

## POLICY BRIEF 2021

# Renewing African Renaissance as a Lever for Building a Democratic, Peaceful And Prosperous Africa

### BACKGROUND

The African Governance Architecture (AGA) Secretariat on behalf of the African Governance Platform (AGP) virtually convened the 10th High-Level Dialogue (HLD) on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance focusing on the theme - 'Renewing African Renaissance as a Lever for Building a Democratic, Peaceful and Prosperous Africa' from 9-10 December 2021. The choice of this theme was informed by a decision of the 33rd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union (AU) declaring the theme of the year 2021 as 'Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the African We Want'. The HLD has been a flagship project jointly owned and implemented by all members of the African Governance Platform the Platform is chaired by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights while the Vice Chair is the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) for a period of 2 years.

For ten years, the HLD has provided a platform for engagement between the AU and African citizens on how to collectively build the Africa We Want. It has allowed for exchanges on best practices on democracy, human rights and governance and has been a useful source of actionable recommendations in the past decade. The 10th HLD was held at a time where Africa faces many governance and democracy challenges exemplified by armed conflicts, spread of terror-

ism, violent extremism and radicalization. Worryingly, there is also regression of democracy with 3 Member States (Sudan, Mali and Guinea) currently suspended for unconstitutional changes of government.<sup>1</sup> However, there are also promising trends including the fact that 15 Member States conducted their general elections in 2021 peacefully. In three of these elections, opposition parties have won in Zambia, São Tomé and Príncipe and Cape Verde. The status of democracy in the continent is therefore not all gloomy as it is encouraging to see that timely elections, were held even in the midst of the global Covid19 pandemic.

It is against the above background that the 10th HLD provided a platform for candid discussions on renewing the African renaissance in the areas of democracy, human rights and governance. The discussions were organised in four main segments. First, the Dialogue reflected on the status of democratic governance on the continent for the last decade, highlighting successes, identifying challenges and recommending solutions. Second, it critically assessed the AU Shared Values instruments on human Right, democracy and governance, problematising the mismatch between the promise in the instruments and reality. Third, the Dialogue assessed the role of creative arts, culture and heritage in reinvigorating Africa's renaissance and particularly how the creative industry can promote and

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contribute to a peaceful, democratic and prosperous Africa. Fourth, experts present projected how the next decade for Africa could possibly look like with special attention paid to megatrends in trade, climate change and technology.

This policy brief will provide an overview of the key discussion points in the four segments of the HLD and conclude with a summary of the main recommendations.

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## LOOKING BACK AT A DECADE OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA

The trend in sub-Saharan Africa is marked by 'isolated gains amid broader democratic backsliding'.<sup>2</sup> This verdict is generally applicable in a considerable number of African countries over the last decade. In the period between 2015 and 2020, 13 African countries amended constitutional provisions on presidential term limits and prior to the Covid19 pandemic a decline was already being recorded in observance of civil liberties. This worsened during the pandemic where governments curtailed fundamental freedoms, especially freedom of movement and association, under the guise of enforcing Covid19 protocols.<sup>3</sup>

In the first panel of the HLD, experts reflected on how the African continent had performed in terms of democratic governance and it was noted that Africa has had mixed results on the democracy and governance landscape, with laudable steps made in the right direction and serious challenges still outstanding. On the positive note, African citizens have continued to demand for expanded democratic spaces, there are regular elections taking place and the number of women in top political leadership, including the presidency, has increased.<sup>4</sup> The push for democracy by active citizens has seen authoritarian regimes fall through popular movements while social media has been a great catalyst to changing policies and calling for change. Examples here include Not Too Young to Run in Nigeria. Other civic groups continue to emerge including women, youth and persons with disability groups which continue to hold governments to account.<sup>4</sup>

Even with these gains, experts agreed that a lot more still needs to be done as there was consensus that the last decade has, overall, witnessed a regression in democracy mainly because of unconstitutional changes of government, irregular constitutional amendments and disputed elections in many countries on the Continent.<sup>6</sup> However, it was pointed out that this perceived regression may also be taken as a challenge

that Africa faces in trying to consolidate its democracy. Panellists noted that from the 1990s, the OAU/AU adopted key instruments on shared values but consolidation of such frameworks is not an easy task and this fact needs to be appreciated. An active African citizenry, it was observed, has also played a crucial role in the push for adoption of these instruments and breathing life to them through protests and other grassroots initiatives.<sup>7</sup>

