

ACHIEVING
EXCELLENCE

SOUTHERN AFRICA

SPECIAL EDITION

Aletta Rochat, DTM

A Global Voice from Africa



Southern Africa Special Edition Team

Editor-in-Chief

Maud Nale, DTM

Managing Editor

Leya Musunga

Assistant Editor

Vusi Nkosi

Editor

Khethiwe Malema

Layout & Design

Leya Musunga

Visit Us

www.toastmasters74.org

www.toastmasters129.org

Contact the PR Teams:

Email: pr@toastmasters74.org

Email: pr@toastmasters129.org

Toastmasters District Mission

We build new clubs and support all clubs in achieving excellence.



From the Editor-in-Chief

It is with immense pride and deep gratitude that I present this special edition of our magazine, dedicated to celebrating the extraordinary journey of our International President, Aletta Rochat, our global voice from Africa.

This tribute not only honours her remarkable achievements but also serves as a beacon of inspiration for members worldwide who see in her story the power of vision, resilience, and service.

My first encounter with Aletta was in 2019, when she spoke at my very first District conference. Her words carried both wisdom and warmth, leaving a lasting impression. A year later, during our Cabinet strategy session in 2020, she joined us again, not merely as a leader, but as a source of inspiration, urging us to aim higher and serve with courage. Since then, I have been privileged to witness her leadership in action countless times as she steadily rose through the Toastmasters ranks.

A defining highlight of my own journey was being present at the historic 100-Year Convention in Anaheim, California, where I witnessed her election as International President-Elect. It was a moment that filled me with pride in her accomplishment, and gratitude to see Africa so powerfully represented on the global stage.

I am honored to lead the production of this special edition, alongside District 74 PR Manager, Leya Musunga, and District 129 PR Manager, Vusi Nkosi. Together, we bring you heartfelt tributes from across the globe as we celebrate Aletta's enduring legacy and leadership.



Maud Nale, DTM

Past PR Manager, District 74

As we mark the first year of the next centenary, we celebrate a truly historic moment for Toastmasters and for Africa. Aletta Rochat, your appointment as Toastmasters International President fills us with immense pride and joy.

You are a beacon of light, not only for Southern Africa but for the entire continent, symbolizing excellence, vision, and the power of possibility. District 74 is honored to stand beside you, pledging to be the wind beneath your sail and a catalyst for your success throughout this remarkable year.

Your leadership inspires us to rise, unite, and amplify Africa's voice on the global stage. We are excited and energized to walk this journey with you. Let's show the world what Africa is truly made of!



Bhekisisa Ngomane, DTM

District 74 Director
2025-2026

I first met Aletta Rochat when she delivered a keynote at our directorate meeting during my term as Club Growth Director. Her composed presence, poise, and heartfelt words left a lasting impression. It felt as though her message was meant for me alone: "You can achieve whatever you want, if only you have the courage to pursue it until the end." Those words did more than inspire me—they awakened something within.

This year, I was blessed to experience her leadership once more. Aletta inducted the District 129 leadership team and delivered a powerful keynote, "*Why We Wear Our Badge*." She reminded us that our badge is not just about speaking or leadership, but about identity. We are life changers, shaping destinies, our own and those of others.

What stands out most about Aletta is not just what she says, but who she is. Her warmth, calm, and inviting smile create a space where others feel inspired to grow. Her presence alone encourages belief in oneself and in our shared mission.

I believe Aletta's year as International President will transform countless lives, for she embodies the essence of our calling: to empower, inspire, and change the world - one voice at a time.



Ravin Papiah, DTM

District 129 Director
2025-2026



From Africa to the World

Aletta Rochat's Legacy of Possibility

The first African and tenth woman to lead Toastmasters International reflects on growth, leadership, and the power of raising your hand.

Compiled by Maud Nale, DTM

Aletta Rochat describes herself as “a normal, everyday person” who walked into a Toastmasters meeting nearly two decades ago, initially looking for “something just for me.” Laughing, she recalls, “I wanted to get away from my kids! But when I saw those people in action, I knew I wanted to learn to be as articulate and funny as they were.”

17 years later, that first step has led her to the highest office in Toastmasters International.

The Role of International President

Aletta is quick to clarify what her role is - and isn't. "I'm absolutely not the CEO. We already have one, along with a team of 100 full-time staff at World Headquarters in Denver, Colorado, USA. As International President, I get paid exactly the same as a club member or club leader - zero. This is all driven by passion."

Her role is to lead both the Executive Committee and the 14-member Board of Directors, drawn from Toastmasters' 14 regions. Together, they set the strategic direction of the organisation, safeguard members' resources, and ensure that clubs thrive.

Strategic Growth in Challenging Times

As the organization moves beyond its centenary year and the global pandemic, Aletta acknowledges the challenges. "We haven't yet returned to pre-pandemic strength in terms of members and clubs. Our primary initiative is to grow - by going back to basics. Let's nurture our clubs so they thrive and become magnets for new members. Let's look after our existing members so they stay. It's as simple as that."

Listening to Members

Aletta values the feedback of members worldwide. "I love that our members care deeply about Toastmasters. Of course, like any household, our resources are limited. If we've lost members, revenue has shrunk. But imagine if every club and District grows—we'll have more capacity and more choices. It's not that we don't know what to do. It's about managing resources well, prioritising, and delivering value today, tomorrow, and into the future."

Making History

As the first person from Africa and the tenth woman to serve as International President in the organization's 100-year history, the significance of her election is not lost on Aletta. "I am a child of Africa. Everything I learnt in Toastmasters started in South Africa, and I am a product of the beautiful people here. People often underestimate Africa, but we know the talent, courage, and commitment that lives here. Despite our challenges, we are one of the fastest growing regions in Toastmasters - and that inspires me.

I may be the first African in this role, but I sincerely believe I won't be the last.

Hopefully my being here inspires others to see what is possible."

Leadership Lessons

Not every leadership journey is smooth. Aletta recalls a difficult team dynamic that became a turning point in her growth. "I was frustrated because I couldn't make the relationship work. My mentor told me, 'Remember, the movie playing in that person's mind makes perfect sense to them.' It was an Aha moment. I realized I wasn't creating enough space for others to bring their own solutions. Now, I consciously lead with empathy and make space for diverse viewpoints. The end result is always better than what I could come up with alone."



