

President Paul Kagame on Thursday called on Africa's young people to take responsibility for shaping the continent's future, telling them they must acquire knowledge, embrace accountability, and act to deliver change instead of being passive observers.

Kagame made the remarks in Kigali while inaugurating the third cohort of the African School of Governance (ASG), which welcomed 51 master's students from 14 African countries. The school, founded in 2022 on his initiative with former Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, trains young Africans in governance, leadership, and contemporary political systems.

"The education you will receive here will push you to think deeply and critically about how to take Africa forward," Kagame said. "This school will prepare you for leadership, but the journey begins within you."

ASG aims to nurture a new generation of leaders equipped with vision, knowledge, and skills to help Africa harness its opportunities in the 21st century. The institution also serves as a hub for policy dialogue, bringing together governments, the private sector, academia, and civil society to promote effective governance.

Kagame praised the school's progress, noting that it had grown from an idea into a regional institution thanks to support from Desalegn and partners such as the Mastercard Foundation.

He told the new students that the continent needs "in-depth lessons that awaken Africa's youth" to become agents of change.

Kagame outlined three principles he said were essential for the next generation of African leaders.

First, he urged them to understand their continent, including why it has lagged behind in development. "Some challenges have been inherited across generations, but many persist because of inaction or indifference," he said. "Problems that should have been solved decades ago still hold Africa back. That should trouble you and fuel your determination to change it."

Second, he called for responsibility. "Earn respect for yourselves and in doing so for your countries and your people," Kagame said. "Africa cannot expect respect from the world if Africans themselves fail to honor their responsibilities."

Third, he pressed the students to act. “Do not be spectators,” he said. “Across the world, economies and technology are advancing; Africa cannot afford to remain behind.”

The 51 students in ASG’s third cohort come from Rwanda, Burundi, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, South Sudan, Gambia, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

The institution, which opened its doors in Kigali in 2023, plans to expand its offerings with an Executive Master of Public Administration (EMPA) program and short-term leadership courses for young professionals.

Amany El-Sharif, ASG’s vice president for academic affairs, said the school was designed to help solve Africa’s pressing challenges.

“You must build Africa’s tomorrow,” he told the students. “Commit to learning deeply, to pursuing knowledge with purpose, and to transforming your ideas into solutions that advance the continent.”

El-Sharif described ASG as a long-term investment in Africa’s future, praising the school’s faculty and staff for their role in training a new generation of leaders.

Kagame warned that global economic and technological shifts leave Africa no room to remain behind. He said the responsibility to deliver progress lies squarely with Africans themselves.

“Use your time here well; our trust is in you,” he told the students. “When your countries call upon you for solutions, be ready to deliver. You are the ones we are counting on.”