

OPENING STATEMENT

4TH GLOBAL COUNCIL FOR POLITICAL RENEWAL (GCPR) CONFERENCE



HIS EXCELLENCY RUSSELL M. DLAMINI

Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Eswatini

President of the Global Council for Political Renewal

Cape Town | 13 February 2026

Your Excellencies,
Heads of State and Government,

The President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste,
The Vice President of the Republic of Ecuador,

Your Royal Highness from the United Arab Emirates,

Distinguished Ministers,
Parliamentarians,
Former Heads of Government,
Party Leaders,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is both an honour and a privilege to welcome you to the Fourth Annual Conference of the Global Council for Political Renewal, convened here in Cape Town, on African soil.

We are particularly grateful for your presence, including those joining us from ongoing African Union engagements and the Mining Indaba. Your participation affirms not only the relevance of this Council, but also the urgency of the global conversation we are convening.

The journey of the GCPR, from London to Washington D.C., from Brussels to Africa, has been deliberate and purposeful. It reflects a growing global recognition that leadership renewal cannot be achieved through power alone, but must be anchored in values, equity and moral clarity.

When we collectively assumed the Presidency of the Global Council for Political Renewal last year, we did so with a shared conviction: that political leadership must once again be ethical, honest, and ultimately judged by delivery.

Values as the Anchor of Political Renewal

Your Excellencies,

The theme before us, *Together for Ethics, Justice, Peace and Development*, is not aspirational rhetoric. It is a direct response to a deep and widening crisis of trust.

Across regions and systems, democracy itself is evolving. As has been aptly observed by President Duma Boko, democracy is becoming more democratic. This evolution reflects an increasing recognition that governance must be inclusive, context-responsive and grounded in the lived realities of societies.

Yet, across the world, citizens are losing confidence in political systems that speak eloquently but fail to deliver. Too often, politics is driven not by principle, but by money and influence. Worthy ideas struggle without financial backing, while flawed initiatives advance simply because they are well funded. This erosion of ethics distorts priorities, weakens institutions and corrodes public trust.

Political renewal, therefore, cannot begin with policy alone. It must begin with values.

In the Kingdom of Eswatini, we are guided by the principle of *Anginasitsa* – “I have no enemy.” This philosophy reflects strength with restraint, authority with humility, and leadership rooted in respect for human dignity. It affirms dialogue over confrontation and cooperation over conflict. Grounded in our fused traditional and modern system of governance, this is the spirit Eswatini brings to the GCPR, and the spirit that underpins our collective Presidency.

From Ethics to Delivery

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ethics in politics must translate into tangible delivery.

Leadership must be measured not by promises made, but by lives improved; not by slogans, but by institutions that function; not by power accumulated, but by trust earned.

For the Global Council for Political Renewal, ethical leadership means truthfulness in public life, accountability in the use of public resources, respect for institutions and the rule of law, and service to citizens above party, faction or narrow interest.

Integrity is not optional.

Honesty is not negotiable.

Delivery is the ultimate test of leadership.

This Council exists because the world urgently needs political renewal anchored in ethics, civic responsibility and measurable outcomes.

Purpose of the Conference

Your Excellencies,

Over the next two days, we will engage on ethics in politics, justice and humanitarian relief, environmental sustainability, peace diplomacy, education and research.

These engagements must lead to action.

Our collective objective is to emerge from Cape Town with a credible and practical Roadmap of Cooperation, built on consensus and guided by the understanding that democracy does not follow a single template. There is no one-size-fits-all model of governance.

Long-standing democracies evolved over time, shaped by their histories, cultures and social contracts. Africa and the Arab world must be afforded the same space to strengthen and refine their governance systems without prescription or coercion.

Africa must be recognised not as a problem to be managed, nor merely as a source of resources to be exploited, but as a capable and equal partner in shaping global solutions grounded in dignity, equity and self-determination.

Mainstreaming the GCPR Agenda into Global Platforms

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For political renewal to be meaningful, it cannot remain confined to standalone conferences or parallel conversations.

The agenda of the Global Council for Political Renewal must be integrated into the mainstream of global decision-making.

Many of us have just come from the World Government Summit, which is clearly entering a new phase aimed at shaping emerging global governance frameworks. The perspectives of the GCPR, particularly on ethical leadership, evolving democratic models and inclusive governance, are not peripheral to this process. They are central.

Our task, as a Council, is to ensure that the GCPR agenda is embedded within platforms such as the World Government Summit, and progressively within the African Union and the United Nations. Not as an external voice, but as a constructive partner contributing ideas, frameworks and solutions.

Political renewal must therefore travel across forums, inform policy debates, shape reform processes and influence the global agenda. Only then can our work move from dialogue to impact.

Reforming Global Governance

Your Excellencies,

Political renewal also requires honest reflection on global governance systems.

Persistent calls for reform of the United Nations, international financial institutions and the global development architecture reflect a growing recognition that these systems have not delivered equitably. After decades, many developing countries remain underdeveloped, while others have advanced at their expense within these same frameworks.

The Global Council for Political Renewal must rise to the challenge of imagining and shaping alternative systems that are fairer, more inclusive and genuinely developmental.

Conclusion: Challenging Orthodoxy, Shaping the Future

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

When we speak of democracy becoming more democratic, we are not speaking of dilution. We are speaking of maturity.

We are acknowledging a truth long ignored: that democracy does not have a single point of origin, nor a single destination. It evolves. It adapts. It reflects the histories, cultures and social contracts of its people. The integration of traditional leadership into governance models is not regression; it is recognition. It affirms that legitimacy flows from society itself, not from imported templates.

For too long, global governance frameworks have insisted on uniformity in a world that has never been uniform. In doing so, they have constrained innovation, delegitimised indigenous systems, and, in many cases, weakened states rather than strengthened them.

Political renewal therefore demands intellectual courage. It is in this spirit of intellectual courage that this Conference invites leaders to engage fully and deliberately with one another, to exchange experiences, share best practices and advance innovative ideas capable of reshaping governance in our time. Our collective objective is not abstract debate, but the practical shaping and

implementation of effective policies, systems, programmes and measures that restore ethics in politics, advance human, economic and environmental justice, promote global peace, and accelerate inclusive human development.

The challenges we face are interconnected and the responses thereto must be similarly linked. This gathering in Cape Town is therefore a call to indulge deeply, to listen openly, and to co-create solutions that are grounded in values, responsive to context, and judged, ultimately by delivery and impact on the lives of people.

We must be bold enough to acknowledge that existing models are no longer sufficient. Honest enough to admit that some global political, financial and institutional systems have failed to deliver equitable outcomes. And confident enough to design new frameworks that recognise multiple democratic expressions, hybrid governance systems and evolving leadership models.

This is the moment for the Global Council for Political Renewal to move from reflection to authorship.

Our task is not to defend old orthodoxies, but to shape governance models that are inclusive, context-responsive and anchored in ethical delivery.

This is the challenge before our Council. And this is the responsibility we must embrace together.

I thank you.