Inspiring Transformation

For Aletta, transformation begins with courage. "Raise your hand. That's where the magic happens. I remember being so nervous about my Icebreaker, but a member said, "Come on, Aletta - put your name up. That encouragement changed everything. If someone asks you to take on a role or serve, say yes, then ask for help and figure it out. The opportunity always comes after you've raised your hand."

Life Beyond Toastmasters

When she isn't serving the organization, Aletta finds joy in nature, family, and running with her group of friends known as *The Wonder Women*. "If I'm stressed, I take the dog for a walk or go for a run. I come back refreshed and ready. My husband often reminds me: 'You joined to have fun. Are you having fun?' It's a grounding reminder to keep balance. We want our members to grow, not burn out. Looking after yourself means you have more to give."



The Wonder Women: Aletta, Ali, Belinda, Di & Wendy



At home with her pets

A Message to the Toastmasters Global Community

Aletta's outlook is anchored in possibility. "My favourite book is *The Art of Possibility* by Benjamin and Rosamund Zander. If we go into situations asking what is possible, we can transform our lives and those around us. Toastmasters is about transformation - raising the bar, taking the next step, and believing in more than we thought possible. That's worth every ounce of energy we put in."

Aletta Rochat's journey from her first nervous Icebreaker to International President is a reminder that transformation begins with a single step - and the courage to take it. From Africa to the world, she embodies the spirit of possibility and the power of one voice to inspire many.



Leadership Begins with the Heart

Aletta, the deepest gravitas doesn't come from titles or power, but from humility, warmth, and genuine connection. You carry these qualities so naturally, making everyone feel seen and valued. As you continue to rise, may you always hold onto that beautiful relatability that makes you so inspiring, reminding us that true leadership begins with the heart

Bryton Masiye, DTM
Program Quality Director
District 74
2025-2026

African Woman, Global Inspiration

As the Program Quality Director of District 129 covering nine countries, I am honored to celebrate a historic milestone - the inauguration of Aletta Rochat as the first African female International President of Toastmasters International.

From afar, I have admired Aletta's leadership journey and the profound impact she has had on our district and beyond. Her dedication, perseverance, and passion for empowering others have inspired countless individuals to strive for excellence.

Personally, I believe that "every young gal is inspired by her surroundings! When she hangs around leaders who make an impact in their community, she has no option but to be inspired in that direction." Aletta's leadership embodies this spirit, inspiring a new generation of women to dream big and strive for excellence.

Aletta's leadership resonates with the quote by John C. Maxwell,

"Leadership is not about titles, positions, or flowcharts. It is about one life influencing another."



I am grateful to have had the opportunity to be inducted by Aletta and share the VIP table with her.

Aletta, thank you for serving Toastmasters International and rising to the occasion. You are worthy of the role and are in the right place at the right time. Shine African Lady shine!

Future Moyo, DTM
Program Quality Director
District 129
2025-2026

Presence, Purpose & Empathy

When I first met Aletta Rochat, when she was the incoming International President of Toastmasters in 2023, I was immediately struck by her presence.

She carried herself with a calm confidence that drew people in, not through loud declarations, but through a warmth and attentiveness that made you feel truly seen.

There was an authenticity in her handshake, a genuine sparkle in her eyes, and an ease in her smile that instantly put me at ease. As our conversation unfolded, I realised she was not just a leader in title, but a leader in spirit.

She listened with intent, never rushing to speak, yet when she did, her words were precise, thoughtful, and inspiring.

Her passion for Toastmasters was evident not as an abstract concept, but as a deeply personal mission to help people discover their voice and potential.

What impressed me most was her ability to connect at a human level. Despite the prestige of her position, she showed no airs or distance. She asked about my own journey in Toastmasters with sincere curiosity, making me feel as though my contribution mattered in the larger global picture.

It became clear that Aleta leads not from a pedestal, but from among us, embodying humility, vision, and service.

Meeting her left me not only inspired but reassured about the future of our organisation. I walked away thinking,

“this is what leadership should feel like - grounded in purpose, driven by empathy, and capable of igniting belief in others.”

That first meeting will remain a defining moment in my Toastmasters journey



Dilshaad Rajabalee, DTM,
Club Growth Director
District 129
2025-2026

A Leader Who Embodies Ubuntu

As Public Relations Manager for District 129, one of my first responsibilities was to invite Aletta Rochat, DTM, to our Induction Gala Dinner. From our very first interaction, I was deeply moved by her humility and her spirit of service. She embodies true leadership and lives out the spirit of Ubuntu.

I had the privilege of sitting next to Aletta during the Gala Dinner, where I asked her many questions about leadership and her personal journey. Her insights left me both inspired and challenged to grow. One moment that will forever stay with me was her session during our Directorate Meeting. In her gentle yet powerful way, Aletta reminded us “never to play small,” but instead to stretch ourselves and embrace our full potential.

When we discussed our theme, “Because You Are Worthy,” it was Aletta who contributed the powerful addition: “Because You Belong.” That message resonated deeply with me, especially as my PRM campaign post was built around the word belong. It felt like a divine alignment.

As a child of Africa, seeing Aletta rise to the global stage as the first African International President of Toastmasters International fills me with hope and renewed possibility.

With her leadership and spirit that truly embody Ubuntu, I am confident that Toastmasters and indeed the world has one of its finest leaders in Aletta Rochat.



Vusi Nkosi

*PR Manager, District 129
2025-2026*

Leadership with Grace

Aletta - true gravitas is not measured by titles or positions, but by the ability to lead with kindness, authenticity, and humility. You embody these qualities effortlessly, creating spaces where others feel valued and included.

As you embrace this new chapter, you are not just stepping into a role - you are opening doors and setting an example of leadership rooted in service. Your journey reminds us that influence is most powerful when it uplifts others and builds lasting connections.

I celebrate you with pride and admiration. You challenge us to reach higher, to lead with empathy, and to believe that every voice has the power to make an impact.

May your path continue to be marked by humility, grace, and an unwavering commitment to people. Your story inspires us all, and the legacy you're building will resonate well beyond this moment.



