are excited to continue growing this collaborative network. Planning is already under way for the **2026 edition** of the UUBO General Counsel Summit, and we look forward to welcoming returning and new participants as we build on this year's momentum to address the next wave of legal and strategic challenges.

For further information, contact:

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