



MS MU LETSIE

**DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH
AFRICA**

ON THE OCCASION OF

**POLICY DIALOGUE FORUM ON THE OUTCOMES OF THE 38TH AU SUMMIT:
TURNING POINT FOR REPOSITIONING THE AU FOR A NEW ERA?**

ORGANIZED BY AMANI AFRICA AND AU ECOSOCC

27 FEBRUARY 2025

SHERATON HOTEL

TIME: 14:00

Distinguished guests,
Esteemed colleagues,
Fellow panellists,
Programme Director,

It is an honour to join you today at this vital policy dialogue forum convened to discuss the 38th African Union Summit. I would like to extend my gratitude to the organisers of this meeting for inviting me to be part of this important conversation.

As we gather here, we are reminded of our shared commitment to advancing the collective aspirations of our continent, particularly the outcomes of the Summit. One of the key outcomes and, in my opinion, historic moments from the Summit were the successful elections of the new Senior Leadership of the AU Commission.

Programme Director,

It is no secret that this Summit was hugely anticipated by Member States and its citizens of the continent because of the elections. The significance of these elections was amplified because they were not taking place in a vacuum but were located within a particular framework in the life of the Union.

In understanding the current shift in the geopolitics of the globe and our region, it was important that we get a leadership that could help us weather the storm towards the realisation of the Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan of Agenda 2063 as the only comprehensive plan that delivers on the aspirations of the continent and keeps us resilient to external shocks.

Programme Director,

This is why the most significant lesson about this past Summit was witnessing the collective resolve of Member States to see the Union function in the way it was supposed to. From the onset, there was a consistent push from the majority of Member States, for the elections to take place. The common understanding was that the Union deserved a leadership that could take it forward, most critical being the election for the Chairperson and the Deputy Chairperson.

A key component to this process was collectively encouraging Member States not to withhold their votes, thus preventing a two thirds majority. It was important to highlight how that could be detrimental to the future of the Union. It was clear that the consequences of being unable to undertake these elections would have paralysed the Union. Not only would it have involved more costs, but it would have also halted and disrupted the decision-making processes within the Commission.

Perhaps one the key moments that truly depicted this and became an important lesson was the elections for the AU Peace and Security Council which had taken place a few

days prior, during the Executive Council. It showed us the dangers of withholding the two thirds majority vote, subsequently halting the appointment of a member from the northern region to the PSC. As we speak, the Peace and Security Council is disadvantaged because it is not going to be fully representative of all the respective regions, until the elections are held.

Colleagues,

I think there was a maturity that was witnessed amongst Member States which bore credence to the values of this Union towards integration, collective decision making and a resolve towards building and strengthening the Union. We had recently witnessed what could go wrong, there was a critical lesson to be learned. Should there be a front-runner in the race and there is a clear indication that this is the direction the Union is moving, irrespective of whether it's your preferred candidate or not, there should be a collective decision and agreement that the Union should not be rendered dysfunctional.

Programme Director,

In our view, the other significant moment for the continent was that the Summit took place during South Africa's presidency of the G20 marking the second year of the African Union's participation as a permanent member in the G20.

It is for the first time that Africa holds the G20 presidency, and we believe that we must leverage this moment to drive global governance reforms that align with Africa's development agenda. Under the "Solidarity, Equality and Sustainability theme," South Africa prioritises issues that resonate deeply with our continent's needs. These priorities include securing urgent progress on shared goals through a number of priority actions. These include strengthening disaster resilience and response, ensuring debt sustainability for low-income countries, mobilising finance for a just energy transition, and harnessing critical minerals for inclusive growth and development. These are objectives and essential pillars for accelerating Agenda 2063, our blueprint for Africa's socio-economic transformation.

As we reflect on Agenda 2063, we must recognise the importance of strong institutional leadership and coherent policy implementation. The aspirations outlined in Agenda 2063, particularly Aspiration 7, call for Africa to be a strong and influential global partner. The AU and South Africa's permanent membership of G20 provides a platform to assert our collective voice and advocate for policies that address the aspirations of "Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want."

In line with the participation modalities and identified priorities, the new leadership of the African Union Commission should strengthen Africa's position within the G20, ensure meaningful participation, and ensure that the continent's voice is heard in global decision-making.

Programme Director,

South Africa has established three Task Forces during its G20 presidency focusing on inclusive economic growth, food security, and artificial intelligence. This underscores our commitment to fostering an environment where no one is left behind. These initiatives will facilitate discussions that resonate not only within the G20 but also across our nations, aligning with the AU's Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan.

Moreover, the G20 Social Forum, which will precede the Leaders' Summit, represents an unprecedented opportunity for civil society engagement. By bringing together diverse voices, we aim to ensure that the perspectives of our citizens are reflected in the decisions made at the highest levels of global governance.

Esteemed colleagues,

We must approach this presidency with unity and purpose as we move forward. South Africa's permanent Membership and the African Union's elevation to a permanent member of the G20 are testaments to our collective strength. We must capitalise on this status to advocate for a more equitable global system that prioritises the needs and aspirations of the Global South.

Let us reaffirm our commitment to working together, ensuring that Africa's interests are represented and prioritised in the G20 discussions. As we engage with our global partners, remember that our strength lies in our unity and shared vision for a prosperous and inclusive Africa.

Asante sana