

Esteemed World Leaders, Representatives of International Organizations, Excellencies, and Distinguished Guests,
I am Monicah Malith. It is both an honor and a privilege to address you today at the opening of the Summit of the Future.

As I begin this speech,
My question to everyone is;

If you speak of the future, what picture do you feature in your mind?

what visions encounter your eyes?

what voices overwhelm your ears?

what tastes lie on your tongue?

Of Hope? Of Action? Of Collaboration? Of Inclusion? Or Of transformation?

Our world is at a crossroads, confronted by uncertainties and challenges that cross borders, regions, and communities. Among the most pressing issues are the escalating refugee crises due to lack of peace and security. If left unaddressed, this issue will destabilize societies, hinder growth, and sow divisions.

Reflecting on my own experiences, I grew up as a refugee from South Sudan, in Kenya.

Kenya, a land of refuge,
Through the gates of education, opened its heart,
The University of Nairobi gave me a chance,

To rise, to lead, and to speak for the voiceless.
Not just as a student, but as a student President,
A refugee crowned with the trust of a nation,

**And so, with the stewardship of the United Nations,
I commit, to change, to build, to fight for the future,
For South Sudan, Kenya, for Africa, and for the world.**

Education remains a powerful tool for progress regardless of the constant cut down in education funding across the world. It equips individuals with the skills and knowledge to navigate a complex world and seize opportunities.

For developing nations and emerging economies, investing in education is crucial for sustainable growth. We must ensure that education is accessible, equitable, and aligned with future workforce demands. And for this, I want governments and key stakeholders in education sector to think big on funding for education.

In a world where world leaders openly make negative comments about refugees we must also acknowledge that no one chooses to be a refugee and anyone can become a refugee. Our efforts must center peace and security so no one is ever forced to leave home. Without peace, there can be no safety, nor development; without security, there can be no stability. Without stability, education falters, and nations fail.

As we embark on this journey, let envision a future shaped by cooperation, understanding, and shared purpose. Let today mark the beginning of deeper collaboration, stronger institutions, and a renewed commitment to creating a world where every individual has the opportunity to thrive.

To our leaders,

The gaps are growing wider still.

The structures are rusting,

While you talk of reform.

Our future deliberations

MUST NOT be rehearsed platitudes,

But revolutions of thoughts.

This summit, this moment—

It's supposed to be a bridge,

To mend the fractures in our trust,

To build a future where cooperation thrives.

And to the youth

The future is ours to forge.

Not theirs to cling to,

Not theirs to pass down like spoils of war.

It belongs to the bold,

To those who speak,

Even when silence is expected.

It belongs to those who demand more—

More justice, more equity, more humanity.

And like the SG said; “power is not given, it is taken”.