



Africa Youth Conference

Unleashing the Potential of Youth:

Prioritizing Investment in Africa's Youth Within the Post-2015 Agenda
23-25 October 2018, United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON)



AFRICA YOUTH CONFERENCE

Unleashing the potential of youth in Africa through prioritizing investment within the post-2015 agenda on sustainable development

23-25 October 2018
(Nairobi, Kenya)

Outcome Document/Call to Action

Preamble

Between 23-25 October 2018, over 350 African youth from across all regions in the continent (Central, East, North, South and West) convened at the United Nations Office in Nairobi (UNON), Kenya, for the first youth-led conference of its kind to deliberate on the theme: ***“Unleashing the potential of youth in Africa through prioritizing investment in the post 2015 agenda on sustainable development.”*** This convening which was facilitated through a partnership between UN agencies and civil society actors, was premised on the recognition of the need to challenge the narrative about African youth on the continent, as a disengaged and passive population that lacks the capacity and/or willingness to positively contribute to the continent’s developmental potential and agenda. This conference sought to challenge this dominant narrative by providing a platform through which the youth in Africa - and in particular girls and young women, would be able to share on how they have been able to take action to address the challenges facing their communities, and in sharing on their innovative efforts, to encourage and galvanize other African youth to become agents of change within their spaces, on the continent and globally.

Recalling that by 2030, Africa is projected to be home to over 600 million young people and 1 billion by 2050, and the reality that as at 2017, youths in Africa were estimated to account for 60% of the continent’s jobless, and that the majority of the youth are unable to access productive resources and quality services to enable them to fully harness their potential as a function of the fact that the majority remain disenfranchised by governance and political decision-making processes.

Recognizing that these realities persist largely due to the non-inclusive nature of development processes which have failed to adequately acknowledge youth in Africa as agents of socio-economic and political change within society, capable of generating solutions that respond to the continent’s developmental priorities.

Noting however the examples of Africa’s youth (on the continent and in the diaspora), who through their efforts have generated solutions to challenges facing their communities including enhancing access to healthcare, mitigating the challenges of climate change and improving agricultural productivity and food security, engaging in value addition, turning waste to profit, building enterprises and creating jobs within their communities- and also galvanized communities to political action and social activism.

¹UN Women in collaboration with Africa Alliance of YMCA, Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), UNDP, UN Environment, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNIC, UNICEF and Youth Agenda

Recognizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063, both of which speak to the urgent need to promote the rights of young people and meet their developmental needs in all their diversity; the African Youth Charter (2006) which seeks to also promote the creativity, energy and innovation of Africa's youth for the continent's political, social, cultural and economic transformation.

Also recognizing the UN Youth Strategy (2018) which highlights the key challenges facing the world's youth population such as access quality education, healthcare or decent work- many of which disproportionately affect young women and girls especially in situations of conflict; and seeks to amplify the voices of the youth, to protect and promote their rights and support them as catalysts for positive change.

WE, the African youth, have identified the following key strategic actions that would allow us to shape the now and the future:

On promoting youth rights, effective participation and inclusion in governance and decision-making processes, we:

Call for genuine commitment by African governments in creating spaces for youth to inform enabling policies, legislation and tailored programmes, interventions and investment that effectively engage young people (as active participants and not mere recipients). This must include an assurance that the created spaces are not cosmetic by implementing policies designed to include youth in governance structures and processes as exemplified by the global youth campaign on "Not Too Young To Run."

Further call for the realization of the African Governance Architecture (AGA) commitments and as such, concerted efforts should be geared towards the implementation of the Youth Engagement Strategy (YES) which seeks to promote youth as leaders and drivers in defining and implementing democratic governance processes at all levels, and enhanced accountability on delivering these commitments through state reporting mechanisms provided in the African Charter on Democracy, Election and Governance, for which only one country (Togo) is currently compliant.

Urge African governments and relevant stakeholders to prioritize engaging youth in understanding and performing their civic duties and responsibilities, from an early age. This should be prioritized within the formal structures such as the education system where governance and civic duty can be integrated at primary and high school curricula, as well as informal structures at the community level where this can be integrated through social and cultural interactions and oral tradition.

Call upon African governments to take deliberate action to increase the participation of young women by creating and sustaining platforms that are safe, accessible, relevant, inclusive and responsive to their participation by recognizing and addressing the factors that inhibit their full and meaningful participation such as regressive socio-cultural norms and practices, levels of education, economic status and other limitations. We state boldly and decisively that inclusion is a deliberate and decisive process that brings together all voices including those of young women and girls.

Commit to unrelentingly exercise and raise our voices to demand for accountability from our governments. We will not allow greed, corruption and ageism to 'steal our futures.'. In so doing, we call on our fellow youth to join hands in marking the Africa Youth Day Celebration 2018 whose theme is "raising Youth Voices Against Corruption in Africa"

Commit to collaborate with relevant stakeholders to strengthen the voice of the youth, their agency and leadership, including harnessing young people’s unique motivations for social, economic and political engagement, while building their technical knowledge of political organizing, agency and “soft skills”, using approaches that “meet youth where they are” based on identities, locations, cultures and other contextual issues, and including recognition of their experience, expertise and innovations.

Support and commit to strengthen the role of youth in Africa in monitoring and reviewing mechanisms and systems for holding African governments accountable to the development of Africa’s youth including operationalization of Africa’s Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030 in line with our respective national development priorities, related targets and indicators.

Strongly urge African governments and the UN to resource, implement and monitor the UN Youth Strategy (2018) and publish an annual progress report on the same. This strategy should enable development stakeholders to address the structural and gender inequalities which have shaped the realities of many African youth.

