

Parliament. Africa Day Event, 25 May 2022

Thank, you Moderator

Presiding Officers – NCOP Chairperson

Honourable Members

Ladies and gentleman

I stand on the protocol read out by our Moderator

Happy Africa Day!

Let me begin by thanking our Parliament for hosting this Africa Day public event, and also for inviting me to be part of this distinguished panel that will be engaging us this afternoon. Deputy Minister Botes, thank you for being here; and for the energy you have injected into South Africa’s foreign policy since your appointment. Ambassador Danghor, you are now at the NCOP. We used to be colleagues at DIRCO – we worked together when you were our Ambassador in Libya, and later, we became neighbors, as advisers to the former SA foreign minister.

The South African Parliament is a big player in the foreign policy space, as an institution; but also in the role that honourable members play in holding the executive accountable. I have been here on many occasions, to participate in the work of your dynamic committees.

Today’s topic is not about Parliament, at least directly; but an opportunity for us to reflect on the state and future of our continent as Africans. The topic we have been given is: “From Pandemics to Endemics: Building an Integrated, Prosperous and Peaceful Africa beyond the COVID 19 Pandemic”.

This topic is expecting too much from us, and reminds me of two African proverbs. The first one says “No matter how old you may be, the future will always be ahead of you”. That is, You’ll never reach the other side of the future to know it before it happens. For me with my tall height, this proverb is calling me to order, not to start thinking that my height will enable me, like at a soccer match, to see over the heads of

others, into the future. For now, and in this session, we can only rely on human tools like projections, probability, scenarios, and the deceptive concept of speculation, to attempt to peep into the future, and take our chances. After all, we can't function without trying to predict what is likely to happen next.

The second proverb is not just philosophical; it also touches on a difficult subject in theoretical physics. It says, "A bird that flies off the earth and lands on an anthill, is still on the ground". Are the past, present and the future three distinct temporal zones, or, as some claim in physics and philosophy, just different locations, different points, on the same mountain? I will not attempt to answer this difficult question. I don't even have enough grounding in this subject to attempt to do so.

I will try, with the little I know, with my limited experience of our continent, to propose to you a few ideas to help us think together about the future of our continent, beyond today.

In preparing myself for this engagement, I tried to peruse through futures studies and scenarios that are available on the internet and in our libraries. Sadly, almost all of them were undertaken before our encounter with covid19, and none had even predicted that humanity will be hit by a pandemic of this magnitude.

Honourable members,

From where I stand, I can see five future trends that should be of great concern to us as a continent, and these are:

1. Technology
2. The new Cold War
3. The Space Age
4. What I call The Butterfly Effect factors; and
5. The People Dynamic

Technology has had a transformative effect on humans since the pre-historic times when our ancestors discovered fire, and it will continue to do so into the near and long

term future. The question is however, the role and place of Africa in these technological trends. We are taught in school that humans have undergone four major technological revolutions, beginning with the the first one that occurred in Great Britain towards the end of the 18th century.

During this 1st Industrial Revolution, of textile machines – Africa’s contribution was as a source of slave labour and colonies for their raw materials and riches. These were the formative years of what has become known in world-system theory as the “development of underdevelopment”.

During the 2nd industrial revolution of Fordism with its cars; the period of as gas and oil, that occurred at the end of the 19th century, into the 20th century – most of Africa was still under colonial rule; under the yoke of colonial oppression and subjected to super exploitation of our human and natural resources.

The 3rd industrial revolution of electronics/computers occurred during our lifetime, in the 1970s. Here, most of Africa, except for a few of us in Southern Africa, was now an independent continent, with the erstwhile OAU already in place. But during this transformative technological wave, we were just user and admirers of computers.

We are now in the midst of what we believe to the 4th Industrial Revolution - the era of the Internet of Things, Big Data, Artificial Intelligence, and the Metaverse. Even here, as we speak, Africa is just a dependent user and an overzealous consumer. And we are not about to be a big player, as inventors and producers in this new wave, called the 4th Industrial Revolution.

Our attitude and approach is to consume more and more, and possesses more and more of these new technologies. By contrast, in other regions, in other countries across the world, the approach is to setup top-end technology centres to generate own patents, own machines, own inventions. Not just consume, just use, what others have invented for you.

And by the way, some of these inventors whose technologies have taken over our lives, like Facebook, were just mere kids when they came up with their inventions. For an entire continent like ours, none of us is yet to match this kid and come up with an invention that will disrupt and transform our daily lives.

I do not want to be misunderstood to be discounting, or dismissing, the historical, political economy context to constraints facing our continent. But I am no longer prepared to continue looking at myself, always, as a victim.

Honourable Members

The New Cold War is upon us. Just a few months ago, none of us would have thought that this New Cold War will happen so soon. Like the previous one, of the 1950s to the end of the 1990s, if we are not careful, our continent will become a zone for bloody proxy wars; and we will be forced to choose sides. My enemy's enemy should become my enemy.

In the past, during the previous Cold War, Africa's response was divided between choosing sides and the non-alignment of the NAM. We have to find an answer to this question as individual countries, and collectively as the African Union. Are we going to choose sides like we did before, or we will opt for non-alignment; and if so, how different should this non-alignment be?