The experts contended that the extent to which African countries can realise democratic governance is inextricably linked to questions of the political economy in the context of dependent states such as is the case for many Africa countries. The challenge in this regard is that most African governments are fiscally dependent on budget support from external actors as they struggle to independently finance core public services such as education, health, housing, infrastructure and so on. In such contexts, it was argued, building sustainable democratic institutions and practices is pegged on having means to respond to the aspirations of the people in dispensing public goods.<sup>8</sup>

The panellists further identified the main challenges underlying the apparent retrogression of democracy on the continent and proffered possible solutions. This discussion is summed up below.

First, at the regional level, lack of enforcement of regional commitments remains a serious challenge. As an example, there is a discrepancy between what is in the Constitutive Act in terms of enshrined objectives and principles and what exists in reality in several AU Member States. Experts suggested that the next stage of integration on the governance front in Africa should include efforts to find the best ways of balancing the sovereignty of states and the inter-governmental nature of the AU because the contested conceptu-

alisation of the two continues to negatively affect compliance and enforcement of existing regional commitments. Importantly, it was pointed out that going forward, the future of democracy in Africa will depend on the African people beyond<sup>9</sup>.

The second main challenge identified is the fact that electoral systems adopted in most African States seem to poorly fit national contexts and struggle to withstand the rigours of multiparty democracy. The first-past-the-post or winner-take-all system, for example, is said to have promoted zero-sum politics on the continent. This is the case because it has made it difficult for some groups and individuals to participate and partake in the democratic space and led to exclusion of important constituencies from national politics, engendering political tensions and violent responses.<sup>10</sup>

The third challenge, and which is related to the second, is that political parties in most African countries are ethnically oriented and this negative ethnicity in a context where national identities are missing in most African states has exacerbated political tensions and disturbed social order. This is particularly so where the democratic processes are perceived as failing to deliver equitably on public goods.<sup>11</sup>

The fourth challenge is related to lack of partnerships and willingness to compromise. The argument made by the panellists in this regard was that democratic transitions are easier if both status quo and pro-reform forces have individuals on each side who recognise that the two forces need to work with each other to realise solutions that move African countries forward. The absence of such partnerships on the continent requires to be addressed in order to solidify the place of compromise and not zero-sum political competition as is currently the case in many conflict situations in Africa.<sup>12</sup>

Lastly, internal security challenges and civil war have contributed to the people's frustration with democracy. Africa is prone to coups d'état and the statistics are worrying as out of the 11 coups recorded globally since 2017, all but one (in Myanmar) have been in Africa.<sup>13</sup> Even worse, there are now repeat coups in some countries such as Mali and Guinea Bissau. In many African States therefore, the prevailing perception is that democracy has not only failed to deliver food on the table but has also not guaranteed security.<sup>14</sup>

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## AU SHARED VALUES INSTRUMENTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS, DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

The second panel of experts at the HLD delved into the existing normative frameworks of the African Union specifically focusing on the AU Shared Values instruments on human rights, democracy and governance. The session assessed the gaps between the promise in the instruments and lived realities of African citizens and interrogated whether the AU shared value instruments have indeed achieved their purpose, identified challenges that explain the implementation gap and gave recommendations on how best to fill this gap.

As a starting point, the experts noted that the term 'Shared Values' is rooted in business strategy and companies usually look inward and reflect on what is common to their business objectives and what can lead to common prosperity. Shared values in the context of the AU are an

important tool for ensuring economic progress and social development and these values refer to those norms, principles and practices that have been developed or acquired and which provide the basis for collective action as solutions in addressing the socio-economic challenges that impede Africa's integration and development.<sup>15</sup>