Leya Musunga

*PR Manager, District 74
2025-2026*

Africa's Pride, The World's President

The first time I saw Aletta Rochat was during Conference that was held years ago in Division A. Listening to her speech while sharing her vision, I was inspired. As a new member back then, I wanted to be like her. I wanted those qualities of a leader that I saw her portraying.

The way she conducted herself as our District Governor, the way she interacted with us, we couldn't have asked for a better leader.

Then, we met again during Icon Conference in Cape Town where she was facilitating one of the sessions ever so remarkably.

Congratulations on your new appointment, Madame International President. We are proud to have one of us representing South Africa and the whole of Africa at an international level.

Keep shining and making the impossible possible.



Vuyisile Vuthela, DTM
Finance Manager, District 129
2025-2026

A New Chapter in History



Your story now carries a new chapter: becoming the first African Toastmasters International President. This achievement is not only a personal milestone, but also a beacon of hope and inspiration for leaders across Africa and the world.

You are an inspiration to women and leaders who are still traveling the leadership journey. Be bold in pursuing your dreams and making your mark in history.

We are all fully behind you and determined to support you in this journey.

Matsela Grace Matubatuba, DTM
Logistics Manager, District 129
2025-2026



Leadership That Inspires Confidence

It is my great joy to offer congratulations to someone very dear to me Aletta Rochat, DTM, International President of Toastmasters International, 2025-2026.

I first met Aletta in 2010, and from that moment our friendship grew. Some people immediately thought that we were sisters. Aletta was a big part of my relationship with Southern Africa.

We shared adventures traveling to various events throughout Southern Africa (so many funny stories to share); then our paths crossed when she served in various District officer roles; and once again when she fulfilled the role of Region Advisor and International Director.

As the years passed, I have had the privilege of watching her learn, grow, and lead her way through this organization.

What has always inspired me is her resilience.

Even in the face of personal challenges, Aletta never lost sight of her goals. She brought her skills as a coach, her marketing knowledge, her strong commitment to accountability, and above all, her determination to serve others.

And now, she enters an extraordinary opportunity - to serve as International President of Toastmasters International for 2025-2026. This is not just a milestone for her, but a moment of celebration for all of us who know her passion and dedication.

Aletta, I am so proud of you. I know you will continue to inspire, to lead with heart, and to help our global family of Toastmasters reach new heights. Keep that laughter close by. And I look forward to sharing many more chuckles with you!

Congratulations, my friend!



Pat Johnson, DTM
*International President
2010-2011*

The Leader Who Shaped Me

When I think of Aletta, I don't just see a leader. I see someone who shaped me as a person and as a leader.

She gave me my first District role as Area Governor at a time when Zimbabwe was a priority area of District 74 and I was still young enough to think ice cream was a full meal. Aletta became a mother to me then, reminding me to look after myself and teaching me accountability. As she often said with a smile, "Talk is cheap, but money buys the drinks."

As I grew through District leadership, she was always there. She was pivotal when I served as Administration Manager, supportive when I pursued the Trio, and steady when setbacks came. I remember being under pressure as Club Growth Director, unable to attend District Leader Training due to a visa issue. Aletta personally trained me in Cape Town, and told me "Frank - you have got this!" and gave me the belief I needed. She welcomed me into her home.

Later, as my Region Advisor, she became my sounding board, venting partner and accountability buddy. Even when I decided not to run for Program Quality Director she helped me reflect, encouraged me and pushed me forward.

Beyond style, she is a progressive force who values action over red tape, momentum over delay and always asks how to make things happen. She is one of #PeopleMakingHistory and her election as the first Toastmasters International President from Africa is the realization of our dream to see Africa as a key player on the global stage in Toastmasters and beyond.

For me it is deeply personal. I would not be the leader I am today and neither would I be a Board member without her.

Frank Tsuro, DTM

*International Director from Region 11
2024-2025*



Faithful, Steadfast, Inspiring

In May 2014, I discovered that in order to achieve my DTM, I needed to serve as a District Leader and becoming an Area Director was the first step. I was guided to approach the then District 74 Governor, Fran Fraser, who referred me to the newly elected District 74 Governor, Aletta Rochat.

Since then, I have watched Aletta systematically and faithfully continue her leadership journey steadfastly, reliably, and always determined to be her personal best. Along the way, she has consistently inspired and positively impacted those around her.

The journey to becoming International President is a long one demanding integrity, respect, and a tireless commitment to serving the Toastmasters community with excellence. Aletta has walked that path with grace and strength.

I cannot think of a more deserving person from Africa to lead Toastmasters International than this long-legged lady from the Mother City of Cape Town. Aletta will take Toastmasters to even greater heights! I hope you hear my vuvuzela making the loudest noise from the world's oldest desert all the way to the USA.

I am so proud of you and wish you every success, with lots of love.



Granny Be 007, DTM
District 74 Director
2024-2025

A Trailblazer in Toastmasters History

I first met Aletta when she visited our Division in Harare, Zimbabwe, in March 2017, and had the honour of welcoming her to our club, Diplomatic Corps Toastmasters Club. Her warmth, poise, and genuine connection with each member left an indelible mark on us all.

As Immediate Past District Director of District 129, I have seen many leaders, but Aletta stands apart. She embodies servant leadership - listening with intent, encouraging with grace, and inspiring through action.

Becoming the first African International President is not only her achievement; it is a victory for every member who believes in the limitless potential of leadership and communication. Aletta's journey tells us that dreams have no borders, and voices from every corner of the globe can shape

the future. It sends a powerful message to every member, especially those from emerging and underrepresented regions: our dreams are valid, our voice matters, and our contributions can shape the future of our global organisation.

Congratulations, Aletta. You are making history and inspiring generations.



Zivai Matondo, DTM
District 129 Director,
2024-2025

Redefining Leadership: Inspired by Aletta Rochat

Across the world, perceptions of Africa are too often shaped by excuses rather than experiences;

by outdated stereotypes rather than the vibrant reality of who we are. Yet, Africa is a continent of resilience, creativity, and brilliance. And when one of our own steps onto the global stage, it is more than an individual achievement; it is a milestone for us all.