Honourable Members

I believe that the 21st century will enter history as the Space Age. I define the Space Age as a period when planet earth, our terrestrial base, will be merged into one spatial continuum, with our immediate, outer space – at least within our solar system. Humans will soon settle on Mars; they will soon colonise celestial bodies like the Moon, the satellite to our planet.

Thinking back to the end of the 15th century - that's how the Western part of Europe came to conquer and dominate our planet, to this day. When those Europeans reached what became known as the Americas, and others rounded the Cape in search of a way to the East, Europe was no different from the rest of us. But since then, from those conquests and the colonisation of the world, Europe transformed itself into a center of our universe to become our economic and knowledge hub, overtook all of us, while under-developing the rest of us.

The same is about to happen. The next gold rush will not be to colonies across oceans, but the rush to lands into the outer space. The African Union has Agenda 2063, with a set of flagship projects, accelerators. One of them is the AFRICA OUTER SPACE STRATEGY. And the AU says: (to quote) "The Africa outer space strategy aims to strengthen Africa's use of outer space to bolster its development. Outer space is of critical importance to the development of Africa in all fields: agriculture, disaster management, remote sensing, climate forecast, banking and finance, as well as defence and security. Africa's access to space technology products is no longer a matter of luxury and there is a need to speed up access to these technologies and products. New developments in satellite technologies make these accessible to African countries and appropriate policies and strategies are required to develop a regional market for space products in Africa." (Close quote)

You can see from this thinking, that our orientation and level of ambition is quite timid and largely terrestrial. For me, the transformative aspect of space technology is in enabling humans to occupy other planets, to turn them into our alternative home; and to encounter other civilisations and intelligent species, beyond. Those who will be there, settling in these lands, will be the winners of the 21st century. And Africans won't be among them, unless we do something different, beginning with changing our unambitious mind-set about the outer space and space technology.

Three actions for SA –

- Move space agency to the presidency,
- Establish a strategic consortium of key stakeholders (politics, research, academic, industry), and
- Reach out to global partners to train Africans in areas where we have no capability – to produce African astronauts to join their colleagues for research at the International Space Station.

Honourable Members

The Butterfly Effect factors – chaos theory - phenomenon that appears insignificant or marginal, but that has catastrophic effect on humans and our well being -

- pandemics,
- climate change.

We have to prepare better. Two lesson from COVID 19:

- Our concept of disaster was very narrow.
- We have to proactively build State resilience to external and unexpected shocks.

Finally, the fifth future trend – the People Dynamic – it's about our livelihood, cohabitation, and prosperity as a species.

- Migration,
- Demographic explosion,
- Youth factor – unemployment, opportunity
- Diversity management; and
- Food, water and energy security.

China is a recent example that abject poverty can be eradicated.

- Namibia- wheat and maize production – thanks to Covid
- Burundi – thanks to sanctions

- Eradication of malaria – Unnecessary loss of life.

Honourable Members

We need to action two transformative interventions if Africa we are to respond adequately to these future trends, and to emerge a better continent. These are:

- Transform the Africa Union
- Transform the African state

The Reforms

The main attention of the AU has been the consolidation of the AU Institutional Reform process championed by H.E. Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda. The core reform priority areas endorsed by the Assembly of the AU through numerous decisions are:

- (a) Focus on key priorities with continental scope;
- (b) Realignment African Union institutions in order to deliver against those priorities;
- (c) Connect the African Union to its citizens;
- (d) Manage the business of the African Union efficiently and effectively at both the political and operational levels;
- (e) Finance the African Union sustainably and with the full ownership of the Member States.

What reforms of International organizations entail (what do they want to achieve)? - look at cases of the EU and UN.

- a) Vision and goal setting; and how to get there or achieve this goal.
- b) Legal - improving existing legal framework. EU case of harmonizing its treaties.
- c) Institutional - creating new institutions or transforming existing ones.

- d) Technical competence - improving the competency of the Secretariat or Commission for program execution, budget etc.
- e) Working Methods - meetings etc.
- f) Harmonization, alignment and integration - relations with related bodies. UN system-wide. Relations with RECs and inter organ harmonisation and rationalization.
- g) Participation - of member states and non state actors.
- h) Sustainable self-financing model

Not the first reforms. AU's Stages of reforms

- a) Ideological - the formative years of the 1960s (the Founders Period)
- b) The OAU Charter Review, beginning in the 1970s
- c) The Era of Plans without Champions (key role played by the ECA under Prof Adedeji) - Lagos Plan of Action and Abuja Treaty
- d) The Transition (the Era of Champions) - from OAU to AU (1990s to 2000)
 - Outlawing coups through the rejection of unconstitutional change of government (the Algiers and Lomé measures).
 - Acceptance of the Trinity of sustainable development, peace and security, and democracy and good governance, in our approach to and agenda for continental integration.
 - The birth of NEPAD and the APRM
 - The birth of Architectures (AGA and APSA)
 - The advent of the doctrine of Shared Values.
 - African ownership of our problems and African leadership in the determination of our destiny.
- e) Union Government Debate