These values are applicable at both the individual, national and regional levels. For the individual, the values include universality and inalienability of human rights, tolerance and participation in governance and development processes and reciprocal solidarity in times of need, dignity, respect, justice and respect for the elderly, among others.<sup>16</sup> At the national and regional levels, these norms and practices include sovereignty, self-determination, independence, adherence to the rule of law, democracy and representation

of the will of the people, care for the vulnerable, economic and social justice, public order, equality, fairness, solidarity of states and sustainability of the environment.<sup>17</sup>

The AU has adopted several normative frameworks that help to promote these shared values. These include the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ratified by 54 Member States), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ratified by 49 Member States), the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (ratified by 45 Member States), African Youth Charter (ratified by 39 Member States), the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (ratified by 42 Member States), the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ratified by 34 Member States) and the African Peer Review Mechanism, among others. Member States demonstrate commitment to the shared values by adopting these instruments at the continental level, ratifying and domesticating them, providing resources and establishing institutions to implement them.<sup>18</sup>

The panellists noted that from a historical perspective, when most African Countries started attaining independence about 55 years ago, the expectations were very high that after the long colonial rule these countries would transition to democracies. In several countries, there was a good start with post-independence elections and there was a modicum of democracy in the early 1960s. However, from the mid-1960s, the continent saw entronement of autocratic rule in form of military coups that continued up to the late 1980s and early 1990s, before a return to multi-party democracies in the 1990s.<sup>19</sup> In 2005, the continent started to experience retrogression on the democratic progress that had been made. It is in the context of this retrogression that the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) was born. The ACDEG expresses a strong rejection of unconstitutional change of government and dedicates its entire Chapter 8 to this. It is this continuing challenge that largely defines perceptions on the current status of democracy on the continent.<sup>20</sup>

Presently, unconstitutional changes of government in Africa are rife and they takes two main forms, namely, manipulation of constitutions to

prolong tenure of the incumbents and outright military coups. In the period between 2020-2021, there have been six military coups in Mali (twice), Niger, Chad, Guinea and Sudan. These recent occurrences have been described as power grabs that 'threaten a reversal of the democratization process Africa has undergone in the past two decades and a return to the era of coups as the norm.'<sup>21</sup> Although ACDEG has allowed the continent to define shared values on democracy and governance, we still have a loophole in terms of the Charter helping the continent address unconstitutional change of government, whether this is through constitutional manipulations or military coups. While ACDEG specifically prohibits unconstitutional changes of government the challenge remains that perpetrators of such actions are not reformed enev while, AU organs and institutions. Norm setting is therefore not a problem on the continent but there are serious challenges in implementing the norms and institutions established to ensure full implementation should be empowered financially and politically to carry out their tasks and deliver on these shared values.<sup>22</sup>

There is, however, some good news on the human rights front. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), having been ratified by 54 out of 55 AU Member States has already achieved a shared understanding of its contents on the continent. This, the experts on the panel argued, means that every normative pronouncement in the ACHPR represents a collective and shared view of what human rights mean for Africa and there is largely no contention regarding the universality of the human rights norms contained therein. The ACHPR is a social pact between Member States and the people on how states are to treat all individuals within their jurisdictions. The hallmarks of this relationship between States and their citizens include freedom, equality, justice and dignity as the legitimate expectations of the African people as a collective.<sup>23</sup>

The ACHPR sets out a catalogue of fundamental rights and freedoms committed by States as duty barriers. It also recognises collective rights such as how natural resources and the environment, as collective goods, are to be shared. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, through its promotion, protection and ad-

visory role, works closely with Member States to move them from where they are in terms of observance of human rights to the ideal that is set out in the ACHPR. The Commission also has

the important role of interpreting the ACHPR to produce implementable meaning out of the provisions of the Charter.<sup>24</sup>

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## THE ROLE OF CREATIVE ARTS IN STRENGTHENING THE AFRICAN RENAISSANCE

The HLD had an 'Africa Talks' session that discussed the role of the creative industry in Africa's renaissance and the specifics of what this renaissance means and looks like. The conversation was led by Zimbabwean novelist, playwright and filmmaker Tsitsi Dangarembga who began by reminding the audience that the spirit with which the African renaissance was intended was that of a 'rebirth'. The critical question for the continent now is to have clarity on what we want reborn. Arriving at this clarity involves looking back and realising that there were positives in the past African society which could give the present Africa a future and move the continent's development forward. She urged that the continent must identify these positives and work towards their realisation as these positives are what needs to be reborn. However, Tsitsi cautioned that it is idealistic to imagine that there was a perfect African past waiting to be reclaimed. Instead, Africans should be analytical and objective in identifying and defining positives from the past and use these to propel the continent to its next level of development.

