

President Paul Kagame called for greater African self-reliance and stronger global cooperation Friday as he attended the World Policy Conference in France.

Kagame joined international leaders at the 18th edition of the conference, held in Chantilly, where policymakers and experts gathered to discuss governance, economic development and international collaboration.

The forum, established in 2008, brings together participants from around the world to explore solutions to global and regional challenges while promoting cooperation based on mutual respect among nations.

Speaking during the event, Kagame said Africa must reduce its dependence on external support and build its own capacity to withstand global economic shocks.

“The issue is not building a perfectly equal world, but whether we can live together despite our differences and still move forward collectively,” he said.

Kagame pointed to lessons learned from recent crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, which he said exposed weaknesses in global health systems and economic structures.

He noted that the concentration of production in a few countries has made others more vulnerable during disruptions, as wealthier nations often prioritize their own populations.

“When a problem occurs in a critical place, everyone pays the price,” Kagame said.

The Rwandan leader also cautioned against attributing Africa’s challenges solely to its colonial past, warning that such thinking can reinforce a sense of helplessness.

“The habit of constantly seeking excuses makes us see ourselves as victims without the capacity to change our situation,” he said.

Kagame highlighted Rwanda’s own experience following the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, saying the country chose to pursue solutions rooted in its own capabilities.

He said Africa has made progress in strengthening domestic resource mobilization, boosting local production and advancing regional economic integration, but more work remains.

Kagame also emphasized the continent's potential in key industries such as fertilizer production, oil refining and pharmaceuticals, saying these sectors could play a larger role in the global economy.

"Africa's goal is simple: to take care of itself while engaging in productive partnerships," he said.

The conference is expected to feature remarks from several global leaders, including French President Emmanuel Macron, as discussions continue on international cooperation and development.