- Ideological debate about the United States of Africa
 - Approach and model of integration – accelerated approach through a strong Executive at the centre versus the staggered model building on the RECs
 - AU Audit by Prof Adedeji
 - Exploration of alternative methods for self-financing of the Union under HE President Obasanjo
- f) Current Institutional consolidation – under the rubric of the Kagame Reforms

AU Reforms Tracks and Achievements

- a) Ideological - Pan Africanism - Union Government debate (refined this outlook and approach). Don't take this for granted as an achievement.
- b) We have established Messianic concept of African Renaissance – Africa as a sleeping giant that is about to rise and claim its rightful place in history to save Africans and bring them pride. In Christianity, the Messiah will decide when to return. By contrast, the realisation of the African Renaissance depends on human agency.
 - i. Began in the 19th century in the African Diaspora as the “Regeneration of Africa”. Its progenitors – Alexander Crummel, Martin Delany, Edward Blyden. We know of Pixley ka Seme 1906 lecture at Columbia university. African Americans had reason to towards a Messianic Africa because they were descendants of slaves and subjected to most cruel racist treatment. They had no home in their own home.
 - ii. Then Renascent Africa of Azikiwe in the 1930s

- iii. Took different forms/mutations in the immediate post independence period
 - 1. Nkrumah Consciencism
 - 2. Nyerere Ujamaa – African socialism
 - 3. Negritude
 - 4. African Humanism etc
 - iv. The contribution of the African intelligentsia – Cheik Anita Diop, Samir Amin and his De-Linking; Fanon, Cabral, Ali Mazrui’s Triple Heritage, etc.
 - v. The African Renaissance of the Mbekis in the 2000s
 - vi. The short-lived, pre-covid - “Africa Rising” of recent years – advanced by the private sector and international agencies
 - vii. Now overshadowed by Agenda 2063, and now the COVID19 demoralizing counter, narrative.
- c) Institutional – the creation of the OAU, AU and its organs, and the RECs
 - d) Programmatic - Agenda 2063
 - e) Legal - legal instruments, Constitutive Act, evolution of AU jurisprudence,
 - f) Self-Financing model based on the scale of assessment, plus the ongoing Kagame reforms model for alternative ways of self-financing (based on a revenue formula at country level).
 - g) Participation - of member states through the various Policy Organs. And Union of the people (the ECCOSOCC).
 - h) Relations with the external world – through Partnerships, participation at UN, etc.

i) Kagame Reforms innovation Versus the Union Government Debate which was largely ideological and about vision and goal setting, and how to get there (at the goal).

- Technical competence of our institutions / organs; plus role clarification; plus technical competency of elected officials
- Working methods of the Union
- Accelerated integration through the CFTA
- Self financing

Next step - Reforming the Reforms

- Institutionalize the reforms. They should not depend on great individuals, because such individuals will not always be there.
- Every four years, just before the election of the new AUC.

Transforming the African state

Our three core (Trinity) challenges -

- Peace and security
- Development
- Governance – is the most difficult of the three for two reasons.

The first reason is because of - the Triple significance of governance to Africa -

- Governance As a root cause to our problems – governance accounts for the existence of the other two challenges – development and peace and security.
- Governance As a bottleneck (the absence or lack of good governance becomes a stumbling bloc to moving Africa forward); and
- Governance As an enabler (the presence or existence of good governance makes the forward movement of Africa possible)

The second reason why Governance is the most difficult of the Trinity challenges - emanates from when we think of the African state in its multidimensional form

- Its institutional form – government, parliament, bureaucracy, etc
- Aspirational dimension (humans create the state for a reason; the same way that a serial killer’s evil deeds would be driven by a moral cause). Even dictatorial regimes have aspirations, an intended purpose by their creators. These aspirations are expressed through our political ideas, the laws we pass, the brutality we may inflict on others, etc.
- The personal (the most difficult) – the warm body. The personal ambition of people. Personalities – some of us are very moody, and we take this personality with us when we become leaders. We can’t separate ourselves from it. It’s impossible. Some of us like money, some don’t. Some find it genuinely difficult to step down from the chair when the time has come – as a function of their personality. We encounter such personalities even in churches or small organizations like a stokvel or a soccer club.

The APRM approaches the state in this multidimensional form

- We propose interventions in the Five areas touching on the institutional and aspirational dimensions of the state
- The peer-part of our work – is related to leaders as persons, as human beings; for leaders to give feedback to each other.

In conclusion, in summary - Key Themes for the Immediate Post Pandemic Period

- a. Peace and security (Silencing the Guns) – in the Horn
- b. Governance contestations
 - i. over elections,
 - ii. the Constitution, and

- iii. Unconstitutional change of government.
- c. The Reforms of the African Union – the next phase
- d. Development questions –
 - i. infrastructure,
 - ii. The CFTA,
 - iii. Climate Change
- e. Socio-economic agenda as articulated in Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030
- f. Africa in the world, post Ukraine.

Moderator, they say “When you show the moon to a child, it sees only your finger”. I hope I have not become that child today – only pointing out the problems. My intention was to also suggest some next steps. I hope I was able to help in that regard.

I thank you.