

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE THABO MBEKI FOUNDATION

Introduction.

The Thabo Mbeki Foundation was formed in 2010 following President Mbeki's retirement as the President of the Republic of South Africa as a Public Benefit Organisation in order to address the many challenges of transformation and development faced by the African Continent.

The fundamental aim of the Foundation is to support efforts aimed at promoting the achievement of Africa's Renaissance by setting the agenda for progressive change throughout the continent and to create platforms for dialogue and action to promote the birth of a continental movement driven by a new cadre of thought leaders dedicated to Africa's political, social, and economic renewal.

We believe the Foundation is uniquely positioned to use its credibility, networks, deep knowledge of Africa's challenges and opportunities and its convening power to catalyse the Africa's Renaissance.

The Foundation has established four flagship programmes to support the renewal of Africa:

1. Thabo Mbeki African School of Public and International Affairs

The Thabo Mbeki African School of Public and International Affairs (TM-School) is envisioned as a premier graduate school to advance public sector education in public and international affairs. The TM-School seeks to be a magnet of excellence in education, experiential learning, and research.

At the launch of the TM-School in September 2020, His Excellency Thabo Mbeki, Chancellor of Unisa, said that the purpose of education was to learn to question everything and that our aim in teaching should be to produce men and women who are both critical and creative. In this respect, he emphasised, "Our students should be encouraged to be thinkers and doers rather than accumulators of facts and receivers of knowledge. This must be so if they are to be instruments of change, working towards the realisation of a just and, consequently, a stable society".

The TM-School's bouquet of learning offerings, primarily doctoral and master's qualifications, have been developed with the political, economic, social, and cultural renewal of Africa in mind.

They are aimed at training public servants, academics, diplomats, leaders in business, civil society, NGOs and communities, and lifelong learners to adopt a transdisciplinary approach to solving complex problems in Africa and beyond. In doing so, they contribute to creating a culture of excellence in the public service and international affairs arenas.

The TM-School's focus areas are:

- Citizenship and Development
- Climate Change, Energy Security, and sustainability,
- Leadership Studies
- Peace and Development Studies
- Study of Government Affairs
- Urban and Regional Affairs
- Simulations and Futuristic Studies
- Security and Intelligence Studies
- Sustainable livelihood & Resources Management

Fundamentally the TM School is the Foundations efforts to respond to the important matter of human capital/ capacity development to respond to the challenges that Africa is facing.

2. South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET)

The SADET was established as a project Trust after President Thabo Mbeki indicated his concern about the paucity of historical material on the arduous and complex road to South Africa's peaceful political settlement after decades of violent conflict. But more importantly this is an attempt by Africans writing their own story, in an effort to build confidence and sense of pride.

SADET's mission is to examine and analyse events leading to the negotiated settlement and democracy in South Africa.

Since its inception the Trust has produced sixteen books primarily looking at the period 1952 to 1996. It continues to produce books.

3. Peace-making, Democratisation and Economic Development.

The Foundation supports President Mbeki in his responsibility to:

- conflict resolution, peace, and security,
- democratisation; and,
- economic development, especially combating illicit capital flows.

Amongst others, President Mbeki is involved in the following ongoing matters:

Chairperson of the AU High Level Implementation Panel for Sudan and South Sudan,

Chairperson of the AU High Panel on the Security of the Horn of Africa and the AU-UN High Level Panel on Illicit Financial Outflows from Africa.

Additionally, the Foundation supports President Mbeki in his activities as the Chairperson the Board of the South Centre, a think tank of the countries of the Global South, based in Geneva, Switzerland.

4. Thabo Mbeki Presidential Centre.

The Thabo Mbeki Presidential Centre, which is scheduled to be opened in 2026, is intended to be a living library and museum which will narrate the story of Africa's development, liberation, and renewal through and beyond former President Mbeki and other historical & contemporary African leaders' work and impact.

Anchored in the past while challenging the status quo of the present to manifest a brighter future, the Thabo Mbeki Presidential Centre will build community by celebrating the multifaceted identity, beauty and creativity of African peoples and cultures. This will be achieved through an articulation of Africa and, in particular, African history and heritage in the form of exhibitions, academic resources, and an archive of inspiring artifacts that speak to pivotal historic moments.

Flagship Events:

The Foundation has five Flagship Events that it hosts every year:

- *International Women's Day Lecture.*

One of the foundation's key initiatives is its annual International Women's Day event, which celebrates the achievements of women and promotes gender equality.

The International Women's Day event organised by the Thabo Mbeki Foundation is usually held on or around March 8th, the official date of International Women's Day. It typically features a range of activities and initiatives aimed at highlighting the challenges faced by women in Africa and promoting solutions to these challenges. The event brings together women from different sectors and backgrounds, including business leaders, academics, activists, and politicians.

