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## **Keynote Address**

“Deepening CSO Engagements in Advancing the Pact for the Future through Partnerships and Best Practices”

Delivered at the CSO Side Event during the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

By

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And

Technical Adviser, National Partnership Coordination

Office of the Prime Minister

Monday, 7th April 2025

2:30 PM – 4:00 PM

Amethyst Room, Munyonyo Convention Centre

- Government representatives,
- civil society representatives,
- Development partners,
- Distinguished guests,
- Youth leaders
- Friends of Africa

Good afternoon.

1. It is both an honour and a duty to speak to you today at this important side event organized by the Core Reference Group on SDGs, under the theme: **“Deepening CSO Engagements in Advancing the Pact for the Future through Partnerships and**

**Best Practices.”** This conversation comes at a defining moment — a moment that calls for boldness, innovation, and above all, **partnership.**

## **Africa at a Crossroads**

2. As we speak today, **Africa’s population is estimated at over 1.5 billion people** — nearly **17% of the global population** — and is projected to reach **2.5 billion by 2050**. Notably, **70% of this population is under the age of 30**, representing the **world’s youngest continent.**
3. This youthful demographic offers an extraordinary potential — a long-term workforce, vibrant ideas, and an unstoppable energy for innovation and entrepreneurship.
4. Africa is also experiencing **rapid economic and urban growth** — six of the world’s ten fastest-growing economies are on this continent.
5. Yet, this growth is uneven and fragile. While the **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)** signals new opportunities, the continent remains entangled in challenges that are deeply systemic: **climate change, conflict, poverty, food insecurity, and deepening inequality.**
6. In 2024 alone, climate shocks displaced **over 2 million people** across the Horn of Africa due to floods and droughts.

7. Conflict and insecurity have left **more than 35 million Africans displaced** — internally or across borders. And hunger continues to affect **almost 282 million people** across the continent.
8. Clearly, we need **urgent acceleration** toward the **SDGs** and **Agenda 2063**.

### **The Role of Partnerships in Delivering the SDGs and Agenda 2063**

9. The SDGs underscore a simple but profound truth: **no one actor can do it alone**. **Goal 17 – Partnerships for the Goals** – lies at the heart of the entire 2030 Agenda, recognizing that transformative change requires collaborative effort across all sectors and levels. Likewise, the aspirations of **Africa's Agenda 2063** — for inclusive growth, shared prosperity, and an integrated continent — can only be realized through deliberate, well-structured, and enduring partnerships.
10. Governments, civil society, the private sector, academia, communities, and development agencies must come together in **inclusive, equitable, and purpose-driven partnerships**. It is through such partnerships that we can mobilize both domestic and international financing, harness innovation and technology, unlock local knowledge and solutions, ensure policy coherence and alignment, and extend the reach of services and

accountability mechanisms to the last mile — where needs are greatest and voices are often unheard.

11. Effective partnerships must be **transformational** — not transactional. They must be built on shared values, co-ownership of outcomes, transparency, mutual accountability, and a long-term commitment to results. These partnerships should not be confined to project delivery; they must embrace joint problem-solving, shared learning, adaptive management, and collective impact.
12. For civil society organizations (CSOs), this means stepping beyond the role of implementers. CSOs must be recognized — and must position themselves — as **co-creators of development**. They bring community insight, grassroots legitimacy, innovation, and agility. Their role in bridging policy and practice, amplifying marginalized voices, and holding duty-bearers accountable is indispensable.
13. As we move forward, we must invest in partnership platforms and ecosystems that enable collaboration across sectors and borders. We must develop mechanisms that foster trust, clarity of roles, aligned incentives, and inclusive governance structures. Strengthened partnerships are not just desirable — they are **critical levers** for achieving the integrated and interdependent goals of both the **2030 Agenda** and **Agenda 2063**.

## **Africa's Moonshots: A Vision for Transformation**

14. As Africa embarks on the second Ten-Year Implementation Plan (2024–2033) of Agenda 2063, the continent has committed to seven transformative moonshots — ambitious, high-impact goals intended to fast-track Africa's journey toward peace, prosperity, and global influence.
15. These include ensuring that all AU Member States attain at least middle-income status, deepening regional integration and connectivity, building responsive and accountable public institutions, resolving conflicts through peaceful means, promoting African values and identity, empowering citizens to be productive and self-reliant, and positioning Africa as a strong and influential global player on the world stage.
16. These moonshots are not isolated from global aspirations. On the contrary, they are deeply aligned with the SDGs of Agenda 2030. Both frameworks share a common vision for inclusive, equitable, and sustainable development. For instance, the goal to end hunger and malnutrition directly supports SDG 2 (Zero Hunger); the ambition to silence the guns by 2030 aligns with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions); and the emphasis on empowering youth through education and decent work corresponds with SDGs 4 and 8.

17. Likewise, the focus on accelerating the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), fostering innovation, and ensuring climate resilience connects to SDGs 9, 13, 15, and 17.
18. This overlap underscores a powerful truth: the moonshots of Agenda 2063 and the targets of Agenda 2030 mutually reinforce one another. Synergizing their implementation is not just a strategic choice — it is a developmental necessity.
19. While Agenda 2030 concludes in five years, Agenda 2063 stretches much further, offering Africa a longer-term vision to continue driving transformation. Thus, the moonshots provide a vital mechanism to sustain momentum beyond the SDG timeline, ensuring continuity, relevance, and renewed ambition well into the future.
20. To make this synergy effective, however, we must commit to more than policy alignment. It requires integrated planning, coordinated action, and shared ownership across governments, civil society, private sector actors, and development partners. And here, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) play a pivotal role.
21. They are uniquely positioned to connect the high-level ambitions of both Agendas with realities on the ground. CSOs are essential in translating policy into practice, holding institutions accountable, amplifying marginalized voices, co-creating community-led solutions, and ensuring that no one is left behind.

