



**Welcoming remarks by the Deputy Chief Justice of
the Republic of South Africa, Deputy Chief Justice
Dunstan Mlambo, on the occasion of the J20
Summit at Sandton Convention Centre – 3rd
September 2025**

Salutations

1. Chief Justice Maya, Chief Justice of the Republic of South Africa
2. Judge Jagot, representing the High Court of the Commonwealth of Australia
3. Chief Justice Barroso, Chief Justice of the Federal Supreme Court of Brazil
4. Judge Mézar, Representing the Constitutional Court of the French Republic
5. Judge Viswanathan, representing the Supreme Court of the Republic of India
6. Judge Arsul Sani, representing the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Indonesia
7. Judge Nog, representing the Supreme Court of the Republic of Korea

8. Judge Konovalov, representing the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation
9. His Excellency Alzaid, Vice-Minister of Justice of Saudi Arabia (Expected at 12:00)
10. President Ozkaya, President of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Türkiye
11. President Okerkez, President of the Court of Cassation of the Republic of Türkiye
12. President Reed, President of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom
13. Lady Chief Justice Carr, Chief Justice of England and Wales
14. Judge Ntsebeza, representing the African Court for Human and Peoples' Rights
15. Chief Justice Malaba, Chief Justice of the Republic of Zimbabwe and President of the CCJA
16. Chief Justice Maphalala, Chief Justice of eSwatini and President of Southern and Eastern Africa Chief Justice Forum
17. Judge Bennini, representing the Constitutional Court of the Democratic Republic of the People's Republic of Algeria
18. Justice Murray, representing the Supreme Court of the Republic of Ireland
19. President Cardoso, President of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Angola
20. President L Ribeiro, President of the Constitutional Council of Mozambique

21. Justice Chong, representing the Supreme Court of Appeal of the Republic of Singapore
22. Esteemed Colleagues of the South African Judiciary and other Judiciaries present here today
23. Mr Laraba, Secretary-General of the CCJA
24. Mr Muffuh, UN Resident Coordinator in South Africa
25. Mr De Souza Godoi Guilherme, representative of UNESCO
26. Mr Musindo, Director of ILO in South Africa
27. Mr Filtane, Representing Juta Publishers
28. Members of the Legal fraternity and Academia
29. Members of the media
30. Members of the public following these proceedings via media platforms,
31. Esteemed Guests
32. Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good morning

On behalf of the Judiciary of the Republic of South Africa, and indeed on behalf of a nation reborn through justice and the rule of law, it is my profound honour and privilege to extend a warm, heartfelt Africa welcome to you all.

We gather here today, in this vibrant corner of the African continent, not merely as representatives of our individual

nations, but as guardians of a shared global covenant: the unwavering pursuit of justice under the law.

The ancient wisdom of our continent teaches us the philosophy of Ubuntu: “Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu” – “I am because we are.” My humanity is inextricably tied to yours. This summit embodies that very principle. The challenges we face—from ensuring equal access to justice, to navigating the digital frontier, to upholding the dignity of every individual—are not confined by borders. They are human challenges, and they demand collective, wisdom-driven solutions.

We are particularly honoured to welcome our distinguished guests from across the G20 nations and our special invitees, including the pivotal continental bodies of Africa.

Your presence here is a powerful testament to a truth we hold self-evident: that the voice of the Global South is not a whisper from the periphery, but an essential, resonant chord in the symphony of global jurisprudence.

Africa is not a subject of history; it is a dynamic architect of its future, rich with innovation, wisdom, and a relentless spirit of progress.

Today we gather under the guiding theme: *Justice in a Time of Change: Independence, Innovation and Co operation* - a vital call

to action that invites us to address the evolving contexts in the Judiciary landscape, domestically and globally, while reinforcing our commitment to accessibility, fairness, forward-thinking solutions, and cooperation across borders.

Independence, innovation, and co-operation are not isolated ideals, but mutually reinforcing. By safeguarding independence, our courts remain trusted guardians of rights; by embracing innovation, we improve how we serve the public; and by fostering co-operation, we extend the reach of justice beyond our own jurisdictions.

This Summit embodies all three values. In these two days, we will have robust discussions reflecting these themes – whether it is preserving judicial independence in a changing world, balancing technological advancement with fundamental freedoms, addressing climate change through judicial collaboration, or strengthening our united front against cross-border crime. In each session, we will learn from one another and refine our common vision for the evolution of our respective judicial systems.

Distinguished colleagues, the stakes could not be higher. In every country, people rely on the courts for fairness and certainty. If independence is compromised, so too is the protection of their rights. If we lag in innovation, their access to

timely justice suffers. If we fail to co-operate, injustices can spread unchecked.

Let this summit be a beacon of hope – showing the world that the guardians of justice are neither idle nor divided in the face of change, but active, united, and resolute.

This J20 Summit provides a sacred space for dialogue—a forge where we can temper the steel of our legal frameworks in the fire of shared experience. It is an opportunity to learn from one another’s triumphs and tribulations, to find common ground in our diverse approaches, and to strengthen the bonds of mutual respect and cooperation that unite our judiciaries.

Our retired Constitutional Court Justice, Justice Albie Sachs once remarked, *“Rights are not gifts from the state; they are claims that can be made against it.”* Those words capture the essence of why we are here. They remind us that courts exist not as generous benefactors, but as guardians of enforceable rights. And they press us to ensure that our innovation and cooperation, across all our jurisdictions, never lose sight of the people whose dignity depends on the strength of our courts.

