



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY PRESIDENT
WILLIAM SAMOEI RUTO, CGH, PHD, AT THE
OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE PAN-AFRICAN
PARLIAMENT**

MAY 17TH, 2023

JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

H.E Hon Cyril Ramaphosa, The President of the Republic of South Africa,
H.E. Sen. Chief Fortune Charumbira, the President of the Pan African Parliament,
H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission,
Dr. Amina Mohamed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Excellencies Members of the Pan Africa Parliament,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I am delighted to join you today at the opening session of this year's Pan African Parliament.
2. Before I proceed, I must take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the President and government of the **Republic of South Africa, His Excellency, my Dear Brother Cyril Ramaphosa,** for the gracious reception that my delegation and I received on arrival at this beautiful country, and the warm hospitality that we have enjoyed throughout our stay. Our bonds of African fraternity and solidarity continue to grow stronger and deeper.
3. The Pan African Parliament is a critical organ of the African Union, whose full institutional potential is going to become manifest as we rally to formulate effective and sustainable solutions to the tremendous crises confronting our peoples and humanity in general. This Parliament rises higher, and goes farther than the sum of its legislative, representative and oversight mandates for Africa. It provides a fundamental deliberative forum where the peoples of Africa gather to reason exhaustively together and develop African Solutions to Africa's Problems.



4. This assembly is the august crucible where the full range of African voices, the diversity of African ideas and the variety of African insights interact and generate the principles and knowledge that we need to inform our endeavours to give present and future generations a prosperous and secure Africa and a liveable planet. I therefore congratulate all of you for the confidence you have clearly inspired to be chosen as the African peoples' representatives in this Parliament.

5. You take your seats in this House at a very critical time for Africa and the world. The world is presently confronted with a daunting array of multifaceted challenges, which range from post-pandemic recovery to the existential threat of climate change. There is also the prevailing adverse financial environment characterised by increasing interest rates and looming debt distress affecting Africa and many other regions, not forgetting the complex security implications of a delicate geopolitical crisis.

6. At this time, your leadership as members of this House is more vital than ever to guide and support all other institutions of the African Union in the pursuit of a new, ambitious and inspiring vision. It is a time to be bold, strong and resolute enough to confront these challenges with greater unity and commitment. It is time to extend our forefathers' Pan-African dream into a brave new world in order to bequeath the people of Africa and our future generations a much better, more secure and prosperous Africa that plays its role and makes its contribution in full to global affairs.

7. And we should be bold because we are the continent of the future. We are a continent of young people, hungry for a better life and a clearer role in world affairs.



8. Unfortunately, however, the discursive profile of the continent has too often been focused on the challenges and difficulties we face and the assistance we need in a way that depicts us as chronically subordinate, eternally vulnerable and perpetually incapable. As a consequence, an emerging psychology of victimhood implicates both African and global leadership in a politics of pity and helplessness. It also denies the world's youngest continental repository of unparalleled abundance the agency to articulate appropriate solutions to its own problems and to offer its unique, indispensable contributions on the broader global stage.
9. I am persuaded that our generation of African leadership has the historic mandate to retire this unhelpful profile and in its place articulate a more accurate and compelling portrait of Africa that is both faithful to fact, yet also developmentally aspirational. Through this fundamental shift, we have the opportunity to empower and mobilise our people to drive transformation, attract investment and inspire partnerships and collaborations across the world. I see a tremendously decisive role for yourselves as members of the Pan-African Parliament since you represent the voices of Africans on all issues pertaining to every sphere and sector of individual and collective endeavour.
10. The need to urgently undertake a fundamental shift in understanding Africa's global role is overwhelmingly evident on the subject of climate **change**. At the moment, conversations about climate change in Africa focus on the fact that Africa's contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions is minimal at only 4 per cent, yet the impact of consequent climate change on our people is huge. The discourse also mainly focuses on the important questions



of **compensation for loss and damage**, and funding for **adaptation and resilience**.

11. This focus, on matters that are clearly important and urgent, tends to dominate and obscure the equally imperative matter of radical economic transformation. I consider rapid economic growth to be indispensable to the achievement of stable and dignified livelihoods for all as well as the creation of lasting resilience. At the same time, I worry about mainstream perspectives where prosperity is often regarded, ironically, as incompatible with environmental sustainability and relegated to the margins of the global agenda for Africa.
12. As a matter of fact, many of Africa's global partners evasively skirt around this necessary conversation, making it difficult and uncomfortable. Explicitly and implicitly, they encourage Africa to focus on managing the consequences of climate change, since only others in the Global North are understood to possess the capacity to solve the global problem of such character and magnitude. This unjust dynamic is unnecessary and inappropriate, and only serves to hold us back from fulfilling our potential.
13. As the Chair of the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC), I fully associate myself with the consensus that has evolved among Africa's leaders, who have refused to be tethered to this unsatisfactory ideology. Instead, we have been pushing a fresh, affirmative and solution-oriented perspective. And I have come here today to ask you to join us in executing this change of course, articulating a fundamentally Pan-African principle and amplifying a new ethos that summons the world to live, produce and consume in harmony with nature.



