



STATEMENT BY

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ON THE OCCASION OF THE FORWARD AFRICA LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM

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EXCELLENCIES, HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT,

HONOURABLE MINISTERS,

COMMISSIONERS AND HEADS OF AU ORGANS,

ESTEEMED BUSINESS LEADERS

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS,

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

ALL PROTOCOLS DULY OBSERVED

Good afternoon,

I am pleased to join you today for this crucial dialogue on Africa's digital transformation and the imperative of data sovereignty and digital identity.

Allow me to commend the African Peer Review Mechanism, under the leadership of my dear sister, H.E. Ambassador Marie-Antoinette Rose-Quatre, and the Forward Africa Leaders Symposium, led by my dear sister Ms Hannah Awuku, together with our partners, for convening this symposium on the margins of the 80th United Nations General Assembly. I also acknowledge Deputy Mayor Tiffany Raspberry for the warm welcome extended by the City of New York.

We stand at the crossroads of Africa's digital destiny. The choices we make today will echo through generations.

The question before us is not whether Africa will join the digital revolution; it is whether Africa will lead it on our own terms.

The African Union has made its choice, inspired by the vision that unites us: The Africa We Want.

At the heart of our ambition lies Agenda 2063, which provides a roadmap for an integrated and prosperous Africa. We are now in the decade of acceleration and have transitioned from vision to concrete action. The Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020–2030) is helping to make that transition a reality.

By 2030, we aim to establish an African Digital Single Market that improves the lives of our people, accelerates regional integration, and ensures that Africa is not just a consumer of digital technologies but also a creator and innovator in the global digital space.

However, we recognize a critical challenge: **the fragmentation of frameworks, policies, and standards across our continent.**

This fragmentation creates barriers instead of bridges, limiting cross-border collaboration and preventing our businesses from realizing the full potential of Africa's digital market.

The African Union Commission is addressing this challenge by developing comprehensive foundational architecture that harmonizes our continental approach.

Over the past few years, we have made significant progress.

In **2022**, we adopted the **AU Data Policy Framework**, providing unified data governance.

In **2023**, the **Malabo Convention entered into force, providing cybersecurity safeguards.** We also launched the **Interoperability Framework for Digital ID**, allowing citizens easily access services while facilitating the full realization of AfCFTA.

In **2024**, the AU adopted **the Continental AI Strategy and the African Digital Compact**. Most **recently**, our Assembly adopted **e-Governance as the sixth thematic pillar of the African Peer Review Mechanism**.

These policy milestones create a connected and cohesive foundational architecture that can provide the predictability and standardization, our economies need to scale seamlessly across borders.

We are laying the groundwork for universal connectivity, resilient digital infrastructure, secure interoperable payment systems, standardized digital identities, and skills development.

The digital revolution we aspire to, requires strengthened partnerships on terms that serves Africa's interests.

Private sector engagement with this architecture is crucial - their insights help ensure our frameworks respond to real market needs while maintaining the regulatory harmony that is essential for cross-border operations.

This collaborative approach strengthens our position as we engage with global partners so as to ensure that global digital governance reflects African realities and incorporates our innovations.

Our related frameworks and policies should contribute to international standards setting, not merely conform to them.

The Global Digital Compact and other international initiatives must accommodate Africa's positions, demands and expectations so that we can collaborate as equals who bring essential expertise to global digital governance, not as recipients of externally designed solutions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The gap between policy and reality can only be bridged through measurable actions.

Today, let us prioritize digitization of essential services, invest in connectivity and shared infrastructure, and create inclusive products for the next generation of Africans.

Africa's time in the digital age is not coming—it is already here.

We must shape the global digital economy as co-creators, not consumers.

In this decisive decade, we must ensure that artificial intelligence contributes to Africa's development and prosperity while remaining grounded in African values.

Thank you. Asante sana.