



CONCEPT NOTE

**YOUTH & CHILDREN'S FORUM:
THEME: AFRICAN RENAISSANCE/ AFRICA WE WANT TO SEE 2063
22 – 24th MAY 2013 ADDIS ABABA – ETHIOPIA**

April 2013

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The year 2013 marks the 50th anniversary of the existence of the Organization of African Unity/African Union (OAU/AU). During this period, African states have witnessed notable improvements in economic and political governance. Positive trends have been recorded in terms of the development of various state systems. Namely, the efforts to build and consolidate democracy, -rule of law, human and peoples' rights, accountability, economic management and the resolution of crisis and conflicts can be observed. All of these have contributed to the steady economic growth gains over the past decade on the continent.

Africa in 2013 is however demonstrative of two unique phenomena; a young population, better educated and healthier than previous generations, and perversely, increasing alienation, poverty and dissatisfaction amongst the youth. Harnessing the full potential of the youth is necessary for driving the continents economic transformation. With the African economic and political landscape ripe for change, all major polices should be characterized by its increasingly assertive and vibrant young citizenry. The right investments Africa's youth are the solution and not the obstacle, to the realization of the African Union vision of an "Integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa".

Based on the demographic forecasts for Africa, considerable actions are required for promoting inclusive and dynamic growth while at the same time investing in social policy especially health, education, infrastructure and youth empowerment. In particular, if Africa is to reap the demographic dividends it must articulate comprehensive and coherent youth policies, legislations and strategies to facilitate rapid economic growth. The youth and children's forum , therefore will aim to address the key questions of how Africa's most powerful resource, its youth, can be engaged in defining the Africa we want to see come 2063. Seven years after the endorsement of the African Youth Charter by African Heads of State, the urgent need to enhance youth capacity and participation is more prominent. With the benefits of retrospective vision, this is an opportune moment to build on recent experience and chart the way forward. And when the litmus test- Africa as a developed continent- is applied in 2063 i.e. 50 years from now, the gains will be self-evident.

The 50th Anniversary celebrations provide a unique opportunity to recreate the African narrative by putting it in perspective to enthuse and energize the African population and use their constructive energy to set and implement an achievable agenda for unity, peace and development in the 21st century. The thrust of this agenda is a program of social, economic and political rejuvenation that links the past, the present and the future in order to create a new generation of Pan-Africanists that will harness the lessons learnt and use them as building blocks to consolidate the hope and promises of the founding parents for a true renaissance of Africa. The essence would reignite the ideals of Pan-Africanism and Renaissance among all

sectors of African people on the continent and the Diaspora, especially the young generation and its future.

The symposium will be the inaugural High Level Forum which will bring African leadership to dialogue with its constituents, the youth. The mainframe for the implementation of this agenda includes four interrelated components;

- A process of reflection on where we came from, where we are and where we want to go!
- The stocktaking of our assets and capabilities vis-à-vis the opportunities and challenges.
- A prognosis for action that forecasts the future, the path we wish to follow and the legacies that should be bequeathed to future generations.
- A process of Pan African socialization that will prepare new generations to assume the responsible leadership and accountability in this context.

GOAL & OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the symposium is to seize the opportunity of the OAU/AU 50th Anniversary celebrations in order to provide a platform for dialogue between selected African Heads of States and young people on major policy initiatives. This is of particular significance in view of Africa Youth decade 2009-2018. As the continent consolidates efforts in its growth trajectory and political renaissance, the symposium will bring young people at the heart of social and political discourse to enable them to make contributions to current policy debates. More importantly, it is intended to promote a youth focused policy priority and support the vision of youth development among the urgent actions by African heads of states.

The forum will further raise meaningful and concrete engagement by mobilizing young people as stakeholders in defining and shaping the next 50 years towards African economic growth and development. Generating and maintaining the potential for development to improve the socio economic condition of the people of Africa requires the effective participation of its most valuable resources. Youth in Africa hold great potential as drivers of economic growth. The forum will therefore address key questions of how Africa's most powerful resource is able to constitute the greatest asset. It will also look at the role of past movements and heroism of its bearers, and actively enlist a critical mass of sensitized and emerging young leaders at continental level towards the idea of an African identity and the future of its shared values and path to sustainable human development and socio-economic growth and advancement.

The specific objectives;

- Take stock of the last 50 years of African Unity under the framework of the OAU/AU, in particular Africa Fit For Children and the African Charter on the Rights and welfare of the child (the retrospective of 50 years cannot be from youth perspective)
- Consolidate the knowledge base and connection of African Children and Youth with the Pan African milestone and journey of 50 years to date (Is this necessary? Perhaps it should be rephrased as it is not very clear)
- Share ideas and elaborate action steps on the role of young people in actualizing a 2063 Vision

- Explore avenues for increased youth participation in the African Union and the implementation of the Chairpersons key priority 2013-2016 on youth mainstreaming
- Engage in continental level discourse on the performance of Africa towards human development goals, in particular, the Renewed Call for Action on the Implementation of the Plan of Action Towards Africa Fit For Children and the African Charter on the Rights and welfare of the child
- Deliberate on the impact of a revived youth movement on the agenda of African renaissance and pan Africanism.

Linking Youth to Growth Prospects in Africa

The forum is an opportune moment to build on recent positive trends in Africa and chart the way forward to drive inclusive and broad based growth. Steering Africa’s trajectory in the right direction requires deep structural transformation. The “demographic window of opportunity” provides the potential for high economic growth particularly, if associated with investments in education and health as well as making sure that the youth are equally the beneficiaries of all gains- economic, political and social. Sustainable development is a process and the product of many deliberate policy choices. Achieving economic growth and development requires the full participation and contribution of various stakeholders. For this reason and to direct the dialogue towards a focus to address key priority areas and prescribe policy intervention, the following issues are to be raised and critically analyzed:

Key Issues to be addressed:

- (i) What are the concrete policy commitments that African leaders should make now to set out a trajectory to reap the demographic dividend by 2063?
- (ii) Investments made today will accrue benefits in 5, 10, 20, 50 years – Is Africa on track to accrue those benefits by 2018, 2023, 2033 or 2063? If so, what are the benchmarks by which to measure this progress?
- (iii) What are African countries doing to create competitive working conditions and investment incentives that attract and retain the best brains in the country?
- (iv) How are youth seeking to empower themselves? What do they think/feel is hindering them from achieving their potential?
- (v) To what extent have African countries ratified/domesticated the African Youth Charter?
- (vi) What are African countries currently doing to address the large youth population in terms of education, health, child and maternal care, social justice and improving status of women?

Methodology

Participants are expected to be representatives of African member states, and various youth groups with national, sub regional and continental scope. Special emphasis will be given to

youth groups that have been actively engaged in youth empowerment, leadership development, interregional networking and policy advice. Overall 50-60 people are expected at the forum.

The organization of the youth component of the 50th Anniversary is at two levels;

a) preparatory meeting (22- 23rd May) – skills building on Pan Africanism values, the African Union, Leadership, AU Summit Decisions, declarations, charters and its adaptation at regional and national levels and the role of the young people. Several resource persons have been identified as presenters, discussants, facilitators and rapporteurs.

b) The Youth Assembly – an inter-generational dialogue between heads of states and the youth and children (24th May).

DOCUMENTATION

All documents related to the 50th Anniversary and its youth lens will be available on the AUC Youth website www.africa-youth.org.