14. The single most important priority commitment that will propel Africa to lasting security, sustainable stability and shared prosperity is an opportunity-oriented focus on climate action. Our continent's abundant wealth of natural resources, immense endowments of untapped green renewable energy and our youthful demographic profile precisely constitute the fundamental elements required to mitigate and then reverse climate change while driving a new, green industrial revolution.
15. Africa's untapped renewable energy potential is more than **50 times** the world's cumulative demand by 2030. The continent's untapped solar and wind potential is rated as 'super-abundant' in most African countries – meaning that the potential is over 1,000 times the current demand. Nearly 600 million Africans lack access to electricity, while another 150 million have highly unreliable access, and 900 million more have no access to clean cooking energy.
16. The primary cause of Africa's minimal investment in exploiting its abundant green energy potential is the lack of energy-intensive anchor demand. Such demand would make investment in additional energy generation capacity bankable, and render universal energy access possible.
17. Scientists tell us that achieving the net-zero emissions by 2050 is imperative to sustain human civilisation. Failure to reach this target will lead to devastating and irreversible impacts on ecosystems, weather patterns and sea levels. At present rates, it will be extremely difficult, if not altogether impossible, for the world's industrialised nations and fast-growing emerging economies to achieve net-zero goals on time.



18. The only way for the world to achieve the net-zero aspiration by 2050 is for countries which presently have net negative emissions, as we do in most of Africa, to make up for those on course to missing the 2050 goal. The implication of this scenario is that African countries are uniquely positioned to limit own emissions and, at the same time, contribute reductions elsewhere.
19. The opportunity therefore exists to provide energy access for all Africans by 2030, while reducing total emissions from energy generation by creating green industrial capacity in Africa, thus positioning the continent to support the global net-zero ambition.
20. The clearest pathway is to re-locate global industrial production capacity to Africa and, therefore, meet Africa's as well as the world's growing demand for goods and services in a 'green-first' manner that also enables the continent to leapfrog the industrial development path taken by the Global North. An African green industrial capacity will not only serve global demand, but it will also decarbonise global production, thereby fulfilling humanity's most ambitious climate goals.
21. For the first time in history, low- or no-emission production processes for products like steel, fertiliser and hydrogen are technically feasible, and economically efficient, thanks to Africa's abundant renewable energy potential.
22. Moreover, primary processing of essential ores presents a major opportunity for Africa to effectively balance its energy and climate ambitions. Africa has 30-40 per cent of the



world's minerals, including those on which the green energy transition depends. The availability of these significant deposits makes a compelling case for Africa to be a global hub for manufacturing. For example, the simple decision to process the 80 million tonnes of iron ore annually exported by Africa to Europe and China, and to produce steel from plants close to mines averts the emission of nearly 7 million tonnes CO₂ equivalent a year from transport. Processing the over 110 million tonnes of bauxite exported annually from Africa to Europe and Asia at aluminium factories near the mines using renewable energy can also avoid between 1.3 and 1.5 gigatonnes of CO₂ every year – which is 3 per cent of all global greenhouse gas emissions.

23. Kenya is a perfect case in point. Our comparatively small national grid is 3 Giga Watts but consists of 92% renewable energy. We aspire to make our grid 100% renewable by 2030, while executing a quantum leap in grid size to 100 Giga Watt and 100 per cent renewable by 2040. The small grid size and relatively high energy production costs in the past made it hard to attract energy-intensive industry to Kenya.
24. By recognising the need to develop industrial anchor demand, and shaping our plans accordingly, we have prioritised green industrialisation and now aim to make carbon credits one of Kenya's biggest export products. To support this, we are working on the appropriate institutional framework to anchor carbon market regulations, aligned fiscal incentives and a green-investor-friendly environment that ensures communities benefit as businesses flourish.



We are therefore organising and building our internal government capacity accordingly.

25. The same will be true for our food production: As the world embraces **regenerative agriculture**, we recognise that our agricultural practices largely comply with the new approach. We must therefore commit to apply productive technologies driven by renewable-energy such as solar-powered irrigation, along with resilient seed varieties, to increase our yields and farming in climate-smart ways to generate soil health and additional carbon revenues.
26. It is essential to point out the additional benefits of re-locating industrial production to Africa in terms of strengthening our balance of trade, easing pressure on our currencies and mitigating the vulnerability arising out of dependency on capricious supply chains as is the case of our fertiliser supply. We have all it takes to grow our industries and make Africa the clean, green factory of the world. My call today is for us to do so in a way that is **green-from-the-start** so as to capitalise on the exclusive competitive advantage we have here.
27. Another major opportunity for the continent is in carbon removal using hybrid solutions, including nature-based and technological solutions.
28. Our continent has the potential to remove over 300 million tonnes of CO₂ per year through nature-based solutions such as landscape restoration, reforestation and mangrove forest protection and expansion. These measures, at a carbon price of \$50 per tonne, could provide more than \$15 billion in revenue, more than 85 million jobs and improve



millions of livelihoods. Of course, I am well aware that the prices we currently get - on average \$5 per tonne - is unacceptably unfair given that elsewhere, prices go up to between \$100-\$200 per tonne.

