



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**MAIDEN ADDRESS STATEMENT BY HIS
EXCELLENCY HON. WILLIAM SAMOEI RUTO,
PhD, C.G.H., PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
KENYA DURING THE 36TH ORDINARY
SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF HEADS OF
STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF THE
AFRICAN UNION**

AU HEADQUATERS, ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

18th FEBRUARY 2023

**H.E. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal and
Chairperson of the African Union
Your Excellences, Heads of State and Government,
H.E. Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat: Chairperson of the African
Union Commission,
Heads of the Organs and Institutions of the African Union
and Regional Economic Communities;
Excellences,
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. I am delighted to have the honour of joining your Excellencies and highly privileged to be accorded this opportunity to deliver my inaugural address to this 36th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union, as the 5th President of the Republic of Kenya.
2. I bring you warm greetings on behalf of the people of Kenya, and through your Excellencies, send best wishes to all our African brothers and sisters. I also thank you all for the immense goodwill and support that you and your governments have shown to Kenya over the course of time.
3. I must also take a moment to appreciate, with tremendous gratitude the warm welcome and reception accorded to my delegation and I, since our arrival in in this charming and historic capital, Addis Ababa. As always, Ethiopia has been a gracious and generous host, and we do not take it for granted.
4. I have no doubt, that we all present here today, share the insistent and pervasive spirit of optimism and confidence about the future prospect of our continent and its peoples. Africa is vibrating at a new frequency and moving to the music of the future, inspired, bold and unbounded.
5. Africa is the world's most youthful continent; 70% of our people are under the age of 30 years. And like youthful beings, our best days are ahead of us.

6. We have immense potential, which we can only actualise by transcending tremendous challenges. In Africa's hope lies urgency, and her opportunities are inside narrow openings. We have the power to win, but only if we move fast.
7. More than half a century since the wind of change swept through our continent, ushering in that bright dawn of African self-determination, our struggle against poverty and underdevelopment is yet to be won. Too many of our people lead a precarious existence without any guarantees of health, safety or dignity. In a continent with the largest tracks of arable land, too many people still go hungry.
8. For the most part, vital infrastructure is severely underdeveloped in many places on our continent. Within the reality of an increasingly hostile climate, life is unbearably difficult, and whatever little infrastructure exists, is prone to disasters induced by climate change.
9. 600 million Africans have no access to electricity, and 970 million live without clean cooking energy. Our continent has the lowest rates of electricity access (43%), even though our population growth rate is more than twice the global average (2.5%).
10. Beyond Africa's gloomy profile and underachievement lies a continent bursting with potential and a vast endowment of natural resources.
11. Currently, our energy generation capacity and connectivity rates fall far below the levels required to support the continent's aspirations for economic growth. At the same time, Africa's renewable energy potential is 50 times greater than the anticipated global electricity demand for the year 2040.

12. I am employing the case of Africa's meagre electricity production and supply, vis a vis its immense generation potential to illustrate our continent's paradox, whereby desperate unmet needs lie side by side with colossal opportunity.
13. One cause for strong optimism about Africa's future is the fact that resolute political commitment and effective action stand between desperate need and obvious abundance. The other is the fact that political will has been summoned before and deployed to achieve a feat whose magnitude is historic.
14. The successful negotiation which led to **80%** ratification of the African Continental free Trade Area (AfCFTA), required **political will** on a scale that had no precedent, especially considering that this took place in the midst of a devastating global pandemic.
15. I am under no illusion whatsoever that executing the leap from scarcity to abundance, and from poverty to prosperity, is as easy as it sounds. Yet I am also confident that we, dear Excellencies, have what it takes not only to set out and try, but also to persist and ultimately, succeed.
16. We must leverage our substantial capacity for renewable energy to spur our development. Africa abounds with solar, wind, geothermal and hydro power potential. The **Grand Inga** dam alone, has the potential to provide up to 40 per cent of Africa's electricity needs.
17. Our continent is also home to **60%** of the world's best solar resources, and as technology improves, it will undoubtedly become the cheapest source of power in many parts of the continent. Over time, we have also developed world class competence in geo-thermal energy production.
18. Additionally, Africa accounts for over 40% of global reserves of cobalt, manganese and platinum – key minerals for battery components and hydrogen technologies.

19. Our opportunity is now at hand, to lead the world and demonstrate that we can industrialize our way into shared prosperity in a low carbon and sustainable manner, and that we can make this century, the African Century, in which our economies finally leapfrog by harnessing our vast endowment of clean energy resources. A future is powered by Africa.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

20. It is a notorious fact that Africa is the least responsible for climate change, yet it bears the brunt of the negative impacts from industrialized carbon emitters. Nevertheless, we must lead the way in choosing green growth as the critical pathway to a sustainable future, and our chosen mode of delivering economic prosperity for our people.

21. In Kenya, we are on an ambitious green growth agenda. More than 40 years ago we embarked on this journey by investing in geo-thermal power generation. Currently, our grid is 92% renewable, projected to be 100% clean energy by 2030. We are also extending the green agenda to other sectors, such as green manufacturing, sustainable agriculture, green urbanization and green transportation.

22. Renewable energy can be deployed towards 'green-from-the-start industrial development', which would make products from Africa, premium, clean, and with low carbon footprint for international trade and commerce.

