CONTINENTAL YOUTH CONSULTATION TO THE 12th HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE ON DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA: TRENDS, CHALLENGES, AND PROSPECTS

THEME:
(THE ROLE OF AFRICAN YOUTH IN)
DELIVERING THE PEACE DIVIDENDS THROUGH AFCFTA IMPLEMENTATION

CONCEPT NOTE

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
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A. CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

Africa’s democratic governance and socioeconomic landscape directly impact the youth, the largest demographic group on the Continent, therefore, it’s imperative to bring youth to the forefront of deliberations, policy, and action. So far, youth’s contributions have been overshadowed by negative perceptions as instigators, disrupters, and the poster child of violence. To the Contrary, youth’s positive contributions are critical, through their resilience, innovation, and ways of overcoming significant challenges. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)’s timely action to accelerate its implementation is an opportunity for collaborative and mutually reflective success.

The AfCFTA is crucial to Africa’s Aspirations enshrined in the Agenda 2063, as socioeconomic development is a proven vector in contributing to peace and stabilization. Setting the tone as one of the Continental priorities gave effect to the decision for the 2023 AU Theme of the Year to focus on the acceleration of its implementation. The AfCFTA is the largest free trade area in the world, with a mandate of creating a single Continental market with a population of about 1.3 billion people, a majority of whom are likely to be youth.

The African Youth Charter, which is the primary Continental framework for youth in Africa underscores the importance of youth meaningful engagement in all Sectors and brackets the youth age from 18-35. With over 400 million young people aged 15 to 35 years, Africa presents a demographic bulge, which is its greatest human capital. The bulge also puts youth at the centre to shoulder socioeconomic development as well as responsive democratic governance that contributes to Africa’s peace dividends. Transforming the demographic potential into practical gains to wards governance and socio-economic development necessitates substantive investments in the youth’s human capital.

Yet, despite young people’s contributions, they encounter significant challenges such as lack of education, unemployment, lack of opportunities, and legal, structural, and financial challenges that hinder their ability to exert their full potential. Their perspectives have not been a priority as their engagement in policy and decision is insignificant. In fact, any progress sought to be made without considering the perspectives of young people is an exercise in futility. The AU has put the youth as one of the main stakeholders in its efforts to promote democracy and good governance within Member States. The same can be said for the AfCFTA, although a significant accomplishment, it must, from the beginning, engage youth fruitfully.

Beyond youth engagement, AfCFTA is dependent on several factors to succeed, democratic governance, peace, stability, and consequently the free movement of persons as essential preconditions. A stable and secure environment is necessary for businesses to operate, for investors to make long-term commitments, and for workers to be able to produce goods and services. On the other hand, trade itself can also contribute to peace and security by promoting interdependence and fostering economic and social connections between countries. Therefore, this can lead to a reduction in tensions and the likelihood of conflict and as a result, the successful implementation of the AfCFTA will lead to the creation of more decent jobs, improved welfare, and better quality of life for all citizenry, including youth.

To further explore this linkage and underscore the role of youth and bring their perspective to the conversation, the African Governance Platform (AGP) with the host of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia shall convene the Continental Youth Consultation under the theme "African Youth’s Role in

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B. GOAL

The overall goal of the Continental Youth Consultation to the 12th HLD is to provide a collaborative, open, and inclusive space to leverage and foster meaningful participation of young people and identify their role in delivering peace dividends through the implementation of the AfCFTA.

C. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of the CYC are to:

1. To provide a platform for youth to buttress their roles and contribution to democratic governance, peace, and socioeconomic development in light of AfCFTA;
2. To increase understanding of the existing normative and institutional frameworks on youth, and on the AfCFTA;
3. To increase knowledge, values, and best practices of youth’s ability, creativity, and vigour, socioeconomic development, and its contribution to sustainable peace; and
4. To contribute to the discourse of discussions that have already been made to curate and proffer solutions into the roadmap for a peaceful, integrated, and influential Africa.

D. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The following outcomes will be derived from the CYC:

1. Increased understanding of youth’s contribution to democratic governance, and socioeconomic development in light of the AfCFTA;
2. Enhanced knowledge of the existing continental and regional normative, and institutional frameworks on youth, and on the AfCFTA;
3. Enhanced knowledge shared experiences and values, and case studies of youth’s ability, creativity and vigour, socioeconomic development, and contribution to sustainable peace; and
4. Identify, curate, and proffer solutions for the way forward into the roadmap for a peaceful, integrated, and influential Africa.

