



# PAUL KAGAME

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I thank Thierry for the kind introduction and for the invitation.

I also congratulate you and his team for the distinctive quality of the World Policy Conference. This is a forum focused on anticipating and shaping the future, rather than trying to hold back change.

That perspective is refreshing for those of us who experience the world from somewhere in the middle, not one of the poles. So I am very happy to be back to continue the productive conversation started eight years ago when Thierry was kind enough also like today to host me in Paris.

Tonight, I would much rather talk with you than at you. And we all know dinner is also waiting.

So let me make two simple but topical points.

The first is that Africa is nobody's prize to win or lose. Not at all.

It is our responsibility as Africans to take charge of our own interests and develop our continent to its full potential. In fact, this has always been the main issue. We have been waiting far too long, actually for centuries.

Trade shapes a nation's economy in powerful ways. The search for comparative advantage generally leads to gains in competitiveness and wealth.

That's why, at a certain point, the concept of 'aid for trade' gained currency. The idea was to build a country's trade capacity so that it could transition from dependency to self-reliance and eventually to prosperity. This should have been the approach all along.

Today, Africa enjoys strong trade relations around the globe, whether with Europe, India, North America, or China. Indeed, we want more investment and trade with everybody, because it leaves us all better off.

That is why coming together as a region has been so important for Africa. Internal barriers to travel and commerce in Africa continue to fall, though more still needs to be done. For example, Sierra Leone is the most recent country to announce visa on arrival for fellow Africans, joining around fifteen others. However, that is still less than one-third of Africa.

The African Continental Free Trade Area is now in force and trading will commence in July 2020. This agreement will radically reshape how Africa does business with itself and with the rest of the world.

The revitalization of the African Union Peace Fund, which now stands at more than \$125 million has enhanced the credibility of Africa's security partnerships, and it should continue to grow.

The second point concerns the tone of anxiety and defeatism that dominates current policy debates. Above all, it's about the fear of losing something, rather than the ambition to do more and better.

Even science and technology — the very engines of human progress — are increasingly seen as problematic, for example with artificial intelligence or genetically-modified crops.

From there, it's a short step to the false belief that preserving a high standard of living in one place depends on preventing others from getting to the same level.

Barriers go up; trust vanishes.



If I may take the liberty of generalizing, this pessimism does not resonate in Africa. There is a determination to live better lives for ourselves. We have already seen evidence of tremendous advances, particularly in health, connectivity, governance, and incomes.

Recovering that sense of hope and optimism, wherever it has been lost, is critical.

We can be better partners. Meaning all of us here and beyond working together. That is what will get us back on track toward a better world, where everyone benefits.

Once again, I thank the World Policy Conference for this wonderful evening. And thank you all for your attention and interest. I look forward to our continued discussion.