

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

CONTINENTAL YOUTH CONSULTATION

THEME:

**THE ROLES AND PERSPECTIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN REVERSING UNCONSTITUTIONAL
CHANGES OF GOVERNMENT**

DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE

**18 - 19 NOVEMBER 2022
COTONOU, REPUBLIC OF BENIN**

A. CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

Africa has had its fair share of democratic governance challenges in the past. Post-independence brought opportunities in new territories for newly born nations but it had its challenges – one of them being military coups that became contagious. Africa nevertheless enjoyed a relatively stable period where coups, military takeovers were replaced by democratic elections and peaceful transitions. Many African nations have embarked on a path of good governance, democracy and political stability. Countries have implemented progressive constitutional reforms for greater political freedom and democratic pluralism. Key achievements have been made in restoring multi-party politics, fixing presidential term limits, conducting regular free and fair legislative and presidential elections, restoring the legislative and oversight functions of legislatures, guaranteeing judicial independence and promoting the emergence and growth of private media and civil society. Additionally, constitutional rules have been taken more seriously, and presidential term limits have been mostly widely respected in some countries and challenged in others.

That was until the year 2022 where the gains built are crumbling and once more, Africa is finding itself going back in time. Origins of coups are different with factors leading up to the coups highly rooted in issues of democratic governance, lack of respect for human rights, activities of terrorist groups and stunted economic growth that had not placed citizens at the core. Despite these challenges, many African constitutions now demand respect for the rule of law, human rights, and have made provisions for institutional checks and balances, including judicial review. African countries have indeed made considerable progress toward consolidating the practice of democracy.

African citizens, in particular the youth, are increasingly concerned about the state of democracy governance – the call for inclusion in processes has become louder and the questions on dividends of democracy have been put on the table by youth. Young people of Africa understand and perceive democracy in practical terms of the protection of civil liberties, youth participation in decision-making, transparent and credible voting processes in elections, and governance reforms. The question is – are our governments delivering on the promises that were made to young people?

African youth have demanded an answer to this question and many more, albeit in their own way – hence they have become the poster child for popular protests, resistances and sometimes coups. Indeed, youth have shown their frustrations and their quest for democracy, social injustices, stolen elections and corruption that are undermining their lives and futures. This has also been amplified by popular culture and the new media where social media networks have been used not only to demonstrate frustrations but also to a greater extent organize and consolidate movements. This is not a new phenomenon; it has been happening throughout our history. African youth have been fearless, have been the face of resistance and led anti-colonization movements – and fought against apartheid.

It is impossible to reconcile our richest hours of history; the role youth have played in this history to what is currently happening on the continent. The impact of UCG on the state of democratic governance and peace in the continent is huge. Considering that this year has seen an uptick in UCG, there is a need to re-examine the reversals, the timing and give young people a chance to discuss the role they can play in reversing UCG. Coups d'états are undoing the democratic governance gains that have been recorded, and demonstrating to a new generation of young people that it is ok to choose the bullet rather than the ballot. These coups will continue to occur on our continent if not addressed deliberately and effectively and youth have a significant part to play in this process. This year, through this Continental Youth Consultation, young people will have an opportunity to deliberate and discuss UCG on the continent and propose solutions to our persistent problems.

B. RATIONALE

Africa's population is the youngest in the world¹. As such, any progress that is sought to be made without considering the perspectives of young people would seem like taking one step forward and two steps back. The African Union has put the youth as its main stakeholder in its efforts to promote democracy and good governance within Member States. The core instruments of the African Union, namely its Constitutive Act, the Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG), OAU/AU Declaration on Principles Governing Democratic Elections, the (Algiers and Lomé) Declarations on Unconstitutional Changes of Government, and the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption have all made foundational principles against UCG. The African Union in recognition of the same has called for concerted efforts in addressing deficits and structural causes of UCG.

Norms and standards have been set for improved democratic principles and practices. These are also manifested by the active participation of and mainstreaming of youth and women not only in dialogues or discussions but in practical steps to improve and build governance systems and institutions, strengthen civil society, civil-military relations and address socio-economic exclusion, and management of diversity.

More particularly, a call has been made to Member States to engage youth, continue to design mechanisms and create a conducive environment for the effective participation of youth in peace and development processes at national, regional and continental levels. This will promote the important roles and contributions of women and youth in the promotion of democracy, good governance, sustainable peace, security and development in the Continent. Additionally, Member States have been encouraged to consider creating continental youth programs to enable the youth to engage and participate in democratic governance matters².

