



03 June 2026

Dear Mariama and the family,

Condolence Message on the Passing of Dr. Karamo N. M. Sonko

It is with profound sadness that I received the news of the passing of Dr. Karamo N. M. Sonko, an exceptional scholar, strategist, and Pan-African thought leader whose life was devoted to the pursuit of knowledge, sustainable development, and international cooperation.

Dr. Sonko was a man of remarkable intellect and broad expertise. Over the course of his distinguished career, he made enduring contributions to strategic management, academia, research, and community development. I had the privilege of knowing him both as a friend and colleague, and I often benefited from his profound understanding of government relations, natural resource economics, and international affairs. His counsel was invariably insightful, thoughtful, and informed by extensive practical experience.

What set Dr. Sonko apart was not only his intellectual rigour but also his exceptional creativity and innovative spirit. He possessed a rare ability to synthesise complex ideas, discern emerging opportunities, and translate visionary concepts into meaningful, impactful initiatives. His work consistently reflected strategic foresight and an unwavering commitment to the progress of Africa and her people.

I remain deeply grateful for his invaluable support of, and contributions to, the work of the Kgalema Motlanthe Foundation. A truly global citizen, Dr. Sonko's multidisciplinary perspective and Pan-African outlook enriched every institution and community he served. His academic influence spanned Africa, Canada, France, and the United States, where he inspired generations of students and scholars through his teaching and mentorship.

His professional accomplishments were equally distinguished. With more than two decades of leadership in the natural resources sector — particularly in gold exploration and development — he played key roles in landmark discoveries and strategic transactions across the African continent. His expertise was sought by leading global mining companies, and his contributions helped shape the sector's development in significant ways.

Beyond industry, Dr. Sonko advised major international institutions, including the African Union, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations, and other global bodies. Through these engagements, he enriched important dialogues on governance, development, sustainability, and international cooperation.

A scholar of international repute, Dr. Sonko seamlessly combined academic excellence with practical leadership. He held a PhD with distinction from the University of Denver's Korbel School of International Studies, an M.Phil. from the University of Cambridge, and a First-Class Bachelor's degree from the University of Swaziland. He was the architect of the Strategic Management Sustainability Framework and a pioneering author on holistic Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles.

Dr. Sonko's legacy will endure through the institutions he strengthened, the ideas he advanced, the students he mentored, and the many individuals whose lives were touched by his wisdom and generosity. His passing represents a significant loss to Africa and the global community, yet his contributions will continue to inspire future generations.

He belonged to that rare class of leaders whose integrity, vision, and moral clarity set them apart. He rose above the constraints of circumstance, leading with sincerity and truth, following with grace and humility, and serving with a deep sense of duty and commitment to his people. On the world stage, he stood as a man of substance and foresight — a principled voice in climate change negotiations, governance, and sustainable development. Even in the most difficult circumstances, he demonstrated resolve, moral authority, and an unwavering commitment to justice and Africa's interests.

Despite his considerable international stature, he remained grounded, preferring quiet dignity, intellectual rigour, and reason over ostentation. He lived among the people and engaged directly with the challenges they faced, earning widespread respect across society.

On behalf of my wife, Gugu Motlanthe, myself, and the Kgalema Motlanthe Foundation, I offer our deepest condolences to the family, friends, colleagues, and all who were impacted by Dr. Sonko's life. We trust that they will find comfort in knowing that Dr. Sonko led a life marked by exceptional purpose, distinction, and dedicated service—a legacy of wisdom and integrity.

As he leaves us, he will continue to live in our hearts.

May his soul rest in eternal peace.



Kgalema Motlanthe

Patron of the Kgalema Motlanthe Foundation