One of the main objectives of the event is to provide a platform for women to share their experiences and insights on various issues affecting women in Africa. Participants discuss a range of topics, including economic empowerment, women's health, education, and political participation. The event also features a keynote speech from a prominent leader who provides inspiration and guidance to the attendees.

The theme for International Women's Day 2024 is Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress.

Based on the priority theme for the United Nations 68th Commission on the Status of Women, Count Her In will examine the pathways to greater economic inclusion for women and girls everywhere.

Through the event and other women-oriented events, the Foundation hopes to inspire women to become leaders in their communities and to work towards a more just and equitable society for all.

- *Thabo Mbeki Africa Day Lecture*

At its formation, the Foundation decided that it should respect the call made by Africa's political leaders in 1963, that the 25th of May must be

used to focus on advancing the goals the continent has set itself. This did not change when African Liberation Day became Africa Day.

Every year since 2010, the TMF has had the privilege to host some of Africa's most eminent thought leaders as our esteemed lecturers.

Successive lecturers have made important comments, observations, and suggestions to add to the process of thinking strategically about what Africa must do. And more importantly to set an agenda for Africa to respond to the most potent challenge it faces in each year.

The 13th Thabo Mbeki Africa Day Lecture was held on Saturday, 27 May 2023, in the City of Conakry, Republic of Guinea. This was the first-ever Thabo Mbeki Africa Day Lecture hosted outside of South Africa, as a demonstration of the TMF's commitment to being a pan-African organisation.

The 13th Thabo Mbeki Africa Day Lecture was a unique platform to critically examine the challenges of fragility and security in West Africa, along with the factors affecting its economic development. The lecture is expected to catalyse bold new actions, solutions, and strategies from state and non-state actors to deliver political, social, and economic progress for all in the region.

The 14th Thabo Mbeki Africa Day Lecture was delivered by Professor Abdoulaye Bathily, and took place in Johannesburg, South Africa, on May 25, 2024. Professor Bathily addressed the timely and critical theme: "The New International Scramble for Africa and the Challenges of Unity."

- *Renaissance Prize for Culture*

In 2024, the Thabo Mbeki Foundation is launching an annual prize to recognise outstanding contributions in African literature, music, art and film. The prize aims to celebrate and elevate African cultural expression, inspiring a renaissance of creativity.

The cultural richness of Africa, a continent replete with diverse traditions, languages, and artistic expressions, is an integral part of its identity and global contribution. Despite this, African creators in literature, music, art and film have not always received the recognition they deserve, particularly within their own continent. The absence of a continent-wide,

prestigious award system to honour and incentivize these cultural practitioners has been a notable gap.

The intent of this Prize is not merely to fill a void in recognition but to initiate a movement that places African cultural expression on an elevated pedestal, fostering a renaissance of African creativity. By annually awarding the Renaissance Prize for Culture, the Foundation will create a new narrative—one where African writers, musicians, artists and filmamakers are at the forefront of shaping the continent's cultural legacy and are empowered to do so from within their own communities and countries.

- *African Peace and Security Dialogue*

The African continent has faced various conflicts, security, and peace challenges that have affected its economic and social development. The challenges range from internal conflicts, terrorism, transnational organized crimes, and external aggression. The Thabo Mbeki Foundation recognizes the urgent need for sustained dialogue and collaborative efforts to address peace and security challenges across the African continent. In this regard, the foundation proposes an annual African Peace and Security Dialogue to promote critical thinking and generate ideas on practical solutions to peace and security challenges.

The objective of the Annual African Peace and Security Dialogue is to provide a platform for African political & economic leaders, scholars, and policymakers to discuss current peace and security challenges facing the continent, share best practices, and develop practical solutions. The dialogue seeks to deepen understanding and stimulate a robust debate on African-led solutions to peace and security challenges.

The Annual African Peace and Security Dialogue will take place over three days and will include keynote speeches, panel discussions, and invite-only roundtable discussions. The Annual African Peace and Security Dialogue will bring together African leaders, policymakers, scholars, and civil society organisations. Participants will be selected based on their expertise and experience in peace and security issues in Africa.

Scheduled for 5-7 September 2024, the Annual African Peace and Security Dialogue is expected to achieve the following outcomes:

- a) Generate ideas and practical solutions for addressing peace and security challenges in Africa.
- b) Promote collaboration and networking among African leaders, policymakers, and scholars on peace and security issues.
- c) Develop a framework for ongoing dialogue and follow-up action to address peace and security challenges in Africa.
- d) Raise awareness about the impact of ongoing negative peace and security on Africa's economic, political, and cultural environment.