Taking the importance of engaging youth and the role young people play not only as beneficiaries but as partners and leaders, the African Union organs and institutions that form the African Governance Architecture (AGA) Secretariat on behalf of the Platform (AGP) have organized under the auspices of the African Governance Architecture a Youth Engagement Strategy (YES) youth programming that aims to increase the capacities of youth and engage them in a constructive dialogue. The Capacity building is hinged upon an African Union Continental Manual on Youth Engagement in Political and Democratic Processes in the Continent³. This free manual can be downloaded on the AU website, and youth, Member States and organizations have access to it to provide targeted capacity for young people to engage meaningfully in democratic governance issues.

As part of an effort to give opportunities for young people to deliberate on issues of democratic governance, the African Governance Platform has institutionalized Continental/regional Youth Consultations before the High Level Dialogue. This year, youth will come together to deliberate about "The Roles and Perspectives of Young People in reversing Unconstitutional Changes of Government." The Consultation was dedicated to this topic because of the particular value young people can bring into the conversations, to gain perspectives on issues affecting their lives and solicit ideas and solutions as well as highlight their role in reversing UCG on the Continent.

The Continental Youth Consultation is scheduled to take place from 18 - 19 November 2022 in Cotonou, Benin.

C. THEMATIC FOCUS OF THE CONTINENTAL YOUTH CONSULTATION

¹ It is estimated that 70% of the population of Africa is young. According to the African Youth Charter, the definition of youth is from 18-35.

² Declaration on unconstitutional changes of government in Africa, <https://www.peaceau.org/en/article/declaration-on-unconstitutional-changes-of-government-in-africa>, Accessed September 2022.

³ Youth Participation in Political and electoral Processes in Africa, https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/41284-doc-Guide_to_Youth_Participation_in_Political_and_Electoral_Processes_in_Africa_-_1st_DEC1.pdf, Accessed September 2022.

1. YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON THE RESURGENCE OF UNCONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES OF GOVERNMENT IN AFRICA: The session will address the history of coup d'états on the continent – youth will discuss and learn the root causes, history and factors for recent resurgence of UCG. This discussion is also aimed at understanding and unpacking the cause and effect of UCG through the perspectives of young people to allow room for learning, brainstorming and ideating on the role they can play to address UCGs.

2. ANALYSIS OF AU AND RECS' NORMATIVE FRAMEWORKS AGAINST UCG THROUGH THE LENS OF YOUTH: This thematic area will provide an opportunity to explore the normative and legal framework of the African Union and the RECs specifically focusing on UCG. Young people will have a chance to explore the normative frameworks and their role in addressing UCG. The session will share experiences, address the challenges and discuss solutions.

3. MEANINGFUL INCLUSION OF YOUTH IN POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC SYSTEMS AS KEY FOR UCG REVERSAL: This session will discuss ways to promote a participatory, inclusive democratic and equitable development that has young people at the center. The discussion is intended to span from meaningful engagement of youth in democratic governance processes; addressing issues of socio-economic injustices, mismanaged elections, corruption and many factors that give way to grievances leading frustration among youth. Discussions on strengthening social contracts between citizens and governments as tools to prevent UCGs will also be raised by speakers.

4. YOUTH LEADERSHIP: FOSTERING THE NEXT GENERATION OF POLITICAL LEADERS AGAINST UCG : Will today's young Africans be different in the future? Africa had its fair share of coups but what will change in the future and what guarantee do we have as society that youth when given a chance do not walk the same path as past leaders? Most coup leaders started off as liberators but once in power they became the most brutal dictators to the extent that their predecessors paled in comparison. A targeted and calculated approach needs to be developed to engage the youth across the continent to become better leaders. Civic education and change of mind-set require investment and this session will address this debate.

5. INCLUSIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACCRA AND MALABO DECLARATIONS AGAINST UCG –YOUTH AT THE CENTER: This section sets to build on the practicalities of the implementation of the Accra and Malabo declaration against UCG. Panellists will discuss and suggest how youth can be at the forefront of the roadmap for implementation. This session will discuss the role of Member States, AU, Organs and RECs, CSOs and other Stakeholders in taking practical steps in the implementation of the Accra Declaration and Malabo Decision.