That is why Aletta Rochat becoming the Toastmasters International President is so much more than a title. It is a statement.

A statement that Africa not only belongs at the table of global leadership but also has something fresh, ethical, and deeply human to offer.

Toastmasters has always been where leaders are made. These leaders are deployed into communities, corporations, and even political spaces where influence is critical. But for too long, Africa has been on the back foot in producing the ethical, smart, and integrity-driven leaders that the world so desperately needs. Aletta's journey is proof that we can change this.

I still remember when I joined Toastmasters, Aletta was completing her term as District Governor. She led with grace, humility, and vision, qualities that inspired me then and continue to shape my own journey as a leader today. She showed us what it means not only to speak with clarity but to make her presence felt, positively. She challenged us that time to be our personal best, and here we are, with her example.

And so, here is the challenge: let us not simply admire her achievement. Let us build on it. Let us take up the responsibility to redefine leadership, not as a pursuit of titles, but as a commitment to integrity, impact, and service. Africa is no longer waiting for permission to lead; we are already doing it.

To Aletta, thank you for showing us what is possible. To the rest of us, I say: may we each be bold enough to follow her example and create the kind of leadership that transforms communities, companies, and countries alike.

The world is watching Africa. It is time we showed them our best.



Andrew Tsuro, DTM
District 74 Director
2023-2024

Thank you for leading from your heart

During the October 2016 Southern African conference, *Emoticon*, held in the beautiful Drakensberg, I had the honour of meeting Aletta for the very first time. Her calm, confident presence was undeniable. She exuded grace in every action. I remember thinking I could learn a lot from her. She instantly became someone I respected and looked up to.

Over the years, I occasionally interacted with Aletta during District activities. When my mom passed away in 2021, Aletta sent me an encouraging message that left an indelible memory that will remain with me for my lifetime.

In addition to Toastmasters activities, Aletta shared her network generously, resulting in me participating in a course led by Teresa Dukes that transformed my interview skills and professional growth trajectory.

I felt blessed to have Aletta induct me as the Southern African District 74 Director in July 2023. A moment that brought back memories of the first time I met Aletta way back in 2016 at a District conference!

Thank you to you, Aletta, for being a calm, confident and constant presence which exudes leadership in action with a heart towards everyone you serve. All the best success for your year as International President.



Angie Kivido
District 74 Director
2023-2024

A Remarkable Journey to the Presidency

Aletta Rochat is a remarkable woman. When you see her, she is tall, elegant, and graceful. When you hear her, her words are clear, meaningful, and precise but most importantly, what she says is always worth hearing.

She speaks with such purpose that you find yourself hanging on every word, absorbing each valuable point she makes. Aletta wastes no words, yet her message lingers long after she has spoken.

It is no surprise, then, that she has inspired countless Toastmasters to grow - not only as speakers, but as leaders, and ultimately as better people. In both areas, she is an expert.

Her journey through Toastmasters is a story of dedication and excellence: from her beginnings in the club, to Area, Division, and District leadership, where she excelled as a District Governor, and then onto the international stage as International Director and Vice President. Step by step, she climbed with distinction, culminating in her election as International President. This is a remarkable story,

and a historic achievement. Yet I believe the best is still to come - the remarkable impact she will make in this role, and the inspiration she will continue to give us all.

Good luck, Aletta. I know you are going to be fantastic.



Tim Knights, DTM
Past District 74 Governor
1995-1996

My Leadership Journey with Aletta Rochat

My leadership journey in District 74 has been uniquely shaped by Aletta and her presence across the various stages of my Toastmasters growth.

When I served as an Area and Division Governor, Aletta was part of the District 74 Trio. Later, when I was in the Trio, she was our Region Advisor. We also shared the challenging COVID years—she as a member of the Board of Directors, and I as District 74 Director.

Although our paths crossed in earlier years, I truly got to know Aletta in 2014 at the International Convention in Kuala Lumpur, the first convention I ever attended. That experience opened my eyes to the depth of Toastmasters, and also gave me the privilege of discovering more about Aletta.

Together with fifteen other District 74 members, we immersed ourselves in every tradition: the Opening Ceremonies, Hall of Fame, Sing-Alongs, and even karaoke after enjoying Malaysian street food. At that time, I had just stepped into the role of Division Governor, while Aletta was our District Governor.

What stood out immediately was Aletta's rare ability to blend leadership with fun.

Her warmth, wisdom, and encouragement have been constants in my journey from my early days as a member to my later leadership roles. She has supported me in countless ways, from preparing for job interviews to developing my leadership style.



Nikki Quinn, DTM

*Region 11 Advisor, 2022-2024
Past District 74 Director, 2019-2020*

Aletta is not only an exceptional mentor to me, but also to countless Toastmasters and professionals around the world. She has a unique gift for helping people uncover their strengths and believe in their potential.

Her influence on my Toastmasters and professional journey has been profound and I know I'm not alone in feeling that way.

I wish Aletta every success as she steps into the role of Toastmasters International President, and I look forward to our continued journey together.

Leadership That Inspires Confidence

When Aletta was elected District Governor in 2014–15, I joined Cabinet for the first time as her Finance Manager. That year marked the beginning of a wonderful four-year journey in District leadership for me.

After conference, we held a two-day strategy meeting at my home in Edenvale. Surrounded by seasoned Toastmasters, I felt I had little to contribute finance often comes into play later. Yet Aletta's leadership stood out immediately. She knew when to step back and allow others to grow, and when to step in with just enough guidance to meet deadlines.

I recall being utterly lost with the Toastmasters accounting system, and Aletta expressing her concern about late reports. But then, in true leadership fashion, she let me work through it myself. That trust built my confidence and inspired me to serve three full terms as District Treasurer.

As her term drew to a close, we were determined to help our clubs achieve Distinguished status. I launched "Operation 40" in the final quarter to boost performance, and together we succeeded. Shortly after, Aletta sent me a short but powerful message: "I cannot find the words to thank you for what you did..." Those words remain etched in my memory as a reminder of the lasting power of appreciation.



I'll never forget her book launch at Scoobs - *Speak Connect Succeed*, a remarkable guide to self-awareness. My signed copy is still one of my treasures. And of course, the moments of quick treasurer footwork that made me smile in hindsight.