Tsitsi observed that the creative industries are a good tool for helping and driving the rebirth whose aspects are to be identified and defined. It is these agreed ideas on the renaissance that creatives can put in the public space in an inspiring way that compels people to believe that this is the Africa we want to have and be part of. This must, however, be preceded by Africa being very judicious in the meaning ascribed to Africa's renaissance. This rebirth of the continent does not, for instance, simply mean having or reclaiming power in a self-defeating way but rather having power to do good. She further pointed out that a crucial element required to realise our African renaissance is appreciating our commonalities, including our common heritage, even as we remain alive to our differences. The strength of Africa, she argued, lies in our similarities and which we can use to leverage on our differences. Conversely, if the continent only sees differences, it cannot leverage the positives from our similar-

ties which cut across all the five regions in the continent.

In addition, Tsitsi noted that African heritage is at the heart of the aspiration for an African renaissance and it is therefore important to also clarify what this heritage is. Tsitsi advised that Africa is now part of a global economy and society and as the continent attempts to leverage on its heritage, this needs to be done in a way that acts as capital for Africa's membership in this global society, economy and community. She warned that if our heritage is reclaimed in ways that are isolating and that make our participation in this global community more difficult, the continent would be engaging in self-defeat.

In reviving our heritage, Tsitsi noted, we cannot simply transplant it from the past to the present. Rather, we must figure out how to remould and reshape it so that it is useful for today. There are many elements of our African heritage that are useful for today but which must be applied in the right way, failure to which they become anachronistic and old-fashioned burdens. She maintained that Africans cannot manifest anything in the outside world that they do not have representation for on the inside. So our internal or symbolic life is of utmost importance but through colonisation, Africans have had the symbolic life of the colonisers imposed on us and the value of our own symbolic life degraded. Our belief systems, practices and interactions with our environment, including the social environment and our rules are all part of our symbolic life and most of these have been lost. Through this loss, Africans lost a significant part of who they are. In view of this, Tsitsi argued that Africans have come from a position where all the things that define them and all those who came before them are discarded and denigrated. So in reclaiming our heritage, Africans should be proud of what they have achieved so far in reversing their erasure.

Tsitsi reminded participants that the African creative industry has a critical role to play in reclaim-

ing what has been erased by colonialism. Creatives are able to mould together all the pieces from the past that we have lost, present these in our current realities and project a prosperous future for Africa through their art. Creatives can make suggestions, through their works, on how we can attain that future. African citizens can, in turn, interact with these creative works and have their imaginations triggered and inspired by these ideas and behave in ways that realise these ideas. This is one key way to having transformative changes in our African society because transformation comes from the bottom (and not up) by the belief of every individual to behave in a certain way because that way is believed by all to be the best way. In summary, the creative industry is arguably a perfect laboratory for ideas that can move the African society forward.

She further lauded the fact that African creatives are winning global awards and this is a good indicator of our being accepted into the global community. It means African voices are being heard and they carry weight and the content is having an impact. This also means that the stories we tell others about us are worth listening to, but it is important that these stories continue

to be heard by ordinary people. Overreliance on high-ranking audiences (governments and politicians) is not ideal because such audiences do not live the day to day lives of ordinary citizens. This underscores the need to get the stories of ordinary citizen out and heard so that they can also have impact.

In her conclusion, however, she argued that global recognition of our creative work does not have a significant impact on our African renaissance. For the renaissance to become a reality, we need such awards, recognitions and approval on the African soil. African people need to engage with the content of the creative industry in all genres and mediums and analyse its value for the African continent and make this known to other Africans. Africa also needs to invest in those producing creative content. It will not be a genuine renaissance, Tsitsi contended, if we do not nourish the very people whose ideas are part of the renaissance and have to wait for the recognition from other parts of the world. So we need to walk the talk and this in part means having cultural policies and cultural homegrown infrastructure.

