The Professional Fighters League (PFL) Africa will hold its mixed martial arts semifinals in Kigali on Oct. 18, the league's continental chief confirmed, though it remains unclear whether PFL Africa chairman and former UFC heavyweight champion Francis Ngannou will attend.

Ngannou missed the league's first two events in South Africa in July and August, drawing criticism from fans and PFL chairman Donn Davis, who called it "disappointing." Speaking to MMA journalist Ariel Helwani, Ngannou described the first event as "like an undercard" and said it should have highlighted African fighters more. He has indicated he may attend future events if conditions are right.

PFL Africa General Manager Elias Schulze said the league is focused on developing African talent on the continent. "These are the best fighters in Africa and some of the best in the world," Schulze said. Winners in the finals can earn up to $100,000 per category.

The Kigali semifinals add to Rwanda's growing portfolio of international sporting events. The country will host the UCI Road World Championships next month, marking the first time the event is held in Africa. Rwanda has also staged the Basketball Africa League playoffs and finals from 2021 to 2024 and is pursuing a Formula 1 Grand Prix.

"Rwanda has proven it can host world-class events. The infrastructure is there, the support is there," Schulze said, describing the semifinals as a potential draw for fans from neighboring countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda.

PFL Africa, owned by the U.S.-based PFL and backed by Helios Sports and Entertainment Group, is pursuing a Pan-African approach, aiming to showcase top talent from across the continent.

While Ngannou's attendance could boost visibility, analysts say the league's success will also depend on media coverage, fan engagement, and sustainable infrastructure for fighters.