



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**OPENING REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY
WILLIAM SAMOEI RUTO, CGH; PHD; PRESIDENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA AND CHAMPION OF
THE AFRICAN UNION INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS,
DURING A HIGH-LEVEL RETREAT OF THE
EXTENDED BUREAU OF THE AFRICAN UNION
INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS**

JANUARY 27, 2025

STATE HOUSE, NAIROBI

Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,

Your Excellency Moussa Faki, AUC Chairperson,

**Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. On behalf of the government and the people of Kenya, I extend a warm welcome to you all. Karibuni Kenya. It is a profound honour that Your Excellencies have graciously accepted my invitation to participate in this Extended Bureau Retreat on African Union Institutional Reforms. Your presence here reaffirms the unity of purpose that binds us together as we chart the course for Africa's future.
2. I have convened this retreat in my capacity as the new Champion of the African Union Institutional Reforms following the assignment by Your Excellencies during the 37th Assembly of the Heads of State and Government in Addis Ababa last year. This retreat is an opportunity to pause, reflect and refocus our collective energies towards an African Union that is robust, efficient and fit for purpose.
3. As Your Excellencies will recall, I was tasked with the role of re-energising the reform process by ensuring the outstanding reform priorities are concluded as soon as is practicable. These reform priorities include the restructuring of the remaining AU organs, institutions and offices, as well as the study on the Division of Labour between the African Union, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Member States. I was also tasked with reporting on the progress of reform implementation during the forthcoming Ordinary Session of the Assembly in February 2025.



4. Today, we stand at a crossroads; a juncture marked by complex geopolitical developments, economic challenges and unprecedented social transformation. Yet, within these challenges lie unparalleled opportunities that will unlock the full potential of our continent through initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area. Our task here is to harness these opportunities, galvanise political will and renew our collective commitment to a prosperous Africa.
5. Excellencies, the African Union is built upon the noble foundation of liberation; liberation from colonialism and Apartheid, from oppression, and from dependency. The transformation from the Organisation of African Unity to the African Union was not a departure from this mission; rather, it was an evolution, a shift towards addressing contemporary challenges and seizing new opportunities. The AU remains firmly in the business of liberation; liberation from poverty, conflicts and underdevelopment; unfair global trading practices; and exclusion in global decision-making.
6. To achieve this, our institutional architecture must be strengthened, streamlined and strategically aligned with our vision. Since my appointment as Champion of AU institutional reforms, I have engaged extensively and strategically with key AU stakeholders to advance the reform agenda. These engagements include meetings with the African Union Commission leadership led by the Chair His Excellency Moussa Faki Mahamat; the AU Institutional Reform Unit Secretariat, led by its technical Head, Prof Pierre Moukoko, and a retreat I convened in Naivasha, Kenya, on reforms with various stakeholders.



7. Additionally, I have held consultative meetings with the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) in Addis Ababa, the leadership of the Pan African Parliament (PAP) led by His Excellency Chief Fortune Charumbira, as well as Dr Donald Kaberuka, AU High Representative for Financing the Union here at State House, Nairobi.
8. I wish to thank my dear brother, His Excellency Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, for the outstanding work he did as the pioneer Champion of the AU Institutional Reforms. I commend him for his dedication and achievements in advancing the reform agenda.
9. Excellencies, the road ahead demands bold leadership and unwavering commitment. Given that the implementation of the reform priorities is a political process, it is my view that execution should continue to be guided at the level of Heads of State and Government. I shall be proposing to recommend to the Assembly, with your concurrence, the formation of a Committee of Heads of State and Government of the African Union on AU Reforms under the leadership of the Champion. This will ensure sustained momentum, strategic oversight and collective ownership of the reform process. I invite this August gathering to provide guidance on the appropriate formula for representation in the committee. To give focused attention to the AU Reform momentum, I am also requesting that we consider the possibility of convening an extraordinary summit of Heads of State and Government this year.
10. To realise the objectives of “The Africa We Want” as outlined in Agenda 2063, we must reinvigorate our political resolve to embrace the African Union’s institutional reforms. These reforms are fundamental to transforming the AU into a robust institution capable of securing a progressive and united Africa.



A prosperous, integrated and globally competitive Africa is within our reach, but only if we act with urgency, unity and single-minded resolve.

