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**CHAIRPERSON, Ms REFILWE MTSWENI-TSIPANE ADDRESS ON THE  
OCCASION OF THE SYMPOSIUM FOR AFRICAN CONTINENT  
SPEAKERS OF PARLIAMENT, PAN AFRICAN PARLIAMENT**

**28 JULY 2025**

**MIDRAND**

***Harnessing Parliamentary Diplomacy for Realisation of Global  
Solidarity, Equality and Sustainability***

***SALUTATIONS***

Good Morning

## **INTRODUCTION**

- We wish to extend warm greetings to you all, on behalf of the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, as we welcome opportunity to address today's Symposium, for the African Continent Speakers of Parliament, in this Ordinary Session of the Pan African Parliament
- We appreciate and acknowledge Speakers', Parliamentarians and the public, joining on various online platforms, as the normal that extends speech and dialogue across geographies
- The Speaker of NA in Parliament, Ms Thoko Didiza, couldn't be present, currently on International Parliamentary engagements outside the country
- In this respect, take opportunity to thank co-host, the President of PAP, the Bureau, the Clerk and Secretariat for your facilitation, coordination and co-hosting of this Symposium
- Your hard work and dedication beyond the call of duty, doesn't go unnoticed by Africa's people

- This P20 Symposium of African Continent Speakers, aims to *harness parliamentary diplomacy for the realization of global solidarity, equality and sustainability*
- It this convened to unite the pluriversal character of African viewpoints, on critical and thematized G20 issues and debates, as it relates to trade, climate, agriculture, debt , technology, mining, peace and security amongst others
- It seeks to create and promote clear positions reflecting the continents priorities and challenges of the past, present and future
- **Through the strengthening of communication and collaboration among African Presiding Officers, and Parliamentarians, we seek to redefine and advance the role of African Parliaments law makers and instruments of representative and participatory democracy**
- Thus, aim to foreground a Pan–African perspective and conciousness, amongst African parliamentarians, ordinary people in dialogue on the global stage

- The globe is still challenged with its linear gaze on the promise of euro-modernity, without interrogating the its darker side, that is being unmasked, made visible, in order that a better world could be reborn
- We accordingly, convene this symposium as part of the buildup activities with various stakeholders, to develop and issue joint communique with realizable recommendations, for the 11<sup>th</sup> P20 Speakers' Summit
- This joint symposium serves to promote the political, socio-economic, cultural unity, self- reliance and self –determination of an Africa we want, highlighted in the agenda 2063
- It must initiate according to our youth parliamentarians, a confrontation and deliberate conversation, able to truly restore Africa to itself, as part a community of nations in the world
- It is within this context, that this interactive session is convened as a festival of ideas, in addition to the youth and women focused sessions

- These previous build up sessions, in our firm view, recalibrate and re-  
invoke, the battle of ideas as a form of intellectual praxis, that captures  
and seizes the meaning of this moment, as emphasized by the youth

## **POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT**

- Critical, for parliamentary diplomacy, in the context of realizing and re-  
energizing our efforts; is exploring opportunities and possibilities of the  
P20 and G20 Summits respectively, on Africa's soil
- Pain, suffering and human dignity, continue to center the lived  
experience of our people in their day to day lives
- The people we serve are re-questioning to what extent are we truly  
African parliaments, that can champion Africa's interest, in our own  
terms and as a unified force
- Or do we bury our heads in the sand, in the face of global powers,  
whose interests continue to keep Africa as a junior partner in the  
negotiation table
- This moment must be inspired by an understanding of continental and  
global issues that are resurgent, insurgent and evolving

- It must shift the persistent features of the postcolonial nation- state; where continuities of oppression continues to be felt, experienced and lived, even under conditions of human freedom
- Meaning, changing the very quality of freedom, with a capacity to **delink** from the persistent features, of a colonial matrix of power, as a mission that history has bestowed on us
- As highlighted through the thematic areas, informing different topical issues today, African parliaments are challenged to rethink better ways to exercise parliamentary influence, through upcoming international fora, as critical spaces of diplomacy
- In our current geopolitical climate, marred by multiple interconnected and interlocking crisis; a truly Pan African Parliament, must assert itself and interests, through mutual cooperation, and collective agency
- We must recreate a transformative agenda, through maximum use of transformative parliaments, more involved and rooted in the core issues that affect our people; especially women, youth, the elderly, people living with disability and other more vulnerable groups

