

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY JOSEPH NYUMA BOAKAI, SR.
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA AT THE OPENING OF THE YOUNG
DEMOCRACY UNION OF AFRICA (YDUA) CONFERENCE

Cape Hotel, Mamba Point, Monrovia

Wednesday, June 30, 2026

The President of the Young Democracy Union of Africa;
Representatives of the Konrad-Adenauer Foundation;
Leaders of the Unity Party National Youth Congress;
Honorable Officials of Government;
Distinguished Youth Leaders from Across Africa;
Members of the Diplomatic Corps;
Representatives of Civil Society, Academia, and Development Partners;
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It gives me great pleasure to extend a warm Liberian welcome to all our distinguished guests from across Africa and beyond, who are attending the 2026 Young Democracy Union of Africa Conference. I congratulate the Young Democracy Union of Africa, the Konrad-Adenauer Foundation, and our host partner, the Unity Party National Youth Congress, for organizing this timely gathering.

This conference comes at a defining moment for our continent. Africa is experiencing rapid political, economic, and technological change.

Across our continent, young people are demanding greater participation in governance, while technology is reshaping the way societies learn, communicate, conduct business, and deliver public services.

Fellow Liberians, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Liberia's story over the past two decades is one steeped in the power of the human spirit; the will to gather and mend what has been broken.

Following years of civil conflict, Liberians made a decision that we would never again resolve our differences through violence.

For more than two decades since the end of the conflict, we have strengthened legitimate politics as the only acceptable channel for political competition, peaceful settlement of disputes, and democratic governance.

The successful conduct of successive democratic elections and peaceful transfers of power since 2006 – and, until then, the first time since 1944 – is an achievement every Liberian should celebrate with pride. Our young people, in particular, should take pride in this accomplishment.

The youth of Liberia have been an integral part of our democratic awakening. They have participated as voters, election observers, civic educators, community organizers, political activists, and emerging leaders. They have demonstrated that democracy flourishes when young people participate responsibly in shaping the future of their country.

My Government remains fully committed to preserving and strengthening these democratic gains because democracy is an integral part of people-centered development.

The decision to host this continental conference in Monrovia has affirmed Liberia's renewed place within the community of democratic nations and its history as the Arrowhead of African Liberation and Freedom.

The Liberia you see today is recognized as a peaceful democracy and a responsible member of the international community because of deliberate choices, deliberate reforms, and deliberate leadership. Those efforts have earned our country increasing international confidence, leading to Liberia's overwhelming election as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The theme of this conference—"Waking the Giant: Youth-Led Democracy and Africa's Tech Revolution"—captures one of the defining challenges and opportunities of this generation. It recognizes a simple but profound truth.

The future of Africa will be determined largely by its young people. The giant referred to in this theme is Africa's youth. Current estimates indicate that Africa has the youngest population in the world, with between 60 and 70 percent of its people under 30. By the year 2030, Africans are expected to constitute approximately forty-two percent of the global youth population.

No continent has a greater demographic advantage. The question before us is not whether Africa has the human potential to transform remarkably and compete globally. The real question is whether we will awaken that potential.

Active Youth Participation in the Democratic Culture

The first responsibility of this generation is to lead Africa's democratic revolution, and Liberia's experience offers an important lesson.

Our democratic credentials did not emerge by chance. They were built through the conscious participation of citizens who rejected violence, embraced constitutional governance, and committed themselves to democratic values. Young Liberians have played a central role in that journey.

That experience demonstrates that democracy becomes stronger when young people are not spectators but active participants—when they vote, organize peacefully, engage in constructive debate, hold leaders accountable, contest elections, defend constitutional values, and contribute meaningfully to public policy.

The future of democracy in Africa will therefore depend largely on the leadership, integrity, and active participation of its youth. Leading the Technological Revolution but democracy alone is not enough.

The same generation that safeguards Africa's democracy must also lead Africa's technological revolution. Globalization and technological advancement are fundamentally reshaping economies around the world.

Artificial intelligence, digital innovation, financial technology, data science, robotics, renewable energy, biotechnology, and digital communications are redefining global competitiveness. Africa cannot afford to remain a consumer of these innovations. Our young people must become creators, innovators, entrepreneurs, and solution providers.

This is where the second part of this conference theme becomes especially important. Technology is ever expanding beyond what we have known for decades; it is cutting-edge. It is transforming agriculture, healthcare, education, commerce, manufacturing, governance, and every aspect of modern life.

Agriculture, for example, remains the backbone of Liberia's economy, employing more than sixty percent of our people.

For our youthful population, it presents enormous opportunities for agribusiness, food processing, value addition, and exports. Yet agriculture itself is being transformed by precision farming, digital platforms, artificial intelligence, climate-smart technologies, and improved access to finance and markets.

The same opportunities exist in education, healthcare, manufacturing, financial technology, tourism, renewable energy, and the creative industries.

If we invest in technology and research, our youth will both participate in and help shape the global digital economy. This is the giant we must awaken.

Our Esteemed Youth, Participants, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

In Liberia, more than half of our population is under the age of twenty-five. We therefore recognize that our youth is both the present and the future of our country.

Yet 179 years after independence, Liberia is still striving to become the prosperous nation envisioned by those who laid its foundation. That reality imposes a profound responsibility on this generation.

Our youth must seize current opportunities to become active partners in national development. Become the architects of the Liberia and Africa you wish to inherit.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Perhaps one of the greatest tragedies confronting Africa today is the growing number of young people who believe that opportunity exists only beyond our shores.

Every year, many undertake dangerous journeys across the Sahara Desert and treacherous waters in search of better lives elsewhere. Far too many never return. Far too many never arrive. This should concern every African leader.

Africa is richly endowed, and there is no reason our brightest young people should feel compelled to risk their lives in search of opportunities we can create here at home.

Our responsibility as leaders is to build societies where our young people choose to stay because they believe in Africa's future. That means creating the enabling conditions for them. The youth should be drivers of Africa's transformation. We owe it to them to give them hope in their countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you begin your deliberations over the coming days, I encourage you to think boldly, debate, and recommend practical solutions that strengthen democracy, promote technological innovation, expand youth participation, and deepen partnerships across our continent.

If we succeed in awakening the giant that is Africa's youth, there will be no limit to what this continent can achieve.

May this conference inspire a new generation of young Africans to lead our continent toward greater democracy, innovation, prosperity, and peace.

It is now my honor to declare the 2026 Young Democracy Union of Africa Conference officially open.

I thank you.