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## POSITIONING CULTURE TO USHER A RENEWED AFRICAN RENAISSANCE

A session of the HLD was dedicated to assessing the contribution of culture, heritage and Pan Africanism in reinvigorating Africa's renaissance and experts on the panel discussed in detail the role of the creative industry in promoting a democratic and peaceful Africa. The experts began by noting that the material domination of African people by foreign interests is only possible and can only be maintained through the permanent and organised repression of their cultural life by co-optation, redirection and redefinition of that culture.<sup>25</sup> It was contended that Africa is currently dealing with its creative products in the same way it deals with its minerals – by exporting them raw. The experience in most African countries is that there are minimal investments in refining, owning and distributing these products. As long as we continue treating our artistic work in this way, the experts argued, it is unlikely to maximally benefit African people.<sup>26</sup>

We now have new ways of consuming cultural products in the age we are living in of new media through virtual and augmented reality. There are

TV shows, movies and films that are excelling through showcasing African content and some African companies have attained global recognition through development and telling of African stories.<sup>27</sup> Even with this success, the discussants warned that by commercialising and commoditising African art, culture and heritage, we can potentially water them down in the process. It was argued that African culture is dynamic and is constantly producing meaning as we continuously project who we are and if African artists continue to showcase our cultures simply as commodities for sale, others are likely to only see our African art and culture as such. To avoid this, it was proposed that it is conscious content that will ensure African artists and their content is taken seriously in the continent and beyond.<sup>28</sup>

The panellists noted, however, that it inspires hope to see young African artists sing conscious music for example and not simply trade African music as an esoteric product. They are, importantly, beginning to question dominant narratives including definitions of beauty, knowledge, suc-

cess, quality and capacity. This represents the rebirth of past African artists like Miriam Makeba, Fela Kuti and Hugh Masekela, among others, who not only critiqued imperialism but also the decadence among the political elite.<sup>29</sup> In addition to this reawakening, young African artists are not just criticising but are giving hope by imagining Africa beyond the present and Africa as a solution. The power of this imagination and future focus (beyond the past difficulties Africa has faced) through self-believing and patriotic cultural expressions is significantly contributing to resistance against authoritarianism, corruption and other ills currently bedevilling the continent. This imagination is at the same time resisting attempts by foreign interests to minimise our countries, our identities and artistic expression to only those things that entertain foreigners.<sup>30</sup>

Beyond the commercial angle, the experts suggested a number of ways to make our arts, culture and heritage more beneficial to the African people. Firstly, they urged that Africans must view and enjoy African art for art's sake and this out of the basic fact that we are humans and need to reclaim and celebrate our humanity. This, however, means that we must work hard as a continent to overcome hurdles such as poverty and insecurity that inhibit African people from enjoying African art.<sup>31</sup>

Secondly, we need to recognize the healing power of our art from the centuries of trauma on the African continent. Our creative works have helped Africans get to where they are despite historical difficulties but we can be more systematic in tapping on the healing characteristics of

African art. Thirdly, we need to capitalise on art as a tool of resistance. Africans should continue to push the boundaries of expression to hold their leaders accountable and use art to reach the hearts and minds of those in leadership. Art should inspire Africans to dream, think and do differently.<sup>32</sup>

The role of art as a tool of resistance is however not to be limited to political resistance but rather extend to economic resistance to particular types of productions that seek to commoditise African culture and instrumentalise it in order to justify and defend an unequal society. The panelists recommended that Africans should embrace conscious culture that advances ownership and leadership over our natural and other resources, including our art. African artists are urged to be alive to the urgent need for epistemic democratisation, that is, the democratisation of knowledge and resist the notion that there is only one standard of quality, knowledge and that it is only Western/foreign.<sup>33</sup>

In conclusion, the experts noted that it was encouraging to see African artists in different countries recognising each other and this is promoting integration and thus showing political leaders a very practical approach to an integrated Africa and the need to dismantle the inhibiting aspects of the colonial borders. The AU was commended to take lessons from the world of arts on how creatives and their works move so fast across the continent and how such speedy movement can be replicated in the economic and political fronts.<sup>34</sup>

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## THE AFRICA WE WANT IN THE NEXT DECADE

The final session of the 10th HLD focused on Africa's future and experts on the panel attempted to project the megatrends on climate, technology and trade and their implications for governance, democracy and human rights in Africa in the next decade. Panellists examined how Africans can transform these megatrends into opportunities that can lead to the Africa We Want. The three experts on the panel were Dr Joy Kategekwa who spoke on trade, Saliem Fakir who addressed climate change and Nanjira Sambuli who focused on technology. Their main contributions are summarised below.