E. EXPECTED OUTPUTS

The following outputs will be derived from the CYC:

1. An Outcome Statement of the conversations;
2. Proceedings Report;
3. One (01) Policy Brief;
4. Press Releases, Media Advisory, topical social media clips, and sound bites; and
5. Excerpts will be posted on Social Media Engagement (Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram).

F. THEMATIC FOCUS OF THE CONTINENTAL YOUTH CONSULTATION

1. **KEYNOTE ADDRESS: UNPACKING THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:** Under this thematic session, speakers will have an open discussion on establishing the role of youth in democratic governance and socioeconomic development. This session will set the tone and raise questions and ideas that will be the basis of the discussions for the following sessions.

2. **YOUTH AT THE CENTER: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AFCTA TO ENSURE PEACE DIVIDENDS:** This session will focus on the normative frameworks of the AU, RECs, and Member States to ensure the
AfCFTA will not be a missed opportunity to ensure youths are meaningfully engaged at every step. Regional and Continental frameworks will be explored during this session to make a case for youth-responsive actions.

3. **CREATING ACCESS FOR YOUTH TO REALIZE AFCFTA AND AFRICA’S PEACE DIVIDEND.** This session will focus on discussing the opportunities that will need to be created for youth in line with the AfCFTA implementation and reaping peace dividends. Youth require the space for policymaking, leadership, capacity, access to finance, technology, and space for political and democratic governance. The session will explore how providing opportunities for youth can be an investment that is worth the implementation of the AfCFTA and realizing the peace dividend.

4. **AFRICA TALKS:** This session is designed as an intergenerational conversation to allow the exchange of experiences and showcase youth’s contributions to democratic values and socioeconomic development. This session will feature young people’s best practices and highlight their key contributions to the areas of discussion.

G. **ABOUT THE CONTINENTAL YOUTH CONSULTATION**

As an institutionalized platform and a pre-event to the High-Level Dialogue HLD, the annual CYC is convened under the auspices of the African Governance Architecture (AGA) – Youth Engagement Strategy (YES). The Consultation will present an open and safe space for young people to think outside the box and engage in a conversation that can potentially provide practical solutions to deficits of democratic governance in Africa, and leadership to contribute to the Africa We Want.

In furtherance, the outcomes of the Consultation will be part of the deliberations of the 12th High-Level Dialogue on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance exploring trends, challenges, and prospects. The Consultation will also contribute to policy discussions on the theme of the year.

H. **METHODOLOGY**

The convening will use a combination of methodologies to facilitate deliberation. Discussions will be conducted through several interactive strategies including, keynote addresses, panel discussions; deep dive conversations with high-profile individuals and experts, and Africa Talks.

The Panel Discussions will be designed to ensure an intergenerational exchange as well as a mix of policy and practitioner perspectives in the conversations along with showcasing practical initiatives.

The CYC will also feature interviews, robust social media engagement, informative threads on sessions and sound bites, and other innovative means to spur debate online. This is also intended to engage a larger audience in the deliberations and disseminate the outcomes.

I. **PARTICIPATION**

Participants at the Continental Youth Consultation will be drawn from:

1. The AU Member States, including representatives of National Institutions, Agencies that focus on AfCFTA, Governance, Peace, and Security;
2. Representatives of the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia as hosts of the Continental Youth Consultation;
3. Representatives of the AGP including AU Organs and Institutions, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and Regional Mechanisms (RMs);
4. UN Agencies and other International and Continental financial institutions (e.g. AfDB, IMF, World Bank);
5. Youth-led and Youth Oriented Organizations;
6. Selected Think Tanks and Academic Research Institutions;
7. Development Partners;
8. Selected Media Practitioners;
9. Private Sector (Multinationals/Local); and
10. Diaspora.

J. DATES AND LOCATION

The CYC will be convened on the 03 October 2023 at the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

K. 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. #DGTrends used for the meeting.

The Youth consultation will be conducted in the 4 AU Languages – Arabic, English, French, and Portuguese. Simultaneous interpretations are provided in all 4 languages while documentation will be provided in French and English only.

L. PARTNERSHIP

The CYC to the HLD is an institutionalized initiative of the AGP aimed at facilitating youth’s participation in policy deliberations on AU themes linked to democratic governance, human rights, peace, and security.

The CYC is supported by several stakeholders like the AfCFTA Secretariat, the Department of Economic Development, Trade, Industry, and Mining (ETTIM) the lead entities for the AU theme of the year, the Women, Gender and Youth Directorate, the Office of the Youth Envoy, the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security and Ambassadors for Peace.

The AGA-APSA Secretariat will be leading the implementation with the host country – The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia with support from development partners.

M. CONTACT DETAILS

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