29. Regarding engineered solutions, Kenyan start ups are exploring the use of the Rift Valley geological formations for mineralised storage to replicate the successes reported elsewhere in geologically comparable landscapes such as Iceland.
30. Market and market access are issues of cardinal significance. As we articulate growth strategies centred on green development opportunities in our continent, we must also establish enabling policies and regulations that foster incentives to make Africa an attractive destination for the growing pool of global capital seeking climate positive opportunities.
31. The Africa Continental Free Trade Area Agreement is a major step in the right direction to the extent that it seeks to enhance trade within the continent and presents the continent as one large trading area. It is absolutely essential to set up a sound global regime of trade and market with robust incentives for low-emission production of goods and services with lower emissions. Such a framework would position Africa as the world's most competitive industrial, investment and trade destination.
32. I wish to direct your attention to the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) and the potential negative impact it will have on African exports. Our exports are produced in older and smaller industrial



facilities that are not managed to minimise emissions compared to their European counterparts. The EU's mechanism is transmitting the most emphatic demand signal and lays down a set of incentives that make low-emission production competitive. This is exactly what Africa can offer through transition.

33. We have a responsibility to ensure that global carbon markets maintain the highest standard of integrity to most efficiently channel benefits and rewards to the communities that do the hard work of protecting and expanding carbon sinks or innovating new ways to avoid or permanently remove greenhouse gases. Our international partners must provide market access and make the right kind of capital available to invest in our potential.
34. On finance and capital, at the Paris Agreement as well as earlier - in Copenhagen in 2009 - it had been agreed that developed countries would make available \$100 billion every year for developing countries. Disappointingly, the amount has never fully materialised. As a result, this figure has become increasingly contentious and divisive in every other conference.
35. By contrast, I invite you to consider the Global Finance Alliance for Net Zero, which was launched at COP26 in Glasgow in 2021. The Alliance unites nearly 600 financial institutions who have jointly invested \$4 billion in energy transition towards net zero – an amount that African investment opportunities hardly tap into.
36. This variety of capital that is out in search of green investment opportunities is tapping into a rapidly growing global demand. Other regions appreciate this opportunity –



and are charging ahead. For example, the United State's **Inflation Reduction Act** provides nearly \$370 billion in tax incentives and government spending towards clean energy and climate technology. The EU has made \$1 trillion available for the **European Green Deal** over and above new trade rules under the **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism** that make importers pay for the embedded carbon in their products.

37. The planet simply cannot afford to channel a paltry **0.6 per cent of renewable** investment to Africa at a time when the continent is home to over **40 per cent of the planet's best renewable energy resources**. Our statistics on sustainability, efficiency and green compliance are astounding. I mentioned earlier that we can create energy access for all by 2030, while reducing total emissions related to energy generation by at least 80 per cent and emissions per MWh by well over 90 per cent with 30 per cent lower costs. However, it entails a 40 per cent higher upfront investment than the current policy pathway. If Africa is to be the green industrial powerhouse of the world, much more investment is needed.
38. This position aligns very closely with the ongoing discussions in the **Bridgetown Initiative**, whose principles, achievements and aspirations we must applaud. A decision, in line with the Bridgetown call for action, to channel a greater proportion of global concessional finance to emerging and frontier economies and link it closely to climate action, would make necessary concessional capital available to de-risk and attract private investment. This is precisely the outcome that decades of economic distress



and underdevelopment in the Global South deserves and must have.

39. Moreover, as the global financial reform movement considers debt restructuring, the sustainability of debt relief is a major shared concern. Many of the countries in debt distress benefited from debt relief accorded to **Highly Indebted Poor Countries** in the 1990s. It is clear, therefore, that debt relief did not automatically usher in significant economic growth. To liberate economies from this vicious cycle, positive growth that is sensitive to the climate and biodiversity agenda is needed. This is growth that builds on all of our assets. African countries possess inherent competitive potential to emerge as clean green global manufacturing hub.
40. A critical growth opportunity that can be the starting point for our intentional efforts in pursuit of our aspirations is fiscal space arising from both debt restructuring and blended capital, combined with economic growth that increases tax revenues and positions African countries to invest more in adaptation and resilience.
41. I submit to you, in this esteemed assembly, that by taking these measures with a degree of both urgency and resolve, Africa's leaders can energise our economies and inspire the people with a new vision centred on investment and growth **in harmony with our planet**. In doing so, our generation will have discharged a tremendous historic developmental mandate, while realising our common global ambition to arrest and ultimately reverse climate change. We will also make it possible for our economies to meet the needs and fulfil the hopes of a young workforce which grows at the



annual rate of 30 million, requiring us to generate millions of decent jobs every year.