### *The future of trade*

Dr Kategekwa commenced her contribution by lauding the adoption of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement which she argued has now positioned the continent on the verge of transformation, diversification and correction of historic wrongs that have kept Africa at the bottom of the multilateral trading system in terms of its engagement in production structures. She lamented the fact that Africa only has 2% of the world's merchandise trade and even a lesser percentage than this of commercial services trade. In view of this dismal performance,

she postulated that the main issue at the moment is to find out how trade will influence actions the continent should take to realise the Africa We Want. She outlined three anticipated megatrends in this regard.

First, she noted that the next 10 years will coincide with the tariff reduction process under the AfCFTA targeting 97% tariff lines and as these tariffs phase down and services markets open up, she projected that we will witness significant structural and economic transformation on the continent. The transformation will be in terms of Africa scaling up value addition in its trade with intra-Africa trade doubling and an increase of agro-manufacturing and services by up to 40% within the ten-year period.

Second, another benefit of the expected tariff reduction according to Dr Kategekwa is the democratisation of the African market space, that is, a crowding of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) because the way the AfCFTA is structured provides opportunities for many. Growth and expansion of value chains is therefore expected in products and services such as locomotives, lithium ion batteries, leather and leather products, soya, cocoa, pharmaceuticals, textiles, clothing and apparel, cultural services, financial services and other services that are embedded in the production process.

Third, it is expected that as Africa integrates and moves into producing 'Made in Africa' products, there will be forces external to the AfCFTA that will be demanding attention. This is especially so because the AfCFTA is a free trade area and not a customs union and does not create a legal framework on how to concretely engage with third parties beyond most-favoured-nation (MFN) clauses. This has already resulted in countries in other regions requesting some African countries for free trade areas and this is going to have an implication on how and when trade can lead us to the transformation that Africa wants. This presents an opportunity to think through political solutions that clarify the African philosophy around the AfCFTA and a political consensus that gives the Agreement a chance. Dr Kategekwa also made a case for adoption of a legal framework that would manage how those who want to make African products contribute to the AfCFTA. In this regard, she suggested that

the continent will need to quickly move to a customs union where trade relations with third party countries can be firmed up.

Participants at the HLD were reminded that although the above three expectations project a positive outlook for the continent in terms of trade, this will not be automatic as there will certainly be forces that try to derail movement towards these aims. In response, Dr Kategekwa argued that Africa must insist on capacity building arrangements that increase our ability to produce 'made in Africa' products and services. This will ensure that African countries and other relevant stakeholders will not merely be spectators in the opportunities that will be presented by the AfCFTA.

### *Africa and climate change*

Saliem Fakir addressed expected climate change implications for Africa in the next decade and argued that as a point of departure, Africa needs to start thinking of climate change differently. That is, move away from viewing climate as just being an environmental issue but rather link it to the continent's economic security. To do this, he argued, the continent needs to change the nature of its diplomacy by not limiting it to discussions on the Paris Agreement but draw interlinkages with trade and geopolitics. He suggested that this climate diplomacy also ought to include broader economic development engagement around 'development regionalism'.

Fakir contended that the above broader approach to climate change would encourage new kinds of investments beyond dependency on minerals and services to capturing value that interlinks with our minerals base. This is because if, as an example, the world is going to decarbonise, Africa has a critical role to play as it sits with vast resources that are central to the decarbonisation revolution that is already taking place such as through the European Green Deal and steps taken by China to decarbonise. Fakir added that Africa has to exploit the high value minerals to its advantage and one key way to do this is by changing the nature of our thinking around climate issues. That is, that the climate issues are not simply around adaptation, migration and security as has been typically the case in climate change discussions that are devoid of a holis-



tic economic development paradigm. He called upon the AU, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Member States to embrace this holistic economic approach to climate change.

