

# NARDOS BEKELE-THOMAS

CEO of the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), former United Nations Resident Coordinator in South Africa

**Seán Cleary, Chairman of Strategic Concepts (Pty) Ltd, Founder and Executive Vice Chair of the FutureWorld Foundation**

If I may, I am going to come to Nardos Bekele-Thomas first, to get an overview. You sit at AUDA/NEPAD, Nardos. You have an overview of the whole of the African developmental challenge. Nardos do tell us what you are doing.

## **Nardos Bekele-Thomas**

Thank you very much. I think we are focusing more, like you said, on the opportunities and being optimistic about Africa. Why be optimistic? First of all, we talked earlier about the agricultural deficit on the continent, and the panel said that there is a problem. It is not a problem. Firstly, 60% of the world's arable land is in Africa, and in terms of most of what it needs as ingredients for fertilizers and how to solve its problems lies within. The second thing is that, as you rightly said, there is a strong demographic dividend. I mean, these youthful energies, if they are empowered, will be a powerful asset for Africa, but also for the globe, and I will come to that later on. The third thing is that Africa is rich in oil and gas, and when we talk about renewable energy, green energy and the green economy, Africa possesses all that it takes. Africa has 90% of the platinum group that you need to make the planet green. It has 95% of the chromium that we need. It has 30% of the magnesium and lithium. It has 20% of the graphite and 66% of the cobalt. It is clear that Africa is certainly bankable.

Africa is also waking up. Despite all the problems that we had with structural adjustment in the past, climate change and all of the exogenous factors, Africa has got a vision, the Vision 2063. It has translated this vision in terms of a Ten-Year implementation plan. We just completed the First Ten-Year implementation plan and came out with the Second Ten-Year implementation plan which took into account the deficiencies of the first one, including the cost of it, and planning for inevitable shocks through foresight planning, scenario building. It is therefore complete and ambitious, truly ambitious, as it should be, yet still attainable.

In the Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan, we have got many programs like PIDA (Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa). PIDA PAP 1 had attained, to an extent, some progress, but it was falling short. However, PIDA PAP 2, takes into account the deficiencies of that and addresses it by making sure that we have got the experts pool, making sure that there is a service delivery mechanism, making sure that the private sector participation is real and that a conducive environment is built. Therefore, in PIDA PAP 1, the progress made was achieved through public expenditure. Member states invested in infrastructure, and that is why debt has risen in some parts. Therefore, this second phase of

PIDA, which has got 67 projects comprising of roads, rail, air and ports, is really a compilation of many projects combined, including on digital infrastructure, which takes into account broadband connectivity, the data centers that we badly require, and also the cyber security aspect of it.

As part of this, I would add energy. In terms of energy, we have come out with the Comprehensive Power Systems Master Plan (CMP). This plan anticipates the energy capacity that we require to transform Africa, to implement the Second Ten-Year Implementation plan, which would generate 1,200 gigawatts. Right now, we have got only 237 gigawatts coming from two sources, which is hydro and, of course, coal. Now, the difference is that the new renewable energy would come into play, and therefore 67-75% would be an opportunity for all investors to come and invest in Africa. This comprehensive plan encompasses not only generation, but also transmission and distribution. Also, when we talk about transmission, before we were thinking of the government coming into transmission and distribution, but today we have opened up. We are coming out with bankable projects so that the private sector from all over the world could come and participate in Africa's power generation, transmission and distribution, so that we can have the power pools at the regional levels developed, and that is part of the capacity-building that we are doing in the five regional power pools, and having a trading market for electricity at the regional level. Also, these five power pools will combine into one single electricity market, which would not only provide power to Africa, but also power to the rest of the world, and whoever would be in the market and interested in the market. We would have a surplus in terms of power.

Coming to the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP), we have been talking about that and there are many aspects of it. The Malabo Declaration has just been reviewed and there are new techniques, using innovation and technology on how to augment production and productivity, and also manage the losses and leakages, be it post-harvest losses, but also losses from the wastages that we have been talking about. Of course, water resource management is another aspect. We now come to climate. Africa contributes only 4% of carbon emissions, but we are bearing the greatest burden of climate change. Hey, the world has to wake up! The world has to wake up because we need to help Africa to build its capacity to adapt, but also to mitigate. We have been promising a lot, but we have not fulfilled the promises, and unfulfilled promises have had consequences, not only for Africa, but for the entire world. I urge everybody to come and help us with the adaptation mechanisms, but also with mitigation.

In addition to that, what I would like to say is that, truly, Africa is awake. We are ready. We have got our plan. We have got our Agenda 2063 Dashboards mapping progress across different nations. Therefore, nations respond to this adapted and aligned plan that we have. We have been having discussions with the UN, and we have told the UN, and the UN has agreed, that there will be Two Agendas, one global and one continental. But we will have just One Plan, which is the implementation plan designed in collaboration with the UN. Therefore, we are coordinating our activities. The Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have got these eminent personalities who are there. They would work. However, to ensure that we do not have a fragmented approach to this development, we have come out with what we call the Africa Team. I will talk about the regional economic communities joining and collaborating with AUDA-NEPAD including the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA Secretariat), the

African Medicine Agency, which we have created, the Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that we have for health. We work together.

On health, we are harmonizing all our regulatory frameworks because we are going into domestic, local production of some essential medicines. We have identified 25 or 26 medicines that need to be produced in Africa, and in order to do that there is a need for harmonization and regularization. In this also, we are inviting the private sector to take part so that we can have a public-private partnership to develop the health sector. It is not normal that Africa produces only 5% of its medicines, and you saw the vaccine inequity and the harm that it has brought. Therefore, the infrastructure of the health sector also needs to be built, and we are inviting you to come and join us.

In addition to that, industrialization is particularly important. We can have the African Continental Free Trade Area, but without any production, without any productivity, without our manufacturing industries, without building the value chains, the supply chains, without making sure that there are forward and backward linkages, we cannot realize the AfCFTA. Therefore, we are working closely with the AfCFTA, coming out with an impact assessment of what the impact of the AfCFTA would be on individual countries, where the growth centers and the chains are, and trying to build the chains, but also focusing around alternative strategies for those countries that depend on tariffs. These are all packaged programs. One overlaps the other.

Finally, youth is our major asset. You have seen innovation and entrepreneurs coming up. There are startups all over the place. It is hope. The young ones are the hope of Africa, and we need to invest in them. By investing in them, as was discussed earlier, we are trying to come out with a program that would make sure that we map out all the investments that have been spent on education to try to see if we can have the intellectual capacities to really inform and inject youth into the public service. Having a program that would capture all of these young minds and integrate them in the public service would make such a difference because it would enable the young ones to plan for their future, and not us, the old ones. The second thing is really coming out with innovation hubs. There are so many innovation hubs in the name of Africa, many hubs that are not functional. Mapping them out, setting standards for these hubs and making them useful to the socioeconomic transformation of the continent is critically important. We have embarked on doing that. Join us.

The third one is the startups. There are many startups, but we need institutions that support them. The Intellectual Property Rights Office is very critical. The Bureau of Standards is very critical. The export promotion centers, the research institutions, all coming and working as one would bear results for Africa. I will stop here, and then I will answer some questions later on.