

AFRICAN UNION

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KEYNOTE STATEMENT

**H.E. Amb Selma Malika Haddadi,
Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission**

At the G20 - African Union AI for Africa Summit

Tuesday 30 September

- **Excellency, Hon Mr Solly Malatsi, Minister of Communication and Digital Technologies,....**
- **Excellencies, honorable Ministers from the G20 and invited countries**
- **Mr Tawfik Jelassi, Assistant Director General for Communication and information of UNESCO,**
- **Excellency Ms Lerato Mataboge, AU Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy,**
- **Esteemed representatives from the AU and the UN organs and institutions,**
- **Distinguished partners and Guests,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen, All protocols duly observed,**

It is an honour and a privilege to join you this afternoon for this crucial and timely G20 dialogue on Artificial Intelligence for Africa (AI4Africa), under the theme

“ Unlocking AI potential for Africa’s Development and prosperity”.

I bring you warm greetings from the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, His Excellency Mahamoud Ali Youssouf, whom I represent, and from the African Union family in Addis Ababa.

Allow me, at the outset, to extend our profound gratitude to the **Presidency** of the Republic of South Africa for its leadership and warm hospitality in this beautiful and mountainous Cape Town.

We also thank UNESCO, our knowledge Partners, and the many stakeholders who have walked with us on this journey. Without your collective commitment, this occasion would not have been possible.

We gather here not only as policymakers and experts but also as custodians of a shared future.

The collective positions we take today should ultimately shape the destiny of our economies, our societies, and, most importantly, the dignity and opportunities of our people.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Permit me to speak plainly about Africa's development trajectory, as envisioned in Agenda 2063 and the opportunities the Artificial intelligence offer, for its implementation while we have embarked in the decade for acceleration.

Our progress hinges entirely on the extent to which Africans assume positions of economic and innovative leadership.

For too long, the global discourse surrounding artificial intelligence has been framed in terms of displacement and inequality. But technology is not a force beyond human control, it is an instrument of deliberate choice.

For Africa, Artificial intelligence should not substitute for human ingenuity. Instead, it should serve as a catalyst—an amplifier that transforms individual capability into exponential impact.

An Africa that combines deep contextual understanding with advanced technological proficiency becomes not only competitive but uniquely positioned to address challenges that others cannot even comprehend.

It is in this convergence—between African perspective and artificial intelligence—that unprecedented opportunities emerge for value creation at continental and global scales and for unlocking potential for development and prosperity.

But realizing this potential demands more than ambition. It requires governance frameworks tailored to African realities and that provide space for Africa's voice.

The African Union's Continental AI Strategy, adopted in 2024, establishes principles to ensure that AI serves our development priorities while protecting the rights and dignity of our citizens.

We must adopt governance models that are fit for purpose and inclusive, that are designed to reflect African values, markets realities, aspirations and needs. Where such models do not exist, Africa must lead in their **co-creation**.

This is where our younger generation becomes indispensable—not just as beneficiaries, but as architects and custodians of the frameworks that will define how AI serves development for decades to come.

Indeed, Young Africans must leverage emerging technologies and shape them to serve African needs and advance African interests.

Yet governance without sovereignty and participation is merely administration.

The African Union's place at the G20 table is not courtesy—it is recognition of Africa's indispensable role in setting the world's priorities. As a full member, we are responsible for co-authoring outcomes and exercising Africa's voice with dignity, conviction, and purpose.

To carry that mandate with weight, we must harness digitalization as a strategic instrument not only to contribute to global discourse, but to drive development, foster cooperation, and fortify governance of the international economy from within.

This means asserting digital sovereignty as agency—investing in sustainable and resilient AI infrastructure and connectivity as well as

computational power; developing interoperable digital identity and data systems that transcend borders; safeguarding our data as a strategic asset; and transforming knowledge into African-owned intellectual property that competes globally.

Sovereignty does, however, not mean isolation; it means entering in partnerships from a position of strength. It also means advancing research and innovation, access to technology as well as addressing funding gap and attract investments.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let us not be tempted to mistake the instrument for the mission.

Efficiency separate from purpose can entrench and perpetuate inequality at scale.

That is why our approach must be human-centred by design and anchored **in the principles of Pan Africanism and Ubuntu, not technological novelty. It must also be strengthened by solidarity, cooperation and partnerships.**

Africa's ambitions must extend beyond our borders. We are no longer willing to just be consumers of AI solutions designed elsewhere. Africa already possesses the potential and the capacity to be at the forefront of shaping AI development, and governance in ways that reflect African cultures, aspirations, and realities.

Excellencies,

Our work is incomplete until AI systems can operate fluently in our local languages, serve our communities contextually, and embody the richness of our heritage as assets for the world.

Africa's message—as we leverage emerging technologies—is one of confident stewardship. **Intelligence—whether natural or artificial, intelligence must always be rooted in human dignity.**

As I conclude and as we deliberate this afternoon, let this be the hand that guides our arrow and the vision that sets our horizon toward the Africa We Want.

Let it also be the expression of the expected support to AI4Africa initiative!

I thank you.