23. For Kenya and the rest of the continent to achieve green industrialization based on renewables, there is need to attract financing and investment.

24. For countries to successfully surmount the global crises of climate emergency, biodiversity loss, pollution and debt distress, and for economies to drive green industrial revolution, **more** and **better** financing is indispensable, from both the public and private sectors.
25. However, by its very design, the post-war global financial architecture has always been ill-equipped to address the multiplicity of global challenges and certainly does not reflect the global economic and geopolitical diversity and complexity and has the least regard for the global South.
26. It is just and appropriate that Africa takes an active role in driving the momentum towards a new global financial order, which transcends the constraints of our geopolitical frontiers and aligns with possibilities beyond the parochial hegemonic imperatives that framed the current financial ecosystem .
- 27.** The leadership transition underway at the **World Bank**, may be opportune for us to contribute our voice and initiate the overdue conversation about the need to re-imagine the international financial system, beginning with the unavoidable reform of the Bank, to make it responsive, climate sensitive, and **fit for purpose**.
- 28.** Part of the objectives of these reforms must be to embed accountability into the financial system in terms that compel actors to reckon with the actual cost of their environmentally harmful practices while recognizing loss and damage occasioned on others.
29. As long as industrialised nations remain at liberty to switch on coal and fossil-fuel energy sources with impunity, every measure, framework, mechanism, and policy will be rendered futile, and all hope of success in climate action will be lost.

- 30.** The nexus between climate change and conflict, insecurity and instability is now well established. Similarly, stability, safety and security are broadly acknowledged to be the underlying enablers of economic development. For Africa, climate action equals development.
- 31.** The failure of both climate financing mechanisms and multilateral development financing to imagine Africa as a legitimate stakeholder, represents a most regrettable **injustice**. The **financial marginalisation** of legitimate African developmental interests constitutes a **negative policy** to perpetuate the global cycle of inequality and exploitation, deprive Africa of necessary tools to build resilience and render the continent vulnerable to adverse impacts, including conflict.
32. For global development finance to be future-proof, it must align with the aspirations of the continent of the future, as an existential imperative. For this to happen, the multilateral development financing sector must attain a significant measure of **Africanisation** in all aspects. This is my simple and direct message to the **World Bank, the IMF and the IFC: Africanise, or perish!**
- 33.** It is against this background, and in consideration of the need to articulate the opportunities and pursue greater progress in the green agenda for Africa, that I am convening a **Climate Action Summit in Nairobi**, from 4th to 6th September this year, to which I humbly invite you all. I encourage you to look forward to highly productive engagements in this **regard**.
34. All these issues – the renewable energy revolution, the international financial sector reforms, and innovative sources of finance – have direct implication for the entrenchment and maturity of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which is a monumental catalyst of unprecedented transformation throughout Africa.

35. In April, 2023, we shall host AfCFTA Dialogues Forum to accelerate the development implementation matrix and incorporate private sector participation in AfCFTA, under the Africa Private Sector Alliance conference.

Excellences, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

36. As a loyal and devoted member of the African family, Kenya is committed to work with our brothers and sisters in establishing a robust infrastructure to facilitate deliberation, negotiation and collaboration in implementing agreed outcomes.

37. I note with satisfaction that in 2016, African leaders resolved to urgently undertake necessary Institutional Reforms of the African Union (AU). This decision was visionary, driven by the demands of the future, in terms of the role that the AU is expected to play in achieving Africa's Agenda 2063 of inclusive economic growth and development.

38. As pertains to Peace and Security, Kenya maintains the firm position that her prosperity is inextricably linked to peace and stability in the continent and the need to enhance regional peace and security.

39. Accordingly, Kenya has identified peace diplomacy as a key pillar of its foreign policy. Over time it has been involved, continues to be engaged and remains fully committed to the cause of peace and stability in the region, as underlying prerequisites for economic development.

40. Until a few months ago, Kenya was a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for the 2021 - 2022 period. During our tenure at the Council, Kenya learned valuable lessons on managing the multilateral dynamics, or the "office politics" of the UNSC to advance African interest and independence.

41. Permit me to reiterate Kenya's commitment to preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction across Africa.

42. With our region currently facing mounting challenges in the wake of increasing political, security and economic stressors, including the overbearing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Kenya continues to utilise its unique strategic vantage to strengthen existing partnerships, forge new ones and enhance solidarity among our neighbours in order to secure our region

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

43. As I conclude, I add Kenya's voice in support of the implementation mechanisms as well as the conclusion of negotiations to ensure effective trade across the region. Without a doubt, Africa stands at the threshold of actualising the aspirations set out in AU's Agenda 2063; and delivering "the Africa we want" by championing fundamental institutional reform in the political and development finance sectors, implementing the AfCFTA; implementing reforms of the African Union; and Silencing the Guns on our beautiful continent.

44. I thank you all for your sustained commitment to the pursuit of Africa's transformation for shared prosperity, Development, Peace and security. Your effort eloquently demonstrates your loyalty to the people of Africa. I am proud to join you in the service of the African people, as one of your newest member, and pledge to walk this road with you in the spirit of brotherhood , and to diligently do my part to advance our shared aspirations.

45. I look forward to fruitful deliberation, illuminated with fresh insights, actualised through effective action, and powered at all times by the **hope** and **vigour**, typical of a youthful continent. Together, we can achieve great things for the continent and its people.

I Thank you.