11. Excellencies, the continent is facing unprecedented challenges regarding peace and security. Conflict continues to rob Africa of its potential, costing the continent an estimated \$18 billion annually and displacing millions of our people. Africa today is home to 35 million internally displaced persons, 8.9 million refugees, 1.1 million asylum seekers and 1 million stateless persons. Between April and June 2024 alone, a total of 1,000 terrorism incidents were recorded across Africa, resulting in 4,818 deaths.
12. This is an existential moment for our continent. The African Union security architecture in its current configuration is incapable of addressing these complex dynamics and challenges, and there is an urgent need for immediate revitalisation of the peace and security architecture. The African Union's presence in regional hotspots remains weak, fragmented and under-resourced. The AU's network of Special Envoys and High Representatives is under-utilised and urgently needs refreshing in certain cases. As peace is the key precondition for development, it follows, Excellencies, that our continent's developmental goals are being hindered by these destabilising forces.
13. Strengthening the performance and effectiveness of AU peace support operations is a strategic imperative given the volatile, complex and interconnected nature of threats to collective peace and security. The fight against terrorism on our continent remains fragmented, reactive, poorly resourced and uncoordinated. Developing a comprehensive Plan of Action for countering terrorism in Africa, as foreseen by the 2022 Malabo Declaration, cannot wait any longer.



14. I urge you, my esteemed colleagues, to reflect deeply on how we can further fortify our peace and security architecture. One pertinent proposal is to convene a High-Level Panel of perhaps three Experts to conduct a comprehensive review of the AU's peace and security framework. This panel would also assess the feasibility of implementing UN Security Council Resolution 2719, which offers a viable pathway for financing AU-led, UN-mandated peace support operations through assessed contributions.
15. Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it is regrettable that despite the Assembly's decision to limit the summit agenda to three strategic items, as outlined in Decision 635, the agenda continues to remain excessively complex and time-consuming. This complexity continues to hamper the efficiency and effectiveness of our deliberations.
16. To streamline the Assembly's proceedings, I will be recommending, for your consideration, a revised format that includes a high-level opening ceremony followed by a dedicated session for national statements by Heads of State and Government, focused exclusively on the three agreed agenda items. Each leader will be allocated between seven and 10 minutes to address any of the items, ensuring precision and focus. Day One will thus be devoted to these statements, while Day Two will be reserved for the adoption of decisions and declarations.
17. At the close of the Assembly session, the Chairperson of the Union and the Chairperson of the Commission will issue a communiqué that encapsulates the deliberations and outcomes of the Summit. In addition, I shall propose that the AUC be mandated to publish the Assembly and Executive Council's decisions within seven days of the Summit's conclusion, ensuring transparency and prompt dissemination of resolutions.



18. Excellencies, dear colleagues, Africa possesses the capability and resources to finance herself sustainably and adequately. The revitalisation of the AU Peace Fund has been a commendable step forward, but we must consolidate these gains and set even more ambitious financing targets. A higher endowment for the Peace Fund is essential. In achieving this, domestic resource mobilisation and strategic partnerships will play a pivotal role, all the while upholding the fundamental principles of African ownership and leadership.
19. Since 2020, the AU budget has remained stagnant despite the increasing scope of our mandates and the creation of new institutions. Our ambitions must be matched by a predictable, sustainable and accountable financial framework. I therefore propose, for your consideration, the convening of an Extraordinary Session of the Executive Council, with the participation of Ministers of Finance, to explore and present to the Assembly viable options for achieving the Johannesburg financing targets within the next five years.
20. Additionally, I recommend that the Assembly mandate the AU High Representative on Financing the Union, Dr Donald Kaberuka, to develop a concept note and a comprehensive report on practical options to achieve these targets.
21. Distinguished colleagues, the operationalisation of the Court of Justice of the African Union remains a critical priority that must be pursued with renewed vigour. This judicial body is essential in providing a legal mechanism for the resolution of disputes between African States, as well as between the African Union and its various entities. Additionally, the Court will serve as a Court of Appeal of decisions of the African Union Administrative Tribunal, thereby enhancing the credibility and efficacy of our continental legal framework.



22. Although the Protocol on the Court of Justice of the African Union came into force in July 2009, its implementation was deferred to facilitate the merger with the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights and to expand its mandate to include an international crimes chamber. It is now imperative that we move forward decisively in operationalising this vital institution.
23. In addition, the revitalisation of the Pan African Parliament (PAP) is a matter that demands our collective focus and commitment. During a recent consultative meeting in Nairobi with the president of PAP, we reaffirmed the need for high-level advocacy to secure the ratification of the Malabo Protocol by an additional 13 Member States, thereby reaching the required threshold of 28 ratifications.
24. As of now, only 15 countries have ratified the Protocol, which seeks to empower PAP with permanent membership and legislative authority to formulate model laws that will shape the governance of our continent. As Champion of AU reforms, I call upon Your Excellencies to rally behind this effort and accelerate the ratification process.
25. As we embark on our consultations today, I wish you all fruitful deliberations. Let us work towards producing empowering and impactful outcomes that will drive the reform process forward and position our Union for greater achievements.

I thank you.

