

# Youth Reference Committee

An initiative of the African Union Office of the Youth Envoy to  
Strengthen Global Youth Participation in Ending Inequalities.



# Background and Introductory Information

The AU Agenda 2063 and UN Agenda 2030 recognize youth as vital in shaping Africa's future. Their active involvement ensures that youth voices and aspirations are considered at all decision-making levels. Both agendas call for partnerships between all sectors of society to strengthen their implementation and revitalize global partnerships for development. Thus, collaboration between the AU Agenda 2063 and the UN Agenda 2030 is crucial to achieve global development goals.

Global inequalities have been further exacerbated as the world grapples with instabilities. Young people are particularly affected as they face barriers to social mobility, access to quality education, primary healthcare (especially for young women and children), and formal employment, which can have long-term consequences for their future prospects. Strengthening global youth participation and collaboration on reducing global inequalities is crucial in ensuring a more equitable and sustainable future for young people and society. We can work towards a more equitable world by engaging with youth-led organizations and networks, facilitating dialogue and collaboration, promoting the inclusion of youth perspectives and solutions, and advocating for increased resources and support.

Against this backdrop, the African Union Youth Envoy, **Ms. Chido Cleopatra Mpemba**, is strengthening youth participation by establishing a network of international youth representatives who are championing the implementation and collaboration of the African Union Agenda 2063, the African Youth Charter, and the UN Agenda 2030 towards ending global inequalities. The network reflects the global solidarity and joint action needed to address global inequalities. As such, the Youth Reference Committee is a youth-led initiative that aims to foster global youth dialogue and facilitate meaningful youth participation across various thematic areas, including citizen engagement, climate change, governance, peace and security, migration, the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), Education and Skills Development, gender mainstreaming in digital technology, mental health and well-being, and sexual reproductive health rights.



The first cohort of the Youth Reference Committee was officially launched in July 2023 in partnership with the Austrian National Youth Council. The inaugural committee comprises twenty-five African youth representatives selected from all five African Union regions and 15 European youth representatives. The committee's 12-month mandate commenced on July 5, 2023, with a Virtual 2-day South-North Dialogue. Drawing on their experience and networks, the committee will contribute to thematic areas and propose activities that align with the realities of African youth on the Continent and in the diaspora. Additionally, the committee is an interactive mechanism and communication channel between the Youth Reference Committee, their communities and networks, and the African Union Office of the Youth Envoy.

## Expected Outcomes

The desired outcomes of the initiative are:

- Establishment of an international youth collaboration platform to serve as a mechanism for the participation of youth organizations in youth policy development and implementation;
- Enhanced participation of young people in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of national development plans, policies, and poverty reduction strategies;
- Advocacy for the inclusion of youth representatives as part of delegations to national and international dialogues and fora for mainstreaming of youth perspectives in policies and programs to address inequalities;
- Strengthened collaboration among youth-led organizations, governments, and other stakeholders to address inequalities;
- Encourage international cooperation in the production, exchange, and dissemination of information from both national and international sources that are of economic, social, and political value to youth;
- Institutionalization of international peer-to-peer mentoring platforms with the inclusion of marginalized youth to highlight the importance of strengthening youth participation and partnerships at various levels on addressing inequalities to achieve global development goals.

## Key Thematic Areas

The desired outcomes of the initiative are:

- Peace, Security, Politics and Democratic Governance
- Youth Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Digital Transformation
- Education and Skills Development
- Climate Change, Climate Resilience & Climate Justice
- Citizens Participation and Leadership
- Economic Integration
- Health and Social Development

## Methodology

For the successful implementation of the initiative, the following approaches will be taken by the Office of the Youth Envoy:

1. Identify key stakeholders and partners to establish the Youth Reference Committee by mapping national and international partners, youth organizations, and civil society.
2. Develop and outline the committee's objectives, goals, and activities, including roles and responsibilities and criteria for selection.
3. Put out an open call for a selection of youth representatives from different countries and regions who have a solid commitment to the implementation of the African Union Agenda 2063, the African Youth Charter, and the UN Agenda 2030 with a transparent and inclusive selection process, with regional and gender balance, based on merit.
4. Training and capacity building to enhance knowledge and skills on the African Union Agenda 2063, the African Youth Charter, and other international agendas to enable selected youth representatives to champion the implementation of these agendas effectively.
5. Establish communication channels to enable the youth representatives to communicate and collaborate through social media platforms, email, and other channels.
6. Events and activities, including study exchanges, conferences, workshops, and campaigns to enable the youth representatives to engage with other stakeholders, carry out on-the-ground research and analysis, and raise awareness about the African Union Agenda 2063, the African Youth Charter, and other international agendas. Activities and events will be mapped based on area of experience and field of interest.
7. Monitor and evaluate the committee's progress in achieving its objectives and goals to identify areas of best practice, improvement, learning, and development.

## Key Products

1. Development of policy brief on Strengthening Global Youth Participation to End Inequalities. This policy brief will be presented at the African Union Summit and the United Nations General Assembly in 2024.
2. Development of Youth Engagement Framework and Guidelines for Strengthening Global Youth Participation to End Inequalities to be circulated to key stakeholders and partners.
3. Formation of a Youth Reference International Alumni Network to be available for approved consultations by stakeholders and partners.

## Partners' Call to Action

This initiative will help us achieve our shared development goals in Africa and beyond. As such, the African Union Office of the Youth Envoy requests the support of its partners in the following areas;

### **Technical Support:**

- Share best practices and lessons learned from similar initiatives.

### **Financial Support:**

- Provide funding and resources to support the operation of the network and support the development of training programs and capacity-building for the committee.

### **Technical Support:**

- Partner with us to implement joint projects and initiatives that align with the initiative's aims.
- Help us identify and engage with other organizations and stakeholders who can support the initiative.



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