6. AFRICA TALKS: This session is designed as an intergenerational conversation to allow the exchange of experiences and showcase young people across the continent and their contributions to democratic values and against UCG, through their resilience and power.

7. INTERLUDE: Interludes between sessions will be provided through creative means by sharing inspiring and relevant performances of culture, music, and videos that are meant to inspire participants.

D. GOAL

The main goal of the Continental Youth Consultation is to provide a collaborative, open and inclusive space to leverage and foster meaningful participation of youth in policy deliberations that contribute to the fight against UCG in Africa.

E. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE

The specific objectives of the Continental Youth Consultation are to:

- a) Discuss the root causes of Unconstitutional Changes of Government as key contributors to the recent upsurge, understanding UCG as a culmination of democratic governance, and socio-economic lapses not as unrelated occurrences;
- b) Increase the understanding of the African Union, Regional and National normative and institutional frameworks that exist at all levels related to the entrenching of Democracy, Elections, Constitutionalism, Conflict-Prevention, Peace, and Security among youth;
- c) Create a collaborative space for intergeneration reflections on cross-cutting issues like socio-economic development and equitable distribution of wealth, women and youth engagement, and institutional capacity building; and
- d) Provide a platform for African youth to share their experiences and lessons learned as well as headline conversations as major stakeholders in the achievement of practical steps to implement decisions and ultimately prevent UCG in Africa.

F. EXPECTED OUTCOME

The following outputs will be derived from the Continental youth consultation:

- a) Increased understanding of the AU Instruments more specifically the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance **ACDEG** and Shared Values,
- b) Increased understanding of the existing normative and institutional frameworks of the AU and RECs against UCG ;
- c) Provide a platform for young people to share experiences and lessons; and
- d) Coordinate and amplify the voice of youth in outlining practical steps and roadmap for the implementation declarations and recommendations against UCG.

G. EXPECTED OUTPUTS

The Continental Youth Consultation shall produce the following outputs;

- a) An outcome statement of the conversations;
- b) Proceedings report;
- c) One (1) Policy Brief;
- d) Press Releases, and topical social media clips and sound bites; and
- e) Excerpt and snapshots from Social Media Engagement (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram).

H. METHODOLOGY

The convening will be held physically and it will use a combination of methodologies to facilitate deliberation. Discussions will be conducted through several interactive strategies including:

1. Panel Discussions;
2. Deep dive conversations with high-profile individuals and experts;
3. Intergenerational conversations;
4. Africa Talk's; and
5. Plenary forums.

The Panel Discussions will ensure an intergenerational exchange and a mix of policy and practitioner perspectives in the conversations along with showcasing practical initiatives. The Consultation will feature robust social media engagement, informative threads on sessions and sound bites and other innovative means to spur debate during, before, and after the meeting to engage a larger audience.

I. DOCUMENTATION AND WORKING LANGUAGES

The documentation for the Consultation will be shared electronically. All documents and news updates will be available on www.au.int/aga, **@AGA_Platform** on **#DGTrends**.

The Continental Youth Consultation will be conducted in the **4 AU Languages** – Arabic, English, French, and Portuguese. Simultaneous interpretation will be provided in all 4 languages while documentation will be provided in **French and English**.

J. PARTICIPATION

The key stakeholders that will be part of the Continental Youth Consultation include the following:

- i. H.E Minister of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Benin;
- ii. Youth-Led and youth organisations;
- iii. Youth with Disabilities;
- iv. AU organs and institutions;
- v. Regional Economic Communities;
- vi. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) including Youth networks and Women’s organizations;
- vii. Representatives of The Republic of Benin as hosts of the 11th HLD
- viii. Development Partners and Agencies
- ix. Private Sector (Multinationals/Local);
- x. Philanthropy Organisations and Individuals;
- xi. UN agencies and other International and continental financial institutions (e.g. AfDB, IMF, World Bank);
- xii. Media and influencers; and
- xiii. Universities, Academia, think tanks, and Research Institutions.

K. DATES

The Continental Consultation will be convened from **18 - 19 November 2022 in Cotonou, Benin**.

L. PARTNERSHIP, INSTITUTIONAL, AND MANAGEMENT

The Continental Consultation is an institutionalized initiative of the AGP aimed at facilitating youth participation in policy deliberations on democracy, governance, and human rights. The Consultation will be supported by the Office of the Special Envoy on Youth with the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security leading the process through the AGA-APSA Secretariat.

M. CONTACT DETAILS

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