

The bid to host the Formula 1 Grand Prix is on the grid, as Nigeria becomes another country to officially submit a proposal to host the sport in Abuja, aiming to become the first African nation in over three decades to stage the prestigious motorsport event.

According to reliable sources from Abuja, the chairman of the Nigerian National Sports Commission, Mallam Shehu Dikko, announced the development last Wednesday, describing it as a historic milestone in the country's effort to position itself on the global sports map.

In a statement released on social media, Dikko confirmed that Opus Racing Promotions has been appointed as Nigeria's official representative for the bid. He said the move is not only geared towards sports development but also a strategy to drive tourism, infrastructure growth, and economic revitalisation.

"We are exploring all possibilities to bring Formula 1 to Nigeria as soon as practicable, not just as a sporting event, but as a catalytic driver of tourism, infrastructure development, youth engagement, and economic growth," Dikko said.

He noted that the bid aligns with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Renewed Hope Initiative for Nigeria's Sports Economy (RHINSE), which aims to reset, refocus, and relaunch the sector to unlock foreign investment, increase exports, and boost GDP contribution.

Dikko added that hosting an F1 race would enhance national pride, attract global attention, and create thousands of jobs while also strengthening local infrastructure.

To demonstrate readiness, invitations have been extended to Formula 1 CEO Stefano Domenicali, seven-time world champion Sir Lewis Hamilton, and Tilke Engineers and Architects, the firm known for designing several F1 circuits, to visit Abuja and meet with key stakeholders.

"Nigeria is Africa's largest economy with significant infrastructure, international appeal, and a dynamic private sector," Dikko said. "This makes us uniquely positioned to deliver both the spectacle and logistical excellence Formula 1 demands."

He added that the proposed Abuja Grand Prix would usher in a new era for motorsport on the continent by blending world-class sport with tourism and

economic development.

In April, Dikko hosted officials from Opus Racing in Abuja for detailed discussions on the proposal. The bid has since received strong backing from the federal government, private sector leaders, and major sports stakeholders.

The bid places Nigeria in direct competition with other African nations, notably Rwanda and South Africa, all of whom are also vying to host the motorsport event on the continent.

In December last year, during the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) General Assembly held in Kigali, President Paul Kagame publicly announced Rwanda's intention to host a Formula 1 race. The announcement was made in the presence of FIA President Mohammed Ben Sulayem and other motorsport dignitaries.

The proposed Rwandan venue is a new circuit designed by former F1 driver Alexander Wurz, located near the planned Bugesera International Airport, approximately 40 kilometers from Kigali. The project is part of a broader \$1.2 billion initiative aimed at revitalizing motorsport in Africa and positioning Rwanda as a key player on the global sports stage.

President Kagame was recently in Azerbaijan for the Baku Grand Prix in September 2025 as part of a three-day official visit. During the tour, he visited the Baku City Circuit, the venue for the Formula 1 race, and engaged in discussions on potential collaborations in motorsport and other sectors.

Rwanda recently hosted the 2025 World Cycling Road Championships, becoming the first African nation to host the event in its 125-year history.

South Africa is also actively pursuing the opportunity to host a Formula 1 Grand Prix, aiming to bring the motorsport event back to the continent. The bid is centered on the Kyalami Grand Prix Circuit, located in Midrand, Gauteng, just north of Johannesburg.

The South African government has approved the bid, with plans to host the Grand Prix starting in 2027. The bid is also fully backed by private sector funding and aims to secure a three-year deal through 2029. Plans to upgrade Kyalami Circuit to meet FIA Grade 1 standards have been approved, making it eligible to host Formula 1

races once necessary works are complete.

South Africa has a rich history of hosting the Grand Prix, having staged Formula 1 races from the 1960s through the mid-1980s, before the event was removed from the calendar due to international protests against apartheid. The motorsport made a brief return in 1992 and 1993, but has not been part of the F1 calendar since then.

The outcome of these bids will significantly impact the future of motorsport on the African continent, especially now that the Netherlands has announced it will drop off the Formula 1 calendar after the 2026 season.