42. Your work, therefore, is clearly cut out, and your assignment well defined. By facilitating robust and continuous discourse on the broadest cross-section of Africa, this Parliament will simultaneously employ the 'federative' transmission of ideas from discrete grassroots agencies to the global and continental multilateral and intergovernmental fora and, at the same time, engage the devolutionary mechanism of domesticating global standards and international norms.
43. Although the theme of this session is 'The African Continent at A Crossroads', our discussion has enlarged our field of deliberation to encapsulate possibilities that transcend our defining dilemma of past decades. For a while, Africa has struggled with an implied trade-off between economic growth and prosperity on one hand, and environmental sustainability on the other. We can now agree that, given the transitional imperative, it is possible for Africa to execute clean green industrialisation that can enable the rest of the world attain the net-zero target as well. We finally have the answer to the dilemma and, with it, our way out of the thematic crossroads: **Africa is the answer.**
44. If Africa is indeed the **young, green continent of the future** and the locus of the next industrial revolution, African solutions are no longer restricted to Africa's problems; they also address humanity's problems effectively.



45. Aspirations often come with the problem of implementation. The Concept Paper contains a statement that I approve unreservedly: "A sound policy framework should begin with formulation and end with implementation. But worldwide, policy development is frequently prioritised without regard for performance. Development partners tend to focus more on providing resources for policy development rather than implementing the policies. This situation has resulted in heaps of policy documents gathering clouds of dust on the shelves of government offices."
46. As legislators, you are mandated not only to formulate law and policy, but also to rigorously oversee their implementation. To ensure that the African Union performs at the level of its aspirations, it will be necessary for you, as legislators, representatives and overseers, to make sure that it empowers itself with sufficient capacity. Otherwise, African Solutions, Agenda 2063, the Africa Continental Free Trade Area and the Young, Clean Green Continent of the Future will remain mere pipedreams.
47. The AU Reform Agenda must therefore become a priority this session, and you must interrogate and conduct the process to ensure that structurally, the roles of the Bureau, Summits, Committees, Regional Caucuses, Secretariat and Commission are duly rationalised to give Africa a fit-for-purpose continental governance body worth its name.
48. To do so, this honourable assembly will urgently review the funding arrangements to ensure that AU budgets are financed primarily by members and secondarily by external partners. In turn, this will require a mechanism where AU



member States are up-to-date with their contributions with regard to all their commitments.

49. As matters stand, our most core mandates depend on the goodwill of development partners, including critical peace and security matters. This needs to change. African solutions must look like solutions and, in principle, they ought to emanate from member States.
50. With this vision in mind, I sought and was privileged to receive the approval of the **African Union's Head of States and Governments Summit** to have the honour of hosting the **African Climate Summit** in Nairobi this year. This will be a major gathering of African and global leaders to deliberate and consolidate a clear African position and clear African voice as we project our agenda in the **Global Stocktake** engagements and the build up to the **COP28**. The summit also provides an opportunity to highlight and forge consensus on the modalities of unlocking Africa's vast potential to positively impact the climate agenda and rally the world to tap the numerous opportunities that Africa presents towards global net-zero ambition.
51. I invite you all to Nairobi to join us at that summit, and to take part in that broader journey and vision.
52. For Africa to hold meaningful discussions with global partners, African heads of State and government have resolved that partnership summits by external parties shall be reviewed with a view to providing an effective framework for African Union partnerships. Africa will be represented by the Troika, namely the current incoming



and outgoing chairpersons of the African Union, the Chairperson of the AU Commission, and the Chairpersons of the Regional Economic Communities as well as the Chairperson of NEPAD.

53. **The United Nations is an important forum for transacting global affairs in diplomacy, peace, security and trade, among others. But Africa, and indeed the Global South, finds itself disadvantaged by the current configuration of the UN, a configuration that was established close to 80 years ago after the Second World War.**
54. **But the world has since changed tremendously. Countries that had not become self-determining have since attained independence and are making a huge contribution to their peoples, continents and the world. It is, therefore, time to reform the UN Security Council and change it from an exclusive club of 5 permanent members to a more representative global council that works for the interests of the whole world. Africa demands and deserves two permanent seats at the Security Council.**
55. **We must therefore work together to make our continent prosperous so that it serves our people now and generations to come, and improve our relationships with global business and global investments.**

Thank you all for your kind attention. God Bless Africa.

