



LERATO DOROTHY MATABOGE

**CANDIDATE FOR THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION
FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENERGY**



MY VISION FOR THE INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENERGY COMMISSION

The election of new leadership for the African Union (AU) takes place at a time of 'poly-crisis' in the global political economy; all of which have introduced global system-level shocks and new global trends. These shocks and trends directly impact our capacity to realise Agenda 2063 aspirations of *the Africa we want* – an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa that caters to all its citizens and is a respected global player. Our continent's aspirations must now contend with three "Ds" of modern global development – **Diversification**, **Digitisation** and **Decarbonisation**. The AU therefore requires a leader like myself who is visionary, agile, courageous, young, experienced and collaborative; a leader who understands the pivotal moment of history that our African continent faces and who has a drive to ensure positive change for the people of Africa. I intend to lead the AU's Infrastructure and Energy Commission to turn the multiple crises confronting us into tangible opportunities for growth, peace and development for the people of Africa.

Africa's most pressing challenge is the **chronic infrastructure deficit** we face, exacerbated by limited private-sector participation. Inadequate infrastructure - in rail, ports, road, water, energy, ICT and digital infrastructure *inter alia* – hampers African integration efforts and the ability to advance intra-African trade. None of our economic growth, industrialisation, trade and integration efforts will be realised without the acceleration of quality infrastructure provision on our continent.

The "commodity pit-to-port" colonial model of infrastructure planning in Africa needs to be replaced with cross-border infrastructure projects, trade corridors and catalytic capital projects. Having led South Africa's Spatial Development Initiatives (SDI) programme for over a decade, whose aim was to fund project preparation along cross-border corridors such as the Maputo Development Corridor, Walvis Bay Corridor, Nacala Corridor among others; and having been a co-chairperson of the AU Presidential Infrastructure Championing Initiative (PICI) Steering Committee for seven years; I have a keen appreciation of how transformative cross-border infrastructure can be to economies.

Africa continues to lose 40% in competitiveness due to the absence of adequate and efficient infrastructure. Furthermore, around 600 million Africans, or 43% of the total population of Africa, lack access to electricity, similarly, many enterprises lack consistent access to reliable energy. Inherent in the aforementioned challenges are unique opportunities for Africa and the African private sector and I intend to realise these opportunities for Africa's growth.

As the Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, I will position Africa for future growth, in a world shaped by climate change and a revolution in green technologies.

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In defining a pathway to taking advantage of the new global economy, a special focus will be on refining a just renewable energy masterplan for the AU as well as an ICT policy of the future; building on and consolidating current AU initiatives; including those at member states and REC levels. I will focus on ensuring credible responses to new technologies; including biotechnologies, digitisation and artificial intelligence – taking cognisance of the increasing importance of Africa's mineral endowments in the creation of new technologies for the world. Current AU flagship projects such as the high-speed rail *inter alia*, will be reviewed for accelerated implementation and impact. I will prioritise rail and the required policy instruments for harmonising our rail links; because rail is a key integrative infrastructure and presents manufacturing potential for Africa as a producer of rail components and maintenance services.

Three strategic objectives will form the backbone of my work as Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy. These are: **accelerating Africa's industrial renaissance; accelerating Africa's transformation; and building a capable AU.**

I will **accelerate Africa's industrial renaissance** through but not limited to:

Rapid scaling up of infrastructure spending. Such spending is urgently required in trade-enabling infrastructure: ports, rail, water, energy, roads and ICT. There is a need to increase levels of investments to at least US\$150 billion per annum from the current US\$77 billion. This will require mobilisation of public sector, private sector and global resources; with a combination of delivery mechanisms. Leveraging the convening power of the AU, I will establish strategic partnerships in the form of **Africa Inc.** – inclusive of member states, RECs, African financiers, African EPC Contractors, African private sector, and Regulators – so as to ensure intra-African investments in African infrastructure, ICT and energy needs. Global partnerships with multilateral organisations, the diaspora, private funders *inter alia* will continue so as to mobilise global FDI that supplements intra-African investments as a priority.

Creating a central portal and databases of Energy, ICT and Infrastructure opportunities. The portal will demonstrate African energy capabilities and competencies and will stimulate meaningful procurement, financing and trade partnerships to strengthen the African infrastructure, energy and ICT delivery. This will include strategic collaboration with AUDA-NEPAD as a central implementing agency for the PIDA.

