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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia P. O. Box 3243 Téléphone : 5517 700 Fax : 5511299  
website : [www.africa-union.org](http://www.africa-union.org)

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**DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION**

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### **YOUTH EMPOWERMENT KEY FOR AFRICA DEVELOPMENT**

**Addis Ababa, 04 April 2011-** Organized by the Department of Human Resources Science and Technology (HRST) of the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Youth Forum, which is a pre-summit event of the June-July AU Summit, opened on Friday 01 April 2011, at the African Union headquarters. The forum, which is holding under the theme: 'Accelerating Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development' has attracted about 300 youth representatives from all over Africa and the Diaspora.

During the opening ceremony Professor Jean-Pierre Ezin, AUC Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology (HRST), underlined the need for the full involvement of the youth in Africa in the development process. He went on to say that the youth should have the will and faith to use their potential capabilities for the development of Africa. Efficiency and the development of Africa depends on youth empowerment, and the youth need education in various ways and forms, so that they contribute to the development process, he further observed.

Prof. Ezin noted that since the regional, national and international organizations are working on development programmes, they need to speed up the involvement of the youth. He stressed on the importance of improving the socio economic status of the youth. This is a time for the youth to speak up and speak out, he said. (the complete speech of the commissioner is available on [www.africa-union.org](http://www.africa-union.org)).

Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, Executive Secretary of the United Nation Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in his statement, read out by the Deputy Executive Secretary of UNECA, Ms. Jennifer Kargbo, said that this meeting is followed by that of African Ministers of Finance and Economy on governing development in Africa, which underlined the importance of the youth employment. Therefore, he said the issue is timely as it encourages an integrated and holistic approach for development. Human capital, he said is one that facilitates the growth of a country and since Africa has a large number of youth that needs to be educated and trained, they can contribute to that growth and development.

"Several commitments, policies and programmes on youth education and employment have been prioritized at national, sub-regional and global levels to improve the livelihoods of young people in Africa. However, these initiatives have yet to translate into the desired outcomes.

Thus, concerted and innovative efforts are still required especially at a time when the youth population continues to increase”, Mr. Janneh urged.

Speaking during the opening ceremony, the Vice President of the Pan African Youth Union, Mr. Yohnnes Mezegebe said “the upcoming African Union Summit on ‘Accelerating Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development’ is of great significance as it provides an opportunity for the African youth to enter the process at its initial stages”.

Mr. Mezegebe commended the AU’s efforts to develop a policy frame work in the form of the African Youth Charter. Furthermore, the Vice President noted the tremendous potential to tackle continental and global challenges and reiterated that support for the AU has to be targeted at strengthening the AUC and its structures.

Taking the floor, Mr. Clever M. Silavwe, a member of Zambian Parliament and a representative of the Pan African Parliament (PAP) mentioned the high percentage of the African youth and the need to integrate them into the society through empowerment. Mr. Silavwe, pointed out that one of the pillars of the parliament is to facilitate peoples’ grass root movement that unites African people especially the youth. “This is in consonance with the ultimate objective of this meeting which strives to promote the development of the youth in Africa”. He added.

The forum will be open until Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> April, 2011. The outcome of this forum will be reported to the AU Plenary Session during the Executive Council Session; after being ratified by the Bureau of Conference of Ministers for Youth (COMY), as the official position of Youth in Africa.

For further information please visit [www.Africa-union.org](http://www.Africa-union.org)

For interview arrangement please contact:

Mr. Molalet Tsedeke

+251-911-630-631

[Molalett@africa-union.org](mailto:Molalett@africa-union.org)

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