It's no wonder Aletta is where she is today. Her wisdom, belief in others, and gift of encouragement left a profound mark on me.

Congratulations, Aletta! You've more than earned this moment.

Jonathan Silverberg, DTM
Past District 74 Finance Manager
2014-2015





A Beacon of Possibility for Africa

When I served as the founding Chair of the East Africa Territorial Council the structure that preceded the formation of District 114, I had the privilege of receiving guidance from Aletta Rochat, then one of the two Region Advisors assigned to our region.

Aletta offered immense support during those pioneering days. She generously shared documents, templates, and even a draft script from District 74 that helped me run my very first District Council meeting.

Thanks to her guidance, I was able to navigate complex processes with clarity and confidence support that contributed directly to our success and the eventual attainment of District status. Beyond the tools, it was her flexibility, professionalism, and generosity of spirit that stood out.

As District 114 began to take shape and grow, Aletta remained a true cheerleader always encouraging, always ready to guide, and always available. Last year, I was both delighted and deeply honored when she invited me to join a Board Committee working group. There too,

**I witnessed Aletta's leadership
in action: genuinely inclusive, highly
effective, and deeply inspiring.**

It gives me immense joy to see Aletta step into her role as International President the very first from Africa



Her journey is a beacon of possibility for so many of us. Africa could not have asked for a more inspiring, capable, and authentic leader to carry this mantle.

Congratulations, Aletta! We celebrate you with pride and gratitude.

Rozy Rana, DTM
*Founding Chair, East Africa
Territorial Council
District 114 Director*

Guided by Integrity, Driven by Purpose

It is a great honor to congratulate Aletta Rochat as she assumes the role of Toastmasters International President. Aletta's journey in Toastmasters reflects dedication, resilience, and a steadfast commitment to helping members grow as confident communicators and leaders.

She has consistently led by example, demonstrating how thoughtful guidance, encouragement, and integrity can shape meaningful experiences for members across the globe.

Aletta - On behalf of District 114 East Africa, I extend my heartfelt congratulations and best wishes for your tenure. Your leadership promises to inspire innovation, strengthen connections across our international community, and empower members to pursue their personal and professional goals with courage and determination.

Your achievements remind us that effective leadership combines vision with action, care for others with commitment to results, and the ability to guide people toward realizing their potential.

As you step into this new chapter, we celebrate your accomplishments and look forward to the positive impact your leadership will create worldwide.

At District 114, our vision is to transform our District into a powerhouse of excellence, where every club thrives, every leader grows, and every member experiences the full value of the Toastmasters journey.

Under this year's theme, "*Unleash Potential. Build Legacy*," we aim to become a Model of Excellence, making excellence not just a goal but our standard. We look forward to working together with leaders like you to achieve the success of our members and the Toastmasters community at large.



Demelash W. Beyene, DTM
District 114 Director
2025-2026

Your Toastmasters journey can take you anywhere

On 22 August 2025, history was made and I was there, cheering with pride. When Aletta Rochat stepped onto the podium at the Philadelphia Convention, she became the 10th woman, and the first African, to serve as Toastmasters International President in its 100-year history.

Her election sends a powerful message: Your voice matters. Your leadership matters. Your Toastmasters journey can take you anywhere.

Distinguished Toastmaster Andrew Tsuro, a young leader from Southern Africa, often speaks of redefining leadership in Africa. Aletta's achievement amplifies that vision. Like women across Toastmasters, I am deeply inspired. Her rise proves we can shine at the highest level regardless of origin.

Africa, rich in cultural diversity, creativity, and growth, may one day host a future international convention. I look forward to new opportunities for cross-cultural collaboration between African clubs and clubs globally, including those in District 71.

Above all, I'm moved by Aletta's promise to bring an "African mindset to the table." As the proverb says, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

Aletta, you will go far because you will never walk alone. Toastmasters from Africa and around the world are with you every step of the way.



Elizabeth Jordan, DTM
*Past District Director
District 71 (UK North & Ireland)*

A Luminous Servant Leader

You are a true multicultural African woman: graceful, grounded, and always of service. Since I met you, you've inspired me in many ways through your visible leadership in Toastmasters, your insightful presence on LinkedIn, and your kindness in every encounter. You always offer a smile, an ear and a hand to lend.

After my first term as Region Advisor, I was unsure about continuing. Then came your message, sincere, empowering, and exactly what I needed. You made me believe I had more to give. I reapplied and I grew. That's your gift: you see people, believe in them, and help them rise.

As you step into your role as International President, I don't just see a proud moment for Africa, but also the triumph of servant leadership. Aletta, your presence is a reminder that true leadership is not loud - it is luminous."



Aminata Keita, DTM
*Region Advisor - Region 11
2022-2024*

A Compassionate Leader for a Global Stage

I have had the privilege of working alongside Aletta Rochat of Cape Town, South Africa, since 2011 through our shared service in Toastmasters International. Our paths have intertwined across volunteer leadership and professional projects, including our collaboration on Interview Survival Masterclasses.

When Aletta served as Region Advisor, we worked closely together during my term as International Director, supporting an extraordinary region spanning Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. Our journeys took us across the globe from Africa to Berlin to Switzerland by car, plane, train, and bus. We became experts at stretching a modest travel budget, often dining on olives, prosciutto, crusty French bread, paprika crisps, and, of course, a celebratory glass of prosecco.

One of my most treasured memories is our visit to Berlin. Walking through a city so steeped in history reminded us of the importance of compassionate leadership a principle Aletta not only values but lives.

Aletta's leadership is not defined by titles or positions it shines in the way she listens, encourages, and inspires those around her.

Her ability to bridge cultures, adapt to challenges, and keep her sense of humor intact has made her not only a trusted colleague but also a dear friend.

From Cape Town to the world stage, Aletta Rochat continues to embody the kind of leader our global community needs compassionate, courageous, and committed.



Teresa Dukes, DTM
International Director
2015-2017



CAPE TOWN TOASTMASTERS

Aletta's Home Club

Aletta's gift is her ability to see potential in others and inspire them to soar. She doesn't just lead; she creates leaders. We are so proud of your achievements as your Home Club, Aletta. Here are a few words from some of the members.