- Africa is faced with the challenge to mobilize its brain power, and eliminate the phenomenon of a hate despising culture
- The women of this parliament argued in our previous discussion that men who are actually meant to be natural protectors of women, have become perpetrators of a toxic masculine identity, that thrives on domination and exploitation
- **John Stoltenberg**, in his important essay, ***Towards Gender Justice***, characterizes this phenomenon as a society created by standards and cultural norms, where male identity becomes the standard for power, prestige and privilege
- We are then challenged to script another way of doing things that can become critical of power relations that reproduce these standards
- This conjecture, requires parliamentarians committed to a society wide rediscovery of our humanness, through a painstaking praxis of ***learning to unlearn inorder to relearn***
- In this regard, we are facing a historical and contemporary dialogue deeply entrenched, in suppositions of human nature and progress

- As we set out to level the playing field, our present initiatives must dismantle structures of domination as an unsustainable path for ourselves and our children
- It is a fact that imperialism and various processes that bolstered colonialism, according to renowned historian **Walter Rodney**, created impenetrable structural blockages to economic, political and social progress of Africa
- However, this doesn't absolve Africans of the ultimate responsibility of development
- The dominant systems of market capitalism have forcibly asserted permanency with alternative consciousness virtually eliminated
- Thus, according to Egyptian Economist and political thinker **Samir Amin**, it is a world in crisis, marked by the collapse of growth in productive investment, notable fall in profitability and persistent disorder in international economic relations
- North –South relations and conflicts around them, constitute the central problem of the current crisis in need of redistribution of incomes, in favor of the South

- The post- covid 19 pandemic forced nations to expand social safety nets, however the severe economic impact is still with us, leaving many destitute
- The pandemic has seen rising debt, increasing fiscal deficits and financial vulnerability amongst nations
- Ending armed conflict and ***rebuilding African unity from below***, is the perennial question, if we are to achieve sustainable livelihoods
- ***Honourable Members, ofcourse, the arising question, is how do we concretize the spirit and value of global solidarity and unity, as the logics of separateness persists***
- This requires a ***new consciousness, another tun, an African we want*** that can inaugurate and embrace equality.
- The *fear of equality* is not a sustainable path for humanity
- Thus, thinking through a more sustainable future for all, must enact the *politics of repair*, in line with AU theme 2025, **Justice for African and the people of African descent through Reparations**
- This is a politics that understands the political and psychological impact of dispossession

- It is what we characterize as Africa's rebirth, re-definition, re-awakening and ***Africa coming back to self***
- We stand on the shoulders of key figures like the renowned Kenyan Author and Scholar, **Ngugi Wa Thiongo**, whose generation left us with a dream, a canvas and an archive of thought, that transforms and creates possibilities for ***re-worlding the world anew***, beyond and in spite of the demon of dependency
- This symposium is therefore providing opportunity for elevating old and new conversations, towards united Pan African Parliaments', geared for new possibilities.

## **PRIORITIES**

### On Agriculture

- The conversation on trade, justice and improved global market access for agricultural products is a necessity
- The possibilities of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), and the promotion of the free movement of people, can no longer be a slogan; it is an injunction to compose a **new song**, one with its people.