Accelerating the AU Energy Transition Programme, so as to achieve a just, developmental and sustainable transition for member states; including creating new industries and new technologies in Africa.

Ensuring Africa's leadership in digital transformation, and driving digital inclusion through the AU Digital Transformation Strategy. This leadership should also be articulated in the positioning of Africa's critical minerals to global digital transformation.

In domesticating the AU's decisions and mission, I will work with member state governments and RECs to resolve key structural constraints to faster growth such as energy availability, energy poverty, ICT unaffordability, logistics challenges and impediments to sustainable investments in catalytic cross-border infrastructure, energy and digital infrastructure. With my experience having chaired South Africa's Economic Cluster for all the Bi-National Commissions (BNCs) with countries from the rest of the African continent; I have a clear plan of engagement in this regard.

In accelerating Africa's transformation I will prioritise economic inclusion, focusing on removing structural barriers to the participation of Africa's MSMEs, women and youth in Africa's hard infrastructure, green technologies and digital transformation projects. I will further focus on scaling up Africa's climate-responsive infrastructure provision that keeps up with the demands of a growing African population.

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Furthermore, I will advance spatial transformation by facilitating infrastructure solutions and projects that cater to landlocked countries and have a cross-border multiplier effect to reverse the colonial model of infrastructure provision in Africa. Energy provision for the continent is an urgent priority as none of our transformation, industrialisation, digitalisation and decarbonisation objectives will be met without stable, secure and affordable energy in Africa.

In **building a capable African Union** I intend to focus the work of the Infrastructure and Energy Commission on greater coordination intra-AU as well as with external strategic stakeholders to improve strategic alignment and synchronicity of policy. I will strengthen the AU's convening power and thought-leadership position and I will strengthen the culture of accelerated implementation, evidence-based policy-making, and impact-based delivery models. The culture of agility and greater responsiveness to our multiple stakeholders requires special focus in the AU and my experience with "one-stop-shop" approaches can add great value to the AU's stakeholder engagement processes for maximum delivery and impact.

Our collective generational mission is to reverse Africa's colonial patterns of infrastructure planning and consumption, where we remain fragmented and where we still consume what we do not produce and produce what we do not consume. The AU is an appropriate platform for me to action this generational mission. The AU is the source of laws and a platform for international norms and standards-setting for Africa. It is therefore the most strategic vehicle to realise the goals of an integrated and prosperous Africa. As the youngest candidate for the African Union leadership, I will infuse the innovation, agility; and expertise that are required for accelerated implementation of our collective decisions and commitments.



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“My ultimate goal is for Africa to be a credible global rule-maker, not a perpetual global rule-taker. I want to contribute meaningfully to an Africa that is diversified, digitised and decarbonised to meet the intrinsic needs of the African child; and through the intrinsic talents of the African child.” - LERATO DOROTHY MATABOGE (2024)



BIOGRAPHY



LERATO DOROTHY MATABOGE'S BIOGRAPHY

Ms Lerato Dorothy Mataboge has over twenty-three years in the global policy and trade and investment facilitation arena. She is a seasoned international political economy executive and diplomat and is currently the Deputy Director-General in the South African Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (**the dtic**). Prior to this role, Ms Mataboge founded and was CEO of **Trade Invest Africa** an initiative aimed at creating sustainable partnerships between governments and the private sector towards the attainment of greater levels of intra-African trade and intra-African investments, specifically in infrastructure and energy projects. Through Trade Invest Africa, over US\$300 million was mobilized for strategic rural electrification projects in Southern Africa by FY1. Ms Mataboge also played and continues to play a pivotal role in the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), having been one of the lead contributors to the inception of the AfCFTA. Ms Mataboge previously held the position of Chief Director for Africa at **the dtic**. In this role, Ms Mataboge coordinated and led the Economic Cluster for South Africa's Bi-National Commissions with partner countries in the rest of Africa; as well as optimized South African enterprises' participation in the rest of Africa by negotiating for their improved market access and improved operational environments. In this role she participated in strategic infrastructure projects such as the Inga Hydro-Electric Project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Lesotho Highlands Project, among others.

In June 2011, she completed her full term as a diplomat (Minister: Economic) in the USA, based in Washington D.C. where she, *inter alia*, contributed strategic ideas to the Africa Group of Ambassadors; managed relationships with the US Congress and Administration for Africa's economic growth; as well as facilitated US investments into South Africa. Ms Mataboge was pivotal in advocating for and securing the extension, retention and expansion of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) in a difficult period of a global economic crisis and resultant on-shoring trends.

