

President Paul Kagame on Thursday announced he is stepping down as leader of the African Union (AU) reform process, a role he held since 2016.

The announcement comes ahead of the upcoming AU Heads of State and Government meeting on February 17-18, 2024, in Addis Ababa, marking the culmination of his eight-year mission to revitalize the continental body.

Kagame took charge of the reform process to improve the AU's efficiency, eliminate duplicitous roles among its institutions, and make it financially sustainable.

He assembled a team of experts from across Africa to tackle these challenges and review the implementation of the initiatives.

During his tenure, Kagame witnessed significant progress, including:

Establishment of a \$400 million peace fund: This fund strengthens the AU's capacity to address security concerns across the continent.

Increased member state contributions: Improved financial stability fosters greater independence and self-reliance for the AU.

He streamlined AU structures, eliminating redundancies, enhancing organizational efficiency and resource allocation..

The Rwandan President strengthened regional economic bodies, enhanced collaboration allowing for focused efforts on regional development priorities.

Despite these achievements, Kagame acknowledges that more remains to be done. He emphasizes the need for sustainable progress and urges continued commitment from member states and AU institutions.

In his own words, Kagame stated: "Our work has made a positive difference, I believe. When we started, the AU was nearly bankrupt. There was no guarantee that the reform effort would be any more successful than the previous attempts. Today, the Peace Fund stands at nearly \$400 million and almost all member states are paying their dues."

While acknowledging remaining challenges, he believes the groundwork is laid for further advancements: "The reform and improvement of AU is a continuous process, it doesn't begin or end with our work. Indeed because of the advances that have

been made, it is now possible to envisage even more ambitious reforms to make our organisation even more effective.”