Let us use this time to build those bridges. Let us speak with candour, listen with empathy, and deliberate with the wisdom our offices demand and our citizens deserve.

It is our sincerest hope that the discussions held within these halls will be rigorous, that the partnerships forged will be

enduring, and that the outcomes will leave a lasting legacy - not just in law reports, but in the lives of the people we are all sworn to serve.

On behalf of the South African Judiciary, I once again thank you all for being here and formally welcome you to the J20 Summit. I am confident that our time together will strengthen our resolve and spark fresh ideas to fortify the rule of law in each of our nations. As we embark on our discussions, let us remember that the principles of independence, innovation, and cooperation are not goals in themselves, but means to better serve our citizens whose rights depend on our vigilance.

You are most welcome. You are at home.

In many ways, the ideals envisioned in this Summit, find their clearest expression in the leadership of our own Chief Justice. A true leader who stewards our Judiciary with vision, integrity, and courage. The Honourable Chief Justice Maya has long been recognised as a pioneer — not only the first woman to ascend to the highest judicial office in our land, but also a jurist whose career has consistently expanded the horizons of justice.

From her early years on the Bench to her historic leadership of the Supreme Court of Appeal, and now as Chief Justice of the Republic, she has shown us what it means to marry independence with compassion, innovation with prudence, and cooperation with resolve. Her jurisprudence, particularly in

advancing gender equality and broadening access to justice, has given life to the Constitution's promise that rights belong to all, regardless of power or position.

A Daughter of the Soil, A Guardian of Justice: An Introduction to Chief Justice Mandisa Maya

From the rolling hills of the Eastern Cape to the highest seat of justice, the journey of Chief Justice Mandisa Muriel Lindelwa Maya is a profoundly African story of brilliance, resilience, and transformative power. She is not merely a woman of firsts; she is a living testament to the promise of a new dawn, a pioneer who has woven the rich threads of her heritage into the very fabric of South Africa's judiciary.

Her path was charted with a quiet determination that speaks of Ubuntu and an unyielding intellect that has consistently shattered ceilings. Distinguishing herself from the outset, she was among the youngest women ever appointed to the Bench, a ground breaking beginning that foreshadowed her historic ascent. From this foundation, she rose like the baobab - strong, deeply rooted, and offering shelter to others. She became the first woman President of the Supreme Court of Appeal, the first female Deputy Chief Justice, and now, the inaugural woman to lead South Africa's judiciary as Chief Justice. Her career is not merely a personal triumph but a beacon for every young girl

across the continent who dares to dream beyond the confines of expectation.

An Illustrious Career: Forging a Legacy of Principle and Progress

Chief Justice Maya's career is a masterclass in judicial excellence and visionary leadership. After her early appointment, she quickly distinguished herself through an incisive legal mind and an unwavering commitment to constitutional justice. Her tenure at the Supreme Court of Appeal was marked by landmark judgments that advanced fundamental principles, particularly in the crucial areas of gender equality and access to justice for all. As President of the SCA, she revitalized the court's efficiency and fostered a spirit of collegiality, earning widespread respect for her ability to unite diverse judicial voices around a shared vision of fairness and integrity.

Her elevation to Deputy Chief Justice in 2022 cemented her reputation as a unifying force and a reformer. In this role, she championed critical institutional reforms, driving the modernization of court processes and tirelessly expanding access to justice for marginalized and rural communities. Her leadership was instrumental in steering the judiciary toward greater independence. Notably, her powerful advocacy for gender parity catalysed a significant increase in the appointment

of women judges, ensuring the bench finally begins to reflect the beautiful diversity of the nation it serves.

As Chief Justice, she has embraced her role as the guardian of judicial independence with fervour and profound purpose. Her announcement of a ground breaking sexual harassment policy on behalf of the Judiciary stands as a testament to her commitment to creating an institution that is not only independent but also safe, inclusive, and dignified. Hailed as a watershed moment, this policy underscores a fundamental truth: justice cannot thrive where human dignity is compromised.

Rooted in Community, Elevated by Excellence

Born in the rural village of Tsolo in the now Province of the Eastern Cape, Chief Justice Maya's epic journey is powered by an academic arsenal that rivals her practical achievements: a B. Proc from the University of Transkei, an LLB from the University of Natal, and an LLM from Duke University in the United States. Her transformative impact has been recognized by no fewer than four honorary doctorates, each celebrating her monumental contributions to jurisprudence and gender equality.

A devoted mother and wife, Chief Justice Maya carries the spirit of Africa with her—the wisdom of the elder, the courage of the pioneer, and the heart of a nation. She has not merely climbed the legal ladder; she has dismantled its narrow confines and

rebuilt it stronger, more inclusive, and more just for generations to come. Her jurisprudence continues to shape South Africa's legal landscape, balancing precedent with progressive interpretations that ensure our Constitution remains a living, breathing instrument for social change.

Through her judgments, her mentorship, and her towering leadership, Chief Justice Mandisa Maya demonstrates daily that the law is more than a tool for adjudication - it is a vehicle for healing, for empowerment, and for building a more perfect union. She is truly a lioness of justice, and her roar is the sound of progress itself.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my profound honour to introduce to you, my colleague, the Chief Justice of the Republic of South Africa, Chief Justice Mandisa Maya!