



Opening Remarks

by Mr Msingathi Sipuka, on behalf of Mrs Nardos Bekele-Thomas, Chief Executive Officer, AUDA-NEPAD

H.E. Albert M. Muchanga, Commissioner for Trade and Industry of the African Union Commission, African Union Commission

Ms Mavis Owusu-Gyamfi, Executive Vice President, African Center for Economic Transformation (ACET)

Executive Director, Institute for Security Studies, Dr Fonteh Akum

Ambassadors and Representatives from the Diplomatic Corps
African Think Tanks

Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed guests, and distinguished colleagues

Allow me to echo the words of welcome expressed by the Programme Director.

On behalf of Her Excellency, Madame Nardos Bekele-Thomas I extend my sincere appreciation for your presence. Her Excellency would have dearly loved to be present this morning to deliver

these opening remarks. Unfortunately, she has been held up with other commitments she could not get out of. She has specifically requested me to convey her gratitude to the participants and the esteemed dignitaries, including the keynote speaker, Ms Mavis Owusu-Gyamfi, Executive Vice President, African Center for Economic Transformation (ACET), and her brother His Excellency Albert Muchanga, Commissioner for Trade and Industry of the African Union Commission.

The work we will be undertaking over the next two days holds tremendous significance for our ongoing efforts of sharpening our capabilities as we look to the next 10 year implementation plan of our continental vision, AGENDA 2030. The hosting of this gathering is testament to our commitment as an organisation to building the required capacity of all social actors across the continent.

In this regard, I am grateful for the contribution of the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in supporting our endeavours. It reinforces the important role of non-state actors in continental

development. A theme that is central to the work of this conference.

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AUDA-NEPAD is acutely aware of the unique challenges that confront the African continent. As an organisation our strategic approach is anchored on long-term thinking and leveraging foresight analysis to support policy-making for Africa's prosperity. We emphasize the knowledge and expertise of Africans within the continent and the diaspora, strengthening capabilities through strategic engagement with international partners.

It is within this context that we are launching this think tank conference and policy dialogue organized by the AUDA-NEPAD Policy Bridge Tank program in collaboration with the African Futures and Innovation program at the Institute for Security Studies. We have aptly themed the conference, "African Futures," in line with our vision of Building the Africa we want and deserve.

If we consider the requirements for effective implementation of Agenda 2063, the discussion is bound to focus on enablers such as financial resources, planning systems, monitoring and governance systems among others. More often than not we miss a crucial ingredient, namely knowledge generation that supports evidence-based policy making in our countries.

Our continent is not short of policies. Despite this abundance of policies the development results in the continent are not where we want them to be, to say the least. This is confirmed by, among others, the recent evaluation of the first ten year implementation plan of Agenda 2063. This calls into question the appropriateness of these policies to the African setting or their implementation.

It is therefore our wish that this conference serves as a platform to reflect on how non-state actors, like think tanks and similar institutions, can work with Governments across the African continent to strengthen both policy formulation and implementation through robust knowledge generation systems and evidence based approaches. As we look to the second decade of Agenda

2063, which we have framed as the decade of acceleration, this is something we have to invest in and get right especially at the regional and national levels.

As an agency we strongly believe that non-state actors, such as think tanks, can and should play a more active role in supporting our continental institutions as well. In the case of AUDA-NEPAD, the implementation of various programs and projects should be able to generate data that can be critically analysed to determine what works and what does not work in different settings. Thus, generating a wealth of knowledge that can support our implementation capabilities across the continent.

As an agency, we may not be well positioned to do this on our own as we stand the risk of being player and referee thus losing the crucial aspect of independence in the process of evaluating the impact of programmes.

This is a gap that can and should be filled by our knowledge institutions, such as yourselves.

Moreover, the AU can benefit from the AUDA-NEPAD Policy Bridge Tank Programme and its Technical Advisory Group Members, comprising the continent's strongest Think Tanks.

These are issues we all realise. The elephant in the room is how do we practically do them. That is the core of what we have to unpack.

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Looking forward, we must also connect our efforts to broader multilateral and global processes, and Africa's innovative governance approaches could serve as a catalyst for global and multilateral initiatives in a challenging geopolitical environment.

But for us to be in a position of taking our best practices to the world, we have to harvest and package them for global consumption. This is yet another opportunity for us to join hands.

The workshop, under the overarching theme of "African Futures," is a call to collectively explore and understand the dynamic forces that will influence Africa's development prospects. By bringing together experts, policymakers, and thought leaders, we aim to

harness the collective intelligence and insights needed to navigate the uncertainties of the future.

As we engage in these discussions, it is imperative to recognize the role of foresight analysis in shaping our approach to development. Long-term thinking, informed by foresight, is a powerful tool for navigating the complexities of the future.

Africa's challenges are unique, and our ability to anticipate and prepare for future trends is vital for sustainable development.

The uniqueness of African challenges demands innovative solutions and a forward-looking mindset. In this context, the AUDA-NEPAD Economic Analysis and Foresight Unit is a vital medium through which foresight analysis can be integrated into our current and emerging policy frameworks. By harnessing the power of strategic thinking, we can position Africa as a leader in shaping its destiny.

On behalf of our CEO I would like to thank you for your active participation, and I am confident that this workshop will significantly contribute to shaping Africa's future.