- This is a song with an African rhythm, the African drum, because our songs are not rhymes without rhythms.
- And if we fashion it with our people, the songs will come by themselves and of themselves
- Meaning, the said continental trade agreements, can unearth our creative genius, if it can truly fashion the potentialities and talents of the people themselves
- Noteworthy, is the trade tensions and sanctions against South Africa and other nations, occasioned by the United States tariff regime and its benevolent imperialism.
- The democratic government of South Africa is studying and engaging on these developments quite closely
- Expected, is declining global economic activity and a impact on jobs
- It is for this reason, that AfCFTA explores the diversification of market access and expansion of investment pool, against the sin of dependency
- South Africa, as it approaches the P20 & G20, also finds itself at the coalface of global political intolerance, and an intention to

undermine its sovereignty, through resurgent imperialism and fascism

- As a nation, together with fellow states across the continent, insist on our mission for people-centered national/ continental democratic transformation
- Working together , our social contract seeks solutions to our inherent problems that requires redress, social justice and restitution
- According to literary author **William Faulkner, the past is never dead. It's not even the past. It is a historical present –as a past that always remains present**
- Cognisant, that intra-African agriculture trade remains below 20%, the enhancing of market access and trade injustice is crucial for food security and boosting small holder farmer livelihood
- To this end, finding solutions to barriers preventing access to global markets and thinking through policies and political interventions that can enhance competitiveness of African agricultural products across the globe is important

- In accordance, we need parliaments to better support and promote regional trade agreements in ways that unify Africa's agricultural potential
- Africa needs to fastrack its agricultural revolution without which any development is not possible
- **Samir Amin**, indicates that an agricultural revolution, means a complex range of transformation, capable of a positive growth in agricultural and food production per inhabitant
- In this regard, intensive agriculture, as precondition to any development, is a challenge Africa must take up, in ways that understand the historical, political and cultural content that shape our communities

## Climate Change

- Our common challenges also relate to the importance of climate resilience to combat climate change
- The previous Africa Climate Summit in Nairobi 2023, elaborated that Africa is getting warmer more than the global average making the climate resilience and early warning signals urgent

- Our Parliaments must respond with clear priorities that enhance resilience and adaptation and also influence national development plans
- Parliaments through participatory programmes should however ensure local communities and public are involved in initiating solutions

## Mining

- Mining remains as an important natural resource for Africa's economies, continues to face predatory practices leading to environment degradation and conflicts
- We need to re-assert ethical resource governance that ensures best practice in environmental and governance standards
- Together, must find common legislative measures against predatory practices, through promoting ethical and responsible resource governance
- We also need to rethink new interventions on policies that parliaments can advance for beneficiation and environmental justice, with futures in mind

## Synergising legislative efforts to influence global policy

- Let us therefore take up opportunities to shape global policies that affect the continent
- We can no longer be passive recipients of policies, knowledges, systems and values imposed from other lands
- In essence, this calls for united positions on key issues of trade , climate change, debt, mining and other sectors
- The difficult questions this symposium must answer ***is how do we achieve more unified positions***
- ***How do we better champion common interests in international forums***
- ***How do we align these efforts with continental goals***
- The P20 and G20 respectively, must be influenced to explore the nature of the exploitation of our resources, rather than satisfy standards set by others
- It must underlie the spirit of solidarity and repair, which understand the fact of development, whose dialectical process, caused the underdevelopment of Africa

## CONCLUSION

- As we conclude, perhaps evaluating our failures from a more political standpoint is needed
- Equally, **perhaps the way we think about change has also got change**
- This also came out clearly in the Women and Youth P20 briefing session, held last week
- We are in a new struggle against colonialism and its misrepresentations
- We are forced to think how to live in times of radical uncertainty, where some feel betrayed by the present
- Cameroonian historian **Achille Mbembe argues** we must begin to think more with our bodily senses, to do politics with the musicality of one's own flesh, if we are to achieve anything meaningful about contemporary Africa,
- This means **generative passion** must rid the planet of all outgrowths of poverty, unemployment and inequality

- Also means, **going beyond capitalism**, under the firm belief that it is possible to go against and transform the laws of capitalism
- **Honourable Members, Speakers, fellow Africans, on behalf of the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, towards the build up to 11<sup>th</sup> P20 Speakers Summit, we submit this invitation for dialogue, contributions and collective agency**
- Another world is possible
- Nkosi Sikelela iAfrika
- God bless Afrika
- Aluta Continua
- We thank you all