

## NARDOS BEKELE-THOMAS

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Thank you very much. I think in three minutes I will say, yes, I agree with all that you have said. Thank you very much. However, anyway, because I have been given this opportunity let me just say that I am just so happy to be talking as the last speaker because I have seen the enthusiasm and the optimism of some of our leaders, starting with our sister Aminata and the Prime Minister. It is very important to understand the fact that the demographic dividend and the GDP are not negligible when we talk about all of our countries, the 54 countries. With a population of 1.2 billion consumers, producers and innovators it is really possible to be the powerhouse of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as Asia has been at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They started the way we did. However, while we have all this potential around us, we also need to reflect on how to co-create our systems to be adaptable and relevant to the society of the future. I hate to say the future society, but it is to the society of the future because we have to re-imagine what it would be like.

Therefore, first of all, the first thing we have to re-imagine is really our political system – as explained in the concept note written by Mr. Chairperson. It is not doing the service. We really need to reflect deeper, go deeper and analyze. What can we do to tweak and to calibrate, to make sure that it meets the needs of the future?

The second thing I should say is that we are abandoning more and more, because of the media etc., our value system. How do we go back to our own African value system and have a moral regeneration? That is for the question that is for peace building and that is us working together to implement the Agenda 2063.

The third thing is how we also re-imagine giving a system a structure that enables us to work together in a coordinated and collaborative manner. I will say this because of my experiences everywhere, we have adopted the system of a silo approach when it comes to implementation, but what is missing in Africa is not policy – not at all, we have many policies, and I agree with the speaker before that we have well thought-out strategies – and Africa has now the capacity to produce its own policy and homegrown strategies, but implementation will be critically important. We cannot implement – and we have learned it from the Covid-19 experience – something that is really a problem of one sector without bringing in all the various sectors in a holistic manner, and therefore an integrated approach is critical and very important, and so is a whole society approach. We have to bring our youth into the center and at the front, we have to bring our learning institutions, research institutions and technology centers in the planning and implementation of our programs. I think it is very critical and very important that we look at that.

Finally, there are the partnership and resource mobilization. In terms of a partnership, it has to be equitable. A partner comes because the partner has an interest, but we have to have our



strategy in engaging with that partner and discuss at an equal power. Resource mobilization and funding are very critical and very important. Our domestic resources could be used efficiently and effectively. The illicit financing should be stopped. Debts should be managed properly. If we do all of this and make sure that we are really going with a paradigm shift of saying, “We will manage to be self-reliant and teach our children to be more independent and not to be dependent and despondent”, as my sister Aminata said, we will arrive there and we will certainly be the powerhouse in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Thank you very much.