22. In this era of shifting financing patterns and increasing global uncertainty, there is a critical need to rethink sustainability. We must forge new partnerships, tap into African philanthropy, and build resource mobilization models that are led by and rooted in the continent. CSOs must help catalyze this transition while continuing to advocate for inclusive development and social justice.
23. Africa holds immense promise—its youthful population, abundant natural resources, rich biodiversity, and cultural heritage make it a continent of opportunity. The Pact for the Future, emerging from the forthcoming UN Summit of the Future, is therefore deeply relevant to Africa. It is not just a global pact — it is an African pact. The generation that will inherit the outcomes of these commitments lives on this continent, and many of the resources needed to fulfill them are also found here.
24. We are at a defining moment. CSOs must now embrace their role not only as contributors but as custodians of Africa’s transformation. By deepening partnerships, aligning agendas, and working in synergy with national, continental, and global frameworks, we can ensure that Africa’s moonshots and the SDGs lead us toward a more just, inclusive, and sustainable future.

## **The Pact for the Future: A Call to Anchor Development in Shared Values**

25. The **Pact for the Future**, launched at the **Summit of the Future in September 2024**, marked a significant moment in global cooperation. It provided not only a definitive pathway to **accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** but also a renewed commitment to anchoring the future of our world on the foundation of **value-based, inclusive, and people-centered development**. It reminded us that sustainable progress must be rooted in solidarity, equity, and justice—principles that transcend borders and generations.

26. Yet, since that historic moment, we have lived through stark contradictions. The world has witnessed an unsettling rise in **armed conflicts across parts of Africa**, coupled with **aggressive, protectionist policies emerging in the global North**, which threaten to erode the very multilateral spirit the Pact aims to uphold. But even amidst these headwinds, we must continue to hold firm to the commitments of the Pact—for they represent not only a roadmap but a moral compass guiding us toward a more just, peaceful, and sustainable future.

27. The Pact for the Future calls on all of us to **recommit to multilateralism, rebuild trust in international cooperation, and strengthen global governance**. It urges the global community to place **youth and future generations at the center of decision-making**, and to act with urgency in **accelerating the SDGs**, while transforming critical systems



such as **education, digital governance, and financing for development.**

28. This is not merely a global pact. **It is, in every sense, an African pact.** The future that the world envisions through the Pact will be lived, shaped, and determined right here—on the African continent. **Africa is home to the generation that will inherit the outcomes of today's choices,** and to the **resources that are central to shaping a livable planet.**

Consider what Africa holds:

29. **30% of the world's mineral reserves,** including **90% of its platinum, 60% of its cobalt, 40% of its gold,** and vast stores of **lithium,** critical for the world's green transition.

30. The **largest solar potential** on the planet, yet ironically, remains one of the least powered regions.

31. **Biodiversity hotspots,** vast **arable land,** and rich ecosystems that contribute to global environmental stability.

32. A youthful population, innovation hubs, cultural richness, and a resilient civil society—one that has endured adversity, driven change, and remained committed to the ideals of progress.

33. Africa, therefore, is not on the margins of the global future—it is at its very center. And as civil society actors, we must see the **Pact for the Future as both a responsibility and an opportunity**—to drive African solutions, anchor our development in shared values, and ensure that global solidarity does not remain an aspiration but becomes a lived reality.

### **This Is Our Moment**

34. Civil Society has walked this path for decades — from the **Millennium Development Goals** to the current SDGs. We have fought for rights, shaped policies, delivered essential services, and built the foundations of community resilience.

35. Today, however, we face a shrinking civic space, declining donor funding, and growing nationalism. **Traditional financing models are being redefined.** We must pivot—toward **African-led philanthropy, social enterprises, and blended financing models** that leverage **our own assets and capabilities.**

36. We must deepen **south-south collaboration**, invest in **collective advocacy platforms**, and embrace **data, innovation, and intergenerational leadership.**

37. Let us also push for **policy coherence and political will**, and hold our leaders accountable to the promises they’ve made—not only to international frameworks but to their own people.

## **In a nutshell**

38. Colleagues, the **Pact for the Future** will not be realized in boardrooms alone. It will be shaped by the hands and voices of **communities, activists, educators, farmers, health workers, and young people across Africa**—many of whom CSOs represent every day.

39. Let me therefore conclude with this dose of optimism by sharing a story about two little girls playing on the beaches of Durban. While they were playing, the waves began sweeping many sardines onto the shore. One girl wanted to go home quickly, but the other decided to throw the sardines back into the ocean, one by one. The girl who wanted to leave asked her, "What are you doing? You're only saving a tiny number of the sardines, and the ocean is washing more ashore. You're wasting your time!"

40. The girl throwing the sardines back replied, "If you asked any of these sardines that I've thrown back whether it was important to them, they would say that it is."

41. Ladies and gentlemen, let us continue to throw back one sardine at a time. No action should be seen as too small.

Welcome to Kampala, and thank you for listening!