In the coming decade, Fakir suggested that Africa needs to reflect on the nature of climate futures and the actions that are required such as reducing risk from climate vulnerability from key sectors like agriculture and the livestock industry. The continent should also focus on the opportunity to increase and diversify energy sources by introducing new kinds of clean energy technologies that are aligned with our natural resources such as solar, wind, hydro, geothermal with our minerals base. This way African countries can exploit the opportunities that are increasingly being availed through the AfCFTA around industrialisation. Africa's climate diplomacy has to start talking to this, namely, new investments in agriculture, energy, urban sector and introducing technologies, systems and institutions that help de-risk important and high employment sectors.

Thinking long-term, Fakir predicted that the call to embrace these strategic and new technologies as part of our economic diversification should eventually lower and de-risk African economies from fossil fuel dependency especially if African countries are going to face penalties in the future. However, he held the view that the demand to take on this new approach immediately is unrealistic. It must be accepted that Africa needs to find ways to work with its partners to achieve more pragmatic and aligned arrangements that will allow Africa to not only grow its economy in the manner it would like but also increase the beneficiation of critical minerals.

He cautioned that if such minerals are not exploited to Africa's advantage, we will have a continuation of the old type of economy except that we will be moving from exports of oil and gas to exports of critical minerals like lithium, platinum, graphite and cobalt under the same conditions that African countries are subjected to presently. Africa therefore has to redefine, using climate diplomacy, the nature of our geopolitics. In this regard, Fakir advised that Africa does not have to only abide by the European Green Deal but can have agreements with other geopolitical partners like China and the US as well as middle

powers that are interested in working in Africa on the continent's terms and which are integrated with the AfCFTA and the framework it has established.

Moving forward in terms of opportunities afforded by the climate change discourse, Fakir suggested that expanding rural electrification, including through climate financing, is a critical priority area and this will not be possible only through use of fossil fuels. Expanding electrification is a priority area because it is linked to minerals beneficiation capacity as well. Increasing the resilience of the agriculture sector is equally important and the continent should invest in developing better knowledge and technology and improving productivity of the agriculture sector for both small-scale and large-scale farming. The agriculture sector is a major employer on the continent and is still under-invested and the sector remains critical for future exports and food security as Africa currently imports too much food compared to what is exported. The AU should work with very clear diplomacy that links to Africa's trade policies in a more integrated way to be able to champion a different kind of 'climate and development diplomacy'.

Fakir concluded by cautioning that Africa will face challenges in the future from climate vulnerability but the upside is that the continent can manage that if it deals with the question of economic security and resilience. Fakir argued that the key to climate security is economic security and not the other way round. The conversation about climate change just as a risk must therefore change to a story of opportunity and investment in new technologies and infrastructure that enables the continent to diversify its economic opportunities.

### *Megatrends on technology*

Nanjira Sambuli, the expert on the panel addressing projections on technology in the coming decade, began by noting that Africa's engagement with technologies should be premised on the confidence that the continent has a lot to offer in terms of emerging technologies. Africa has resources such as minerals and data generated based on activities on the continent that are critical in the technology production and digitalisation processes. However, there is still a challenge in terms of access to universal connectivity with re-

gard to internet and digital devices and this has been exacerbated by the Covid19 pandemic. There have been increased inequalities during the pandemic with a section of the population in most African countries easily moving fully to a digitalised space in spheres such as education and access to information. However, those who had no access to internet and requisite devices have been left behind in significant ways. As African countries increase digitalisation, the increment rate has not been commensurate with having policies and investments that ensure no one is left behind.

Sambuli pointed out that Africa has significantly contributed to creation, consumption of emerging technologies as well as the negatives that come with the technological advances such as dumping of technology-related waste. She urged that Africa must rethink how it negotiates for its space and role in the area of digital technologies vis a vis other global actors, but this requires harmonisation of approaches at the regional level. In this regard, Sambuli noted that it has not helped that only 8 countries have ratified the AU Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection. To complicate this further, a number of countries have gone ahead to enact national laws that do

not align with this continental framework resulting in fragmentation of policies at the national and regional levels. Aligning policies at both levels is critical to not only leverage on more numbers but also because digital technologies are cross-cutting and permeate different spheres, including trade, such as through e-commerce, flow of data and its protection.

