



**CONTINENTAL YOUTH CONSULTATION TO THE 11TH HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE
ON DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND GOVERNANCE: TRENDS, PROSPECTS,
AND CHALLENGES**

THEME:

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

DRAFT NARRATIVE REPORT

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

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The African Governance Platform has institutionalized the Continental Youth Consultation prior to the High-Level Dialogue, with the theme of the 2022 Consultation being **“The Roles and Perspectives of Young People in Reversing Unconstitutional Changes of Government.”** The overriding objective of this Consultation was to gain youth perspectives on issues affecting their lives and solicit ideas and solutions as well as highlight the role of youth in reversing UCG on the Continent.
2. The sub-themes discussed during the Consultation centred on youth perspectives on the resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government in Africa; analysis of AU and RECs’ normative frameworks against UCGs through the lens of youth; meaningful inclusion of youth in political and socio-economic systems as key for UCGs reversal; youth leadership: fostering the next generation of political leaders against UCGs and inclusive implementation of the Accra and Malabo declarations against UCGs—youth at the centre.
3. This narrative report captures the proceedings of the CYC. These included moderated opening and closing sessions, panel discussions on the five (5) sub-themes of the Consultation, question and answer sessions where participants shared their views on the various session themes, and “Africa Talks” discussions with specific personalities.

II. ATTENDANCE

The two-day consultation brought together participants from Youth-Led and youth-oriented organizations; AU Member States, including representatives of National Institutions, Agencies; Think Tanks and Academic Research institutions; media practitioners; the private sector, representatives of the African Governance Platform Members; International organisations and Development Partners.

III. OPENING SESSION

Ms. Hagar Azooz, Project Officer for AGA-APSA moderated the Opening Session of the Continental Youth Forum. She welcomed all dignitaries and participants to the Consultation and thanked them for taking time out of their busy schedules to participate in this significant event. Ms. Hager invited Amb. Salah Hammad, Ag. Head of the AGA-APSA Secretariat for his opening remarks on behalf of Ms. Patience Chiradza, Director for Governance and Conflict Prevention at the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS).

Amb. Salah Hammad began by acknowledging and expressing his gratitude and that of the AGA-APSA Platform to the President of the Republic of Benin for hosting the 11th High-Level Dialogue (HLD) and its pre-events, and for the warm welcome accorded to all participants.

He remarked that from the year 2016 when he first visited Cotonou until now, what he can only describe as a “miracle” had occurred concerning the significant transformation of this city into a beautiful, clean and attractive African city. Benin, he noted satisfactorily, is a shining example of building the Africa We Want.

Amb. Salah informed participants that the AGA-APSA Secretariat is mandated to facilitate citizen engagement to bring the AU closer to citizens but also ensure involvement of citizens in AU initiatives. According to him, the youth, being the leaders of today and tomorrow, aptly deserve the continent’s attention. Youth are the majority and therefore the majority must be involved in building the Africa We Want. He stressed that approximately 60% of Africa’s population is under the age of 25 and more than a third between 15 and 34 years old, with the youth population expected to increase by approximately 42% by 2030, according to the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

The conversation about the roles and perspectives of youth on UCG, he urged, should not only examine the root causes of UCG which are already well known, such as bad governance, corruption, poor public services, poverty amidst wealth—but rather, this conference should unearth youth contribution to good governance. He encouraged the youth to leave the conference empowered with practical knowledge and insights about how they can be the true leaders of today and tomorrow who turn the tide from underdevelopment to development—and ensure the right to development as a human right.

According to him, the AU is working to promote good governance and democracy through the AU shared values treaties, one of which is the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, and he encouraged participants to find out whether their respective countries had ratified this Charter. He also urged participants to work with their governments to ensure that this Charter is adopted and domesticated.

He noted that the continent had come to the end of the first ten-year implementation of Agenda 2063—with 40 more years ahead until 2063. In view of this, he urged delegates to:

- Take advantage of their presence in the Consultation to build alliances and networks with other participants and share information and best practices.
- Harness each other’s experiences and knowledge.
- Be fully conscious of the fact that each African is the African Union because we represent the AU, and that the AU can be stronger when youth are involved in its affairs. He urged the youth to support the AU efforts and build shared prosperity.

Furthermore, Amb. Salah encouraged youth to be open, freely express their opinions throughout the Consultation and share their ideas so we can build the Africa We Want, the Africa we deserve. He noted that the AGA-APSA is honoured to facilitate the organisation of the event and wished all participants fruitful deliberations.

Ms. Lindiwe Khumalo, Executive Secretary, ACHPR and Chairperson of the African Governance Architecture, on her part, also welcomed all participants to the Consultation. She expressed the hope that the meeting will challenge youth and public-spirited organisation that represent the youth to examine worrying trends on the continent and resurgence of UCG from a youth lens.

She observed that shortly after the continent had overcome colonialism and imperialism, it was clear that political transitions were marred by military take over and civilian dictatorship, affecting democracy, human rights and governance in Africa. This concern was articulated as a key principle in the Constitutive Act of the AU enacted in the year 2000 by African Heads of State and Government, namely the “respect for democratic principles, human rights, the rule of law and good governance.”

She commended the efforts of the AU to promote good governance, human rights and democracy through the adoption of normative instruments, which reinforce these principles, including the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights of 1981 and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance of 2012. Ms. Lindiwe bemoaned the fact that despite the existence of these instruments, UCG continues to be a scourge on the continent, thereby reversing democratic gains and stifling effective democratization and human rights. In view of this, she added, the issue of UCG was elevated to the top of the continent’s agenda by the Heads of States when they convened the 16th Ordinary Session in Malabo. Discussions centred on issues of continental peace and security and identified the need to engage youth in governance as well as the role of youth in shaping democracy in Africa.

She stressed that youth are the majority on the continent and are central to the implementation of Agenda 2063. She admonished the youth participating in the conference to contribute their best ideas and innovations, and bring their perspectives to bear. She concluded by assuring participants that the outcome of the conference would be placed before Africa’s policy and decision makers during the High Level Dialogue.

H.E. Oswald Homeky, Minister of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Benin was introduced by Ms. Hagar Azooz for his Keynote address. On behalf of the President of the Republic of Benin, he wished a warm welcome to all participants to Cotonou, Benin. He began by noting that in discussions about good governance and regime change, it is important to dialogue with the youth as they are the continent’s largest demographic segment, and also because UCG usually occurs following dissatisfaction of youth.

He satisfactorily noted that Benin is striving to be exemplary and has resolutely turned its back to any form of UCG