On promoting sustainable livelihoods and wealth creation through employment and entrepreneurship, we:

Recognize the entrepreneurial spirit of many of Africa’s youth and recommend the scaling up of the ‘hustle’ in ways that provide a support to the young entrepreneurs, an enabling environment for their work and opportunity to both create employment and grow sustainable businesses.

Call for a stronger innovation and social enterprise ecosystem in African countries—environments that include a supportive policy and legislative framework, more structured support programs that provide a strong linkage between youth training and job market, interventions and investments, which foster social enterprise research, promote increased access to affordable financing, enabling technologies, innovations, and other productive resources.

Further call for African governments and private sector’s recognition of the care economy and unpaid care work which often burden young women and constrains their socio-economic and political potentials—and investment in tangible solutions that recognize the economic value of their efforts and unleash their potential to sustainable livelihoods.

Commit to promoting and expanding spaces for young entrepreneurs to harness their innate potentials through sharing, learning, reflecting, collective strategizing, partnerships and investing in efforts aimed at enhancing youth access to sustainable livelihoods and wealth creation.

Commit to tap many opportunities that exist in Africa along the Environmental Restoration Value Chain that have high potential for creating jobs for youth and women.

Further commit to adopt a “Support Africa Build Africa” approach to ensure that local businesses, especially those by the youth are promoted and enhanced considering that they present a solid opportunity for growth of enterprises culminating in employment and economic growth.

² .e. collaboration, effective communication and resilience which enables effective social, economic and political participation

On promoting inclusion and the recognition of diversity in the generation of research/studies, full disaggregated data and statistics on youth, we:

Call for deliberate investment in generation and management of accurate, full disaggregated data and statistics (including on young persons with disabilities, people living with HIV, youth from ethnic and racial minority groups, refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants), research and information on the youth in the political, social, cultural and economic spheres, to reflect the diversity and differentiated challenges faced by youth in Africa.

Call for African governments and other stakeholders to leverage technology to generate research/ studies, data and statistics, to involve youth in such efforts and in the dissemination and utilization of data and statistics, as a tool for promoting youth engagement in decision making and in identifying solutions in socio-economic and political challenges, taking full account of the digital and gender divide and the urgent need to bridge these gaps.

Call on stakeholders, governments and the United Nations to produce a biennial Status Report on young women in Africa for purposes of monitoring and reporting progress and informing interventions, programmes and policies targeting young women in Africa.

On peer to peer learning, intergenerational dialogue and mentorship, we:

Commit to redefining the dominant narrative about the youth by consistently documenting and telling our African success stories among ourselves and to the world, and how we contribute to socio-economic and political development.

Commit to continuously share our knowledge, experiences and skills amongst our peers within our spaces and collaboratively take up efforts to advocate for youth rights as well as creating synergies that respond to current day social, political and economic challenges.

Commit to initiating and promoting intergenerational dialogues which will promote experience-sharing and co-mentorship, challenge prejudices, promote cross-generational understanding, reduce conflict, facilitate the increased recognition of the knowledge and expertise of youth, as well as access to decision-making by youth in Africa.

Call on UN Agencies to widen its scope and activities for youth in Africa beyond capacity building initiatives and shift its focus towards building champions from the grassroots and building capacity of youth from as early as 15 years to ensure that children and youth have more information, knowledge and skills required to change the African landscape.

On youth action in ending violence including harmful practices, we:

Commit to raise our voices and take action to prevent all forms of gender-based violence as individuals and as a collective, including sensitizing each other on technology-assisted violence against women and girls, and equipping ourselves with tools to deal with the same.

Call on our fellow youth to join us in instigating dialogues at grassroots levels on ending harmful practices against women and girls.

Call for opinion shapers and champions in our communities including traditional and religious leaders and related institutions and media influencers to be agents for change against harmful practices that predominantly affect young women and girls such as female genital mutilation, early or forced marriages, virginity/-puberty testing, forced migration and for all African governments to fully implement the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol (2015)), and take decisive steps to bring perpetrators of such violations to justice.

Call for African governments to invest in accessible and affordable services and safe spaces for women, girls and survivors—including healthcare, psycho-social support, and access to justice.

Recommend partnership among ICT users' communities, internet intermediaries, CSO networks, the private sector, the media, youth led agencies and collectives/movements and African governments to take decisive measures towards ending technology assisted violence against women and girls.

Call for holistic ICT policy and legislative frameworks on cybercrime that address technology assisted violence against women and girls and related crime-and promote the simplification and creation of social media messaging that propagates women's empowerment to widen their understanding of how to prevent technology-assisted violence.

On promoting gender equality and inclusion of youth living with disability, we:

Strongly affirm the non-negotiable centrality of gender equality and women's empowerment as key principles, and the inclusion of other marginalized groups of youth including youth living with disability in all the decision-making structures and processes, interventions, programmes and investments designed to address youth challenges in Africa.

Pledge to advocate and lobby for the urgent and effective enactment and scale up of policy, legal and investment frameworks ensuring the safeguarding and full participation of young women and other marginalized groups, as informed by the successful experiences of countries across Africa and in line with the principle of leaving no youth behind as enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals framework.

Commit as youth in Africa to banish negative perceptions towards the participation of young women, youth living with disability and other marginalized groups in social, cultural, political and economic spaces.

Adopted in Nairobi, Kenya on 25 October 2018 by Delegates of the Africa Youth Conference on Unleashing the Potential of Youth and Prioritizing Investment in African Youth within the Post-2015 Agenda

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