"During one of my many visits to the club as a guest, I met a remarkable woman whose warm smile and strong, quiet presence captivated me. I told another member, 'Wow, I really like her.' Her leadership was so inspiring that as the club's Public Relations officer, I eagerly supported her campaign without her asking. She is making history, being the first woman from Africa elected as Toastmasters International President. I joined a dedicated team of Toastmasters to amplify her vision, driven by the belief that her success uplifts us all. Her achievement marks a milestone for Africa, uniting us in celebration. Viva Africa!"

Kerri-Lea Adlam - Club VPPR



"Aletta's gift is her ability to see potential in others and inspire them to soar. She doesn't just lead; she creates leaders. Over the past 15 years, I've been privileged to work alongside her, witnessing her unwavering commitment to our community and her ability to foster growth with kindness and wisdom. Her rise to International President-Elect is not just a personal triumph but a beacon of hope and pride for Africa and Toastmasters worldwide."

Chris Adlam, DTM



"I still remember my very first Toastmasters meeting - Aletta was on stage, speaking with such comfort and ease, delivering her message effortlessly. I was instantly inspired. Since then, whenever she visits our club, she takes the time to address us, commend us, and make each of us feel valued. She continues to inspire us not only through her leadership, but also by jumping in for a table topic without hesitation."

Jason Scott, IPP

"Aletta Rochat's election as Toastmasters International's president has made this one of the most remarkable years in the 40-year history of the Cape Town Toastmasters club. Aletta, a long-standing member, has inspired everyone in the club. Her achievement of taking her leadership across borders and continents has led to a surge of enthusiasm for leadership roles within the club, with more members now having 'helium hands,' as she would say when it comes to taking on leadership roles."

**Wayne Robinson, President,
Cape Town Toastmasters**

"Aletta was the driving force in ensuring we survived as a club during Covid. She took up the President role with grace and inspired us all."

**Dawn Corin, DTM - Club
Treasurer**

"I'm incredibly proud of Aletta's achievement; it's a testament to steadfast consistency over many years! The magnitude of having the first person from the continent lead our international organisation brings me great joy. I have no doubt that Aletta will lead with distinction; we will certainly support her every step of the way."

Shukri Wiener - Club VPE

CAPE TOWN TOASTMASTERS

Aletta's Home Club



"Ever since I joined Cape Town Toastmasters Club in 2022, I have been inspired by Aletta's 'effortless' speaking style, which has set a personal benchmark for me – always engaging, gently masterful and quietly humorous."

Louise Jones

"Congratulations Aletta! Such an amazing achievement, and the honour couldn't have been given to someone more deserving. I'm very excited for the leadership I know you'll deliver, and as always very proud to have such a distinguished Toastmaster in our midst at Cape Town Toastmasters."

Donovan Will - Club VPM

"I first met Aletta when I was 16 years old and she inspired me to pursue a leadership position in Toastmasters. To this day, I have never met someone so inspiring, calm and confident when they speak."

Jenna Ewers

Aletta, on behalf of us the Cape Town Toastmasters Club, your home club, and the countless lives you've touched, thank you for your legacy of empowerment, resilience, and inspiration. As you take on this historic role, know that we stand behind you, cheering with pride and gratitude for all you've done and all you will continue to do.

Inspiring Global Leadership



Charlotte Kemp

Past President: Global Speakers Federation

I have had the privilege of sharing the stage and working alongside Aletta Rochat over the years as we explored many facets of public and professional speaking. Her consistent professionalism, combined with her dedication to supporting and developing Toastmasters around the world, has been an inspiration to all who have engaged with her.

As a Past President of the Global Speakers Federation, I am especially proud to see such outstanding global leadership emerging from Southern Africa. Aletta's appointment is both historic and richly deserved, and I wish her every success in her new role as International President of Toastmasters.

Graceful, Warm, Commanding Leader and True Friend

It has been a privilege calling Aletta a close friend for nearly fifteen years. I remember my first impression of her as possessing a "regal elegance" as she opened her Cape Town Club meeting as their President. She was poised, graceful, warm and commanding as their leader. She still is.

She was an exemplary District Governor, leading District 74 to Select Distinguished for 2014-15. Years later, I was honored when Aletta asked me to be her Campaign Floor Manager when running for the Region 11 International Director position at the Denver Convention.

It is now my pleasure to be a co-mentor with Aletta for one of District 74's newest corporate clubs, Ninety One. Being at the annual convention in Philadelphia cheering robustly at Aletta's Inauguration as the Toastmasters International President on 23-Aug-25 is a great pleasure.

She is the first African to take this position and I thank her for blazing a wide path for many others on this continent to follow.



Bill Russell, DTM

*Two Oceans Toastmasters
Cape Town Speakers Toastmasters*

Aletta's calm nature helped turn my fear into confidence

My first Toastmasters speech was a blur of stumbles, racing heartbeats, and trembling hands. But that shaky beginning was the start of something extraordinary. When I joined in 2018, Aletta was a member of my club. I was nervous, almost incoherent at times, but surrounded by people Aletta among them who encouraged me to keep going.



I took every opportunity: every role, every speech, every moment to stand up and speak. The evaluators' feedback was gold, and slowly, the stammer softened, my pace steadied, and my confidence began to shine through.

Aletta's calm presence, generous feedback, and belief in others left a lasting impression, as did the guidance from many fellow club members. Their support became the scaffolding for my growth.

Today, I speak to audiences of 300+ and train others in presentation skills a transformation I once thought impossible.

As Aletta becomes the first African Toastmasters International President, I am reminded of what Toastmasters does best: turning fear into confidence, and potential into impact.

To anyone starting out keep speaking. Your future self will thank you.

Terry Winship

The Grove Club

Former member of Cape Town Toastmasters

A Rare Combination of Grace, Grit, and Heart

I have been lucky enough to know Aletta since the start of my Toastmasters journey in 2011. Back then, she struck me as an incredible woman a picture of grace and poise whose words I listened to in awe at District events.

I'll never forget her stepping up to mentor my sister Kay when she represented District 74 at the World Semi-Finals in 2012. It was my first real connection with Aletta, and I quickly discovered she was just as inspiring one-on-one as she was on the big stage. Since then, I have been blessed to cross paths with her many times and clearly remember her support when I competed in the World Championship of Public Speaking in 2021.

