

President Paul Kagame urged Africans on Tuesday to make better use of the continent's people, natural resources and other capabilities, saying Africa's challenge is no longer simply identifying what it needs but turning what it has into the progress it wants.

Kagame was speaking at the Africa Mindset Reset Forum in Kigali, a two-day gathering bringing together African leaders, researchers, business leaders and young social media influencers to discuss leadership, governance and how the continent can change its approach to development.

"Africa has people. It has resources. It has capabilities. And we should have learned many lessons," Kagame said.

He acknowledged that Africa had made significant progress over the past 50 years, but said the continent remained short of where it should be given the resources and opportunities available to it.

"Africa has everything we need. But why don't we see the Africa we want?" he asked.

Kagame said the focus should no longer be on repeatedly describing Africa's problems, but on understanding what prevents the continent from achieving its goals and addressing those obstacles.

He said Africans must also close the gap between their ambitions and their actions.

"We have to align what we say, what we want and what we do, and then we will see results," he said.

Kagame criticized what he described as a tendency among Africans to look outside the continent for solutions and to place greater value on achievements elsewhere. He said such an attitude can undermine confidence in Africa's own ability to solve its problems.

Instead, he urged Africans to work together, support one another and take greater pride in achievements made on the continent.

"Why don't we do things in a way that we can celebrate what we do among ourselves?" he said.

Kagame said changing Africa would require changes in behavior, thinking and the way institutions and individuals operate.

“We have to change our continent, but we cannot change our continent without changing our behavior, the way we do things and our mindset,” he said.

His remarks echoed a point he made a day earlier about the role of the African School of Governance, which he founded with former Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn.

Speaking to journalists in Kigali on Monday, Kagame said the school should help produce leaders capable of understanding Africa’s challenges and developing solutions suited to the continent, rather than simply awarding academic qualifications.

“Africa needs people with the capacity to lead its countries and institutions, but especially leaders who can change the way things are done and move from words to action,” he said.

Kagame said the school’s impact should ultimately be judged by the people it produces and the changes they bring to the institutions and countries where they serve.

The Africa Mindset Reset Forum, running Aug. 25-26, is the first major forum hosted by the African School of Governance. Kagame said the institution should provide a space for research, knowledge-sharing and debate on Africa’s challenges, while ensuring that ideas generated there lead to practical action.

He said Africa could not afford to keep setting goals without changing the practices that prevent it from achieving them, calling for an end to what he described as “going around in circles.”

The challenge, Kagame said, is not only to define the Africa Africans want, but to make the decisions and changes needed to build it.