

Mlambo-Ngcuka to address summit on digital influence and young voters

insideeducation.co.za/mlambo-ngcuka-to-address-summit-on-digital-influence-and-young-voters

Inside_Education

August 12, 2026



FILE PHOTO| UN Photo/Mark Garten| Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, briefs journalists.

Former deputy president Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka will deliver the keynote address at a national summit in Pretoria on Thursday that will examine the growing influence of digital creators on young voters and democratic participation ahead of the 2026 local government elections.

The National Influencer Code Summit will bring together young people, social media influencers, digital creators, political leaders, democratic institutions, civil society groups, academics, and media to discuss how online influence can be used to encourage participation in democratic processes.

The gathering comes as digital platforms play an increasingly prominent role in how young South Africans consume information, debate public issues and form opinions about matters affecting their communities.

Organisers said influencers and digital creators can reach audiences that traditional institutions sometimes struggle to engage, but said that reach also carries responsibilities.

The summit will examine electoral integrity, misinformation and disinformation, online safety, public trust and ethical influence, as well as ways of converting digital engagement into greater participation in local democracy.

As South Africa moves towards the municipal elections, organisers said democratic institutions needed to engage young people in the spaces where they increasingly participate in public life.

“The Summit seeks to encourage a culture in which influence is understood not only as reach, but also as responsibility,” the organisers said.

Mlambo-Ngcuka, who also served as executive director of UN Women, is expected to focus on youth participation, civic engagement and the responsible use of influence in strengthening democratic institutions.

The summit is being convened by Club de Madrid in partnership with Women of Firsts by Asanda Luwaca as part of an initiative titled *The Influence Code: Youth Shaping Democracy in the Digital Age*.

The initiative is being held in South Africa under the Women and Youth in Democracy programme, which is supported by the European Commission.

Organisers said the rise of digital creators presented an opportunity to engage people who might otherwise remain outside traditional political and civic structures, while also raising questions about the accuracy of information, accountability and the influence wielded by people with large online audiences.

Influencers and creators increasingly have the ability to reach audiences traditional institutions may not, “creating both an opportunity and a responsibility to use that influence constructively,” the statement said.

The summit will be held at the Freedom Park Heritage Site and Museum in Pretoria from 8am to 5pm.