One of my fondest memories with Aletta was sharing a room with her in the Bahamas in 2023. That experience gave me a glimpse into just how hard she works as a Toastmasters leader, and I knew then how fortunate the organization would be when she stepped up to lead it. Aletta is a rare combination of grace, grit, generosity, and heart.

I have never heard her speak without being inspired and moved by her words, and she remains someone I look to her for guidance and insight. She truly is a one-in-a-million woman and leader, and I cannot wait to see her make history as the first African International President.



Verity Price, DTM

*2021 World Champion of Public Speaking
District 74*

Her belief in me

Fifteen years ago, I joined Cape Town Toastmasters, stepping nervously out of my comfort zone. Aletta Rochat's gentle nudge to take on the PR role changed everything. That small step led me to serve as club president, area director, and division director twice, unlocking potential I never knew I had. Today, we stand ready to celebrate Aletta Rochat's historic rise as the first African International President of Toastmasters International, a moment of immense pride.

Nelson Mandela said, "It is better to lead from behind and to put others in front, especially when you celebrate victory... You take the front line when there is danger." This captures Aletta Rochat's leadership perfectly. A pillar of calm strength, she empowers others to shine, convincing them to embrace challenges beyond their belief. During COVID, Aletta Rochat led from the front, saving our club with courage and grace.

I've been privileged to work alongside Aletta Rochat for 15 years, witnessing her transform lives with kindness and wisdom. Dear Aletta, as our shepherd of leadership, you've inspired us all. Thank you for your legacy and for leading Africa to this global stage. We stand behind you, filled with gratitude.

Chris Adlam, DTM

Cape Town Toastmasters

A Memoir of Aletta Rochat

It has been my absolute pleasure to know Aletta Rochat since joining Cape Town Toastmasters on 1 August 2011. From the start, Aletta radiated warmth, kindness, and motivation qualities she continues to embody today. Her speeches remain unforgettable.

One that stands out was about attending a Bruce Springsteen concert while in remission from breast cancer leaving us laughing, crying, and celebrating her remarkable spirit.

Another revealed her quirky passion for collecting roosters, always leaving space in her luggage to bring one home. She also shared how growing up as an 'army brat' taught her to adapt by listening, asking questions, and showing genuine interest skills she still uses to great effect.

Aletta's speeches are always beautifully crafted, delivered with quiet assurance and peppered with wit. Her leadership has been equally inspiring. During COVID, when our club struggled, Aletta stepped in as President with grace and resolve, guiding us through uncertain times.

She has served in many roles on our Committee, always leading with humility and strength. Cape Town Toastmasters is incredibly proud of all she has achieved and will proudly display the banner:

**"HOME CLUB OF THE TOASTMASTERS
INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT"**

at every meeting. Thank you, Aletta, for all you've taught me and everyone at Cape Town Toastmasters. As Bruce Springsteen would say YOU ROCK!

Dawn Corin, DTM,
Treasurer

*Cape Town Toastmasters
District 74*

The Wonder Women

Every superhero team has a leader the one who inspires, sets the pace, and keeps everyone moving forward. In our Wonder Women running group, Aletta is our very own Wonder Woman! Not because she wears a cape (though we're sure she'd look amazing in one), but because she shows up with quiet strength, unshakable determination, and the ability to lead without needing the spotlight.

Whether we're pounding the pavements at sunrise or sharing a coffee afterwards, Aletta's encouragement, focus, and belief in others lift us all higher. She is resilient, committed, and always keeps her eye on the prize whether that's finishing a long run or taking on the extraordinary role of International President of Toastmasters International. She never gives up, and she inspires everyone around her.

We have no doubt she will bring the same integrity, vision, and heart to this new chapter that she brings to every challenge. Aletta, you truly are OUR Wonder Woman for our little team and now for the global Toastmasters community.

With pride, admiration, and friendship,

Ali, Belinda, Di & Wendy



I met Aletta at our running club about five years ago and, from the very beginning, I admired her tenacity and determination, especially when it comes to long-distance running. She never settles for mediocrity, always giving 100% and more to everything she undertakes.

What I love most about Aletta, though, is her sense of humour. Our early morning runs are peppered with her witty comments and perfectly timed one-liners, often leaving the group chortling along the route.

Above all, I admire her unassuming humility. She quietly accomplishes the extraordinary, never seeking recognition or praise, and that's what makes her truly inspiring.

Aletta, you make us proud. Keep the South African flag flying high, and have a fantastic year as International President!

Wendy Gilbey

The Wonder Women

Aletta Brune Roachat, a cherished member of our “Wonder Women” running group, has always stood out as a beacon of strength and inspiration. As the former Head Girl of Collegiate High School for Girls, she carried herself with quiet confidence and authority that hinted at the remarkable communicator and leader she would one day become. I still remember watching her speak to hundreds of students with such poise—an early glimpse of her gift for connecting with people.

Aletta lives true to the school motto, *facta non verba* - deeds, not words. It has been a delight to reconnect with her through our running club. She is currently preparing to complete her 10th Two Oceans Half Marathon, entirely under her own steam. During our training runs, she not only inspires us with her determination but also enriches us with her thoughtful insights, always ready to listen, advise, and encourage.

Off the track, Aletta’s warmth and humour shine just as brightly. She captivates with stories, keeps us laughing with her wit, and brings people together with ease. Now, as Toastmasters International President, she continues to embody grace, wisdom, and dedication - qualities that make her a true role model to many.

—Diana Lovemore





We celebrate your leadership, Aletta

Aletta Rochat walks with quiet but loud dignity and leads with a heart that touches souls. As Africa's first Toastmasters International President, she carries not just a title but the hopes, pride, and dreams of a continent.

Described by many as the embodiment of grace and calm, Aletta inspires us to believe in more courage, more purpose, more possibility. Her journey reminds us that greatness is not loud; it's gentle, steady, and deeply human. Today, Africa celebrates her.

Tomorrow, the world will be moved by her example. Aletta - your presidency is a gift to every Toastmaster who dares to dream. Good Luck as you take on a role fitting for a leader such as yourself.