The Annual African Peace and Security Dialogue will be a critical platform for promoting peace and security in Africa, bringing together experts, policymakers, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to exchange ideas, experiences, and best practices on peace and security issues in Africa. The Foundation believes that the establishment of the Annual African Peace and Security Dialogue will contribute significantly to the achievement of the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

- *Annual Cape Town Conversation*

Beginning 24-26 November 2023, the Thabo Mbeki Foundation co-hosted the inaugural annual "Cape Town Conversation" event with New-Delhi based Observer Research Foundation.

Africa is the continent where key global opportunities are playing out and where solutions are being discovered and partnerships forged to respond to the challenges of the present and future. As such, Africa is playing a central role in shaping both political and developmental narratives, policies, and new institutions in the global governance system.

The year 2023 was a unique for international cooperation with South Africa holding the BRICS presidency and three developing countries in the G20 Troika – Indonesia (past presidency), India (current presidency), and Brazil (next presidency), with South Africa to follow. There have been serious conversations on the African Union being invited as a permanent member of the G20. Now is the time to realize common futures, and to move beyond the binaries of North - South and for Innovation, Dialogue and Action to flow.

The event was graced by the esteemed presence of our patron, President Thabo Mbeki, former Maldives President Mohamed Nasheed, former Liberian President Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson, and Dr. Naledi Pandor, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, amongst others.

The gathering brought together over 250 guests from 60 countries, including a diverse group of thinkers and doers from international organizations, governments, the private sector, and influential think tanks, particularly those active in the Think20 process.

Thematic Pillars:

- Making Multilateralism Deliver
- Reclaiming Peace: Building Bridges in a Turbulent World
- Women-led Development
- Achieving Just Green Transition
- The Development Imperative
- Data for Development

Following the successful hosting of the inaugural Cape Town Conversations in 2023, the 2024 version of the event is scheduled for November 27-29, 2024

Cape Town Conversation will continue to serve as an annual South Africa-based platform for the Global South that brings together key stakeholders and new voices. It is designed as a common platform where established and emerging actors convene for a global conversation on contemporary issues of global governance –identifying new challenges, ideating possible solutions and shaping the world order of the future.

Other Projects:

Additionally, the Foundation has been inundated with a number of requests to intervene in various areas across the African continent on matters such as politics and governance; economic growth, development, and transformation; and social cohesion and nation building.

- **Promoting Education**

In its quest to further the ideals of access to quality education to all learners, the Thabo Mbeki Foundation has partnered with Telefonica Foundation and La Caixa Foundation to roll-out their Profuturo programme in South Africa. Profuturo is a digital education programme launched to narrow the education gap in the world by improving the quality of education for children.

The project which began in the Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga in 2019 has so far equipped twenty-five primary schools in each province, serving 23 337 learners with technology to use in classroom lessons. A total of 244 teaching staff have been taken through professional development and digital training sessions by seven coaches.

The Foundation seeks to work collaboratively with the Department of Basic Education and other partners to transform these and other schools into beacons of excellence that will improve the education of millions of children through technology, becoming a global reference for transformation and innovation in education.

Through these partnerships, in South Africa, we hope to reach a million learners in the next 5 years.

- **Promoting Agriculture**

The Thabo Mbeki Foundation seeks to leverage the early successes of its education project by introducing an agriculture intervention in the fifty schools it works in in the Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga.

With the assistance of the full-time employed coaches, it has on the ground, the Foundation intends to use its convening power to meaningfully address food security in rural communities whilst also equipping primary school learners with the knowledge, tools, and practical

experience to grow their own food for the benefit of their families and communities.

- Afrikaner Africa Initiative (Promoting Social Cohesion)

The Afrikaner-Africa Initiative (AAI), was initiated by the Thabo Mbeki Foundation alongside 16 Afrikaner groups in 2019 to:

- a) To address the feeling of alienation of Afrikaners in the body politic of South Africa.
- b) To contribute to the [economic] development of South Africa and Africa by exploring assorted opportunities that can be used to leverage the skills, network, and resources of all South Africans, including Afrikaners, to unleash their collective energies to the benefit of the country.

- Municipality Turnaround Initiative (Promoting Good Governance)

The Foundation believes that many critical levers of economic development are located at the local government level, necessitating immediate engagement by all stakeholders.

As a pilot project, before scaling to other municipalities across the country and the continent, the Foundation has partnered with the Matjhabeng Local Municipality, in the Free State, to help the municipality turnaround and thrive economically.

The Foundation and the Municipality have agreed to construct a strategy and action plan that is fit for purpose. At the end of September 2022, the Foundation and Municipality hosted an Economic Development Summit aimed at promoting economic development in Matjhabeng. It focused on ensuring cooperation between state and non-state stakeholders, for the benefit of all.

This project, in collaboration with top mining companies in South Africa, aims to generate a positive impact on both the communities and the environment in the country's mining towns. Our commitment is to foster sustainable development and enhance the quality of life in these regions.