She lamented the fact that Africa is still too fixated with talent that is emerging through the formal educational system and ignoring the potential of individuals and groups that are self-taught. In the tech-labour economy, cyber security is one big area that needs a lot of talent and the cyber-crimes in financial institutions in some countries are by locals and students within that economy. Sambuli argued that this in part speaks to a capacity mismatch because those who should be working to protect such financial systems have been locked out by rigid policies that are determining how they can or cannot enter the workforce. Member States and stakeholders in the technology sector must therefore find home-grown solutions to get rid of this rigidity without mimicking policy approaches from Europe and elsewhere.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS ON REINVIGORATING AFRICAN RENAISSANCE

### Enhancing democratic governance

1. There is a need to align the AU Shared Values instruments with those already being implemented at the RECs level. The AU and RECs should, for example, harmonise election observation missions to avoid duplication of efforts and contradictions resulting from parallel delegations.

2. Member States are implored upon to commit to the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and work towards making the APRM mandatory for all Member States and to fully commit to implementation of APRM national plans of action and recommendations from country review reports.

3. Political parties are important catalysts for democracy and good governance and legislatures in Member States are urged to en-

act laws that will facilitate proper institutional regulation and internal democracy within political parties and address the disruptive activities by military wings and militia in political parties.

4. The African Union should ensure relevant AU organs and institutions such as the Banjul Commission are sufficiently empowered and their functional independence guaranteed to ensure compliance with the ACHPR. The organs and institutions should have powers to sanction, beyond the common and failing practice of using persuasion.

5. The AU, RECs and Member States should establish strong legal frameworks that provide for and protect citizen engagement to hold States accountable. This includes opening up the civic space wide enough to even allow for popular protests that are now legally rec-

ognised by the AU. Clause F(ii) of the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration recognised the ‘right of our people to peacefully express their will against oppressive systems’.

6. Relevant AU organs should strengthen the African Governance Architecture Platform by enhancing information sharing, coordinating, monitoring and evaluating compliance with governance and democracy codes and standards that Member States have adopted.

### **Positioning creative industry and culture for renewal of African Renaissance**

7. Member States should allocate sufficient budgets for the arts and culture sector, develop institutions to build capacities of African artists and leverage on the expanded digital and technological space to promote cultural exchange and products.

8. Member States are called upon to adopt policies that promote products on African arts, culture and heritage as well as laws and regulations that protect African intellectual property.

9. Member States are implored upon to treat cultural space as a holistic space where the arts and culture discussion is mainstreamed at all levels and departments of government and not as a subject at the periphery of core government business that merely ‘entertains us’.

10. The AU is urged to adopt measures that ensure the AfCFTA results in meaningful promotion and protection of African artistic products.

11. The AU Shared Values should form part of school curriculum at all levels of education within Member States so that younger generations benefit from harmonised teaching of African history, values and Pan Africanism so as

to advance our African identity and Renaissance.

### **Leveraging on trade, climate change and technology megatrends**

12. Following the adoption of AfCFTA, the AU and Member States should now accelerate the process of the establishing of the customs union through a legal framework that would, inter alia, concretely outline how States Parties to the Agreement engage with non-member countries beyond the MFN clauses.

13. Member States should leverage on climate diplomacy and climate financing to increase and diversify their energy sources by introducing new kinds of clean energy technologies that align existing natural resources such as solar, wind, hydro, geothermal with their minerals base and increase beneficiation of these minerals.

14. In engaging external actors on climate change, the AU and Member States should establish policies that ensure intellectual property on the critical technologies is accessible and that climate change investments being made support the development of flagship companies in Africa that can be part of the global value chain. These investments must also intensify and diversify jobs and Africa’s future economic base.

15. AU Member States are urged to ratify the AU Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection and importantly, align national laws with this continental framework to avoid fragmentation of policies at the national and regional levels in the area of digital technologies.

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