Khethiwe Malema

*President - Nedbank Allstars
Area E4 Director 2024/25
District 74*

A Voice for Africa. A Leader for the World

History is not only recorded in books — it is written through the vision, courage, and leadership of remarkable people. Aletta Brune Rochat, DTM, is one such leader. As the first African Toastmasters International President, she stands as a beacon of inspiration for members across the globe.

Aletta's journey reflects the essence of Toastmasters: growth through perseverance, leadership through service, and communication that bridges cultures. From her home in Africa to the world stage, she has shown that passion paired with dedication can open doors and break barriers.

Her achievement is not just personal; it is a collective triumph for every member who dreams beyond borders. Leadership, as Aletta proves, is not confined by geography or circumstance, but shaped by vision, empathy, and courage.

Her presidency represents hope that when we lift our voices, share our stories, and serve with heart, we can change the world.

This historic moment will inspire a new generation of Toastmasters, in Africa and beyond, to step forward as global leaders.

Congratulations, International President Aletta Rochat your journey reminds us all that dreams have no borders, and neither does excellence.



Margaret Andris DTM

*District 42
Southern Alberta &
Southern Saskatchewan, Canada*

The Leading Lady Who Makes Leaders Feel Seen

In an organization with a tagline like ours; "Where Leaders Are Made."; newcomers by default look for the embodiment of the leadership virtue.

As a new member myself, I immediately became drawn to watching Aletta and I continue to glean on from literally watching how she immaculately walks both as a woman and as a leading lady par excellence.

Aletta has this gift of accepting our diversity, giving others opportunities to grow and modeling great graceful leadership. And if I could describe Aletta in a few words- I would go for Consistent and Committed. It must be Ravi Zachareus who said;

"You can never lift a burden off anyone until you feel their burden in your own soul."

I see Aletta bearing the weight and charge and calling to lead and develop leaders with an unrelenting passion. Since joining Toastmasters ten plus years ago- I got to know Aletta both from a distance and at some privileged moments from really up close. I recall serving on Aletta's campaign team when she stood for the International Director role a few years back. I learnt so much from the abundance of her heart, her determination and steadfastness as a yielded servant leader.

One trait that stands out consistently is her willingness to honor and live out loud the Toastmasters values of Integrity, Respect, Service & Excellence. Aletta truly inspires the steadfastness in leadership excellence by being exemplary in the African proverbial "going together".

Aletta is always allowing leaders to grow on their leadership journey and modeling great leadership. A fervent learner and evolving leading lady, we are honored to be served by the best.

We are becoming better leaders by mirroring giants like Aletta.

Aletta is one leader who makes you feel seen.

Congratulations again Aletta Rochat - International President and know that you deserve to lead and you will be supported as you take the helm of this organization. I consider it an honor to serve you as you serve us from the highest office in Toastmasters.



Dorothy Chanakira DTM
District 74 & 129

From African Soil to Global Stage

History has no blank pages. We celebrate Aletta Rochat, DTM not only as a woman, but as the first Toastmasters International President from African soil. By taking this bold step, you have proven what is possible. You represent not only your country but the entire Toastmasters community, who are inspired and motivated by your journey. We are proud of you, Aletta, and stand fully behind you as you make history and lead with courage, authenticity, and vision.

Martha Mamagadi Kgonodi

Extension Chair| VPE & President, Breaking Barriers Toastmasters Club, District 129



Inspiring others with unwavering dedication

As a Distinguished Toastmaster in District 74, I have seen first-hand how leadership, vision, and perseverance can transform lives. Aletta Rochat's journey to becoming the first African Toastmasters International President is not just a personal achievement – it is a triumph for Africa, South Africa, and for women in leadership across the globe.

My own journey in Toastmasters has been one of continuous growth – from learning to speak with confidence to leading with purpose. Along the way, I have witnessed how leadership is not defined by titles, but by the courage to inspire others to step into their own potential. Aletta embodies this truth. She has carried the voice of Africa onto the world stage with grace, humility, and unwavering dedication.

For South Africa, her presidency is a reminder that our stories matter and that our leaders can compete – and lead – at the highest level. For Africa, it is proof that excellence is not bound by geography, and that our continent's influence is rising in global arenas. For women, it is a beacon of possibility showing

that leadership is not limited by gender but expanded by diversity.

Aletta's milestone is not just her own. It belongs to every member who dares to dream, to every leader who chooses service over self, and to every African who believes our time is now. Her achievement will inspire generations – and I am proud to witness it in my lifetime.



Michael Shackleton, DTM

District 74

Such a living force!



I had the privilege of being trained by Aletta during the District 129 Directorate weekend, and it left a mark on me. From her calm presence to the way you ask the most thought-provoking questions, you made me pause and reflect deeply on my own journey.

The story you shared about the answer you once received from your mentor about belonging still echoes within me. It was not just wisdom, but a gift you generously passed on to all of us.

Seeing you now, reaching the very top of the Toastmasters journey, is more than an achievement it is a celebration of your service, your charm, and your unwavering commitment to uplifting others. You embody the very spirit of leadership that inspires us to grow, belong, and contribute.

Well done, Aletta! We are proud of you, and we stand ready to support you as you carry forward the mission of Toastmasters International.

Helio Macarrala, DTM

*Division G Director, District 129
2025-2026*

Embodying Ubuntu and High Standards in Leadership

A playful yet profound moment unfolded at our District 129 Hall of Fame when I found myself on stage with Toastmasters royalty International President Aletta Rochat and Outgoing District Director Zivai. More than just an encounter, it was an opportunity to witness Aletta's heart and character.

She shared her remarkable journey of growth and servanthood in Toastmasters, a path that now culminates on the world stage. I have no doubt she will embody the spirit of Ubuntu standing tall to represent the strength, resilience, and heart of Africa.

Later that day, while driving with Aletta, her warmth and sincerity shone through. She left me with words that will stay with me forever: "We must hold each other to a high standard." This message resonated deeply, reminding me that true leadership uplifts, inspires, and challenges us to become better.

Aletta Rochat is not only making history; she is setting the standard for it.



Felicia Bam

*President: Pretoria East Toastmasters Club
District 129 - AI Area Director*



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