Ms Mataboge has over a number of years led the commercial aspects of South Africa's global multilateral engagements through the BRICS, IORA, G20/B20, AfCFTA *inter alia*; as well as bilateral engagements by leading and coordinating South Africa's economic priorities, Business Forums and Exhibitions within these formations. She is an astute facilitator of partnerships between the private sector and the public sectors for the realization of growth objectives. Central to her multilateral work is the negotiation and management of catalytic international programmes and the establishment and maintenance of strategic partnerships for Africa's growth.

From 2012 to 2018, Ms Mataboge was the co-chairperson of the South African Presidential Working Group on the North-South Corridor during South Africa's Chair-ship of the African Union's Presidential Infrastructure Championing Initiative (PICI). Ms Mataboge, in 2024, has resuscitated the PICI, a report of which will be presented to PICI Heads of States during the AU Summit of 2025. Ms Mataboge was also pivotal in the successful roll-out of the DBSA-supported Spatial Development Initiatives Programme, a project-preparation fund aimed at preparing bankable cross-border infrastructure projects on the African continent. In recent years, Ms Mataboge has provided thought-leadership to the Africa Energy Indaba and Manufacturing Indaba platforms and is a key contributor to and creator of the *Africa Energy Colloquium* launched in 2023 which aims to facilitate partnerships between African energy regulators, utilities and financiers towards acceleration of energy provision in Africa driven by African solutions to African needs. Ms Mataboge has contributed to successive clean audit outcomes for her current organisation from 2018 to date, through her consistent application of good governance principles, including in good financial management of the multi-million US dollar trade investment incentive programme that she currently manages.

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Ms Mataboge currently serves on the Board of the Export Credit Insurance Corporation of South Africa (ECIC) as a non-Executive Director, a position she was appointed to in May 2018. As a member of the Finance and Investment Committee, she has been instrumental in the strategic deployment of financing to key infrastructure and energy projects in the rest of Africa such as the Mozambique LNG project, SANPower and Amandi rail projects in Ghana, Zimborders in Zimbabwe and ITB Nigeria Limited, *inter alia*.

Ms. Mataboge is an Archbishop Desmond Tutu – Oxford University Fellow for African Leadership. She was featured in the *Destiny Magazine's* "Power 40 under 40" feature in November 2015, in recognition of her leadership on African economic development issues. She was recently named one of the top-100 Influential Persons of African Descent in the International Trade field on Africa Day, 25 May 2024 by the United Nations-affiliated organization, the MIPAD Global Network.

On the eve of the African Extraordinary Summit on the AfCFTA in December 2020, Ms Mataboge delivered a **TEDx Talk** on "*Why Intra-African Trade Matters*", a talk which is currently being used as a tool for introducing the subject of trade to policy-makers, executives and global students of the South African National School of Government. Ms Mataboge was a member of the UNIDO Practitioners' Group on Norms (2021-2023) where she contributed her knowledge and experience in assisting the United Nations (through UNIDO) to mainstream norms and standards for development and creating matrices for measuring the developmental impact of UN economic interventions globally. She has authored and co-authored numerous articles on Africa's development and has contributed thought leadership in over 120 panels and conferences globally, advocating for Africa's growth and development through trade and investment.

Ms Lerato Mataboge's positive and valued contribution to Africa's integration, growth and economic development is featured in the autobiography by South Africa's longest-serving Trade and Industry Minister, Dr Rob Davies entitled: "**TOWARDS A NEW DEAL - A Political Economy of the Times of My Life**" (Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2021).

Ms Mataboge holds a BA (Law and International Relations) degree as well as an Honours degree in International Relations from the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. She obtained a Master's degree in International Political Economy (International Trade and Global Finance) from the University of Warwick in the United Kingdom, with a thesis entitled: "*A Critical Analysis of Proposals to Reform the Global Financial Architecture*". Ms Mataboge also holds certificates in trade negotiations, bilateral investment treaty negotiations as well as project management; awarded by the European Institute of Public Administration in the Netherlands, WTO/UNCTAD, and SADC Secretariat, respectively. She completed Executive Training in infrastructure project conceptualization, preparation and execution - "Infrastructure in a Market Economy" - from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

Ms Lerato Dorothy Mataboge stands as the youngest candidate for the African Union Commission and brings a wealth of experience, and agile and innovative leadership to the organisation towards an AU that is representative and transformed for the Africa We Want.





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MS LERATO MATABOGE

