



## **OPENING STATEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON OF THE NATIONAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (NYDA) ON THE OCCASION OF THE APRM YOUTH SYMPOSIUM**

10 November 2025

*Programme Director,*

*Hon. Chief Fortune Zephania Charumbira, President of the Pan-African Parliament,*

*H.E. Vincent Angelin Meriton, Former Vice-President, Republic Seychelles,*

*Hon. Sindisiwe Chikunga, Minister in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with  
Disabilities,*

*Hon. Inkosi Mzamo Buthelezi, Minister for Public Service and Administration,*

*Honourable Members of the Pan-African Parliament,*

*Representatives of the African Union and the APRM,*

*Fellow Youth Leaders,*

*Distinguished Guests,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is an honour, on behalf of the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) and the young people of South Africa, to welcome you to our beautiful country and to this 5th APRM Youth Symposium. We are humbled to host you at the Pan-African Parliament which stands as the cradle of continental democracy, as we come together to shape a future where Africa's youth are not bystanders but the heartbeat of governance, justice, and transformation.



We gather at a moment of both symbolism and substance, as South Africa assumes the Chair of the G20, the first African nation ever to do so. This milestone transcends national pride; it is a continental affirmation that Africa is not on the periphery of global governance but rather Her voice is rising in global governance and decision making. It affirms that our continent's future led by its young people is not one of dependency, but of agency and global leadership. As Africa takes its seat at the world's most powerful table, it must bring with it the aspirations of its youth, their creativity, courage, and unyielding demand for justice and inclusion.

As the great Pan-African thinker Amílcar Cabral once said, “*Tell no lies, claim no easy victories.*” This gathering challenges us to be honest about the state of our democracies and bold in reimagining their renewal through youth participation.

The AU's Agenda 2063, particularly Aspiration 6, which envisions “*an Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of its youth and women*” — provides the normative compass for this gathering. Likewise, the African Youth Charter, the 1 Million Next Level Initiative, and the African Governance Architecture call for institutionalising youth participation beyond tokenism, towards what the political theorist Mahmood Mamdani might term “*transformative inclusion*,” that is inclusion that reconstitutes power rather than merely diversifying it.

As the National Youth Development Agency, we align ourselves with this continental vision. The NYDA's strategic focus is to convert policy intent into tangible change through integrated youth development programming, spanning entrepreneurship, skills development, and civic participation. We have learned that the developmental state must also be a pedagogical state, that is a state that teaches participation, cultivates agency, and democratizes opportunity.

Our collaboration with the African Peer Review Mechanism, formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), exemplifies this praxis. Together, we seek to amplify youth voices within governance review processes, ensuring that the lived experiences of young Africans, their frustrations, innovations, and aspirations inform continental policymaking and the Africa Governance Report 2027.

The theme, *“From Promise to Prosperity: A Call to Individual and Collective Agency,”* compels us to interrogate both structure and subjectivity. Africa’s youth, which makes up over 60% of the population under 25, are not merely a demographic statistic; they are a structural force. Yet, their transition from potential to prosperity depends on what Achille Mbembe calls, *“the right to the future,”* the right to imagine and participate in a future that is not foreclosed by inequality, unemployment, or exclusion.

Generation Z, Africa’s “digital generation”, is reshaping civic participation and redefining accountability. Their digital activism and innovation remind us that democracy is not static and that it must evolve, or risk irrelevance. Across our continent, Gen Z youth are demanding transparency, equity, and dignity. Yet, their courage often meets repression. As we reflect on the state of democracy and human rights in Africa, we must be guided by truth: democracy is not sustained by constitutions alone, but by young citizens who believe they have a stake in its survival.

In reflecting on youth empowerment, we must also confront its gendered dimensions. Women and girls continue to experience structural marginalisation across institutions of power. True empowerment requires that we do not simply make space for women at the table but reconstruct the table itself. Women must be entrusted to lead in parliaments, boardrooms, and movements that define the soul of our continent.

In the spirit of Pan-African thought, I am reminded of Thomas Sankara’s enduring words, *“We must dare to invent the future.”*

Indeed, the task before us is not only to imagine but to invent and to design governance systems where accountability is not reactive but anticipatory, where leadership is not hereditary but participatory, and where prosperity is not individual accumulation but collective well-being.

As South Africa welcomes you to this 5th APRM Youth Symposium, under the leadership of His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa, we reaffirm our commitment to an inclusive, accessible, and intellectually rigorous youth development agenda — one that recognises that democracy is sustained not by elites, but by engaged citizens who believe their voices matter.



Let this symposium be a site of critical reflection and transformative praxis. Let us co-create a Pan-African Community of Practice that ensures youth are not the subjects of policy, but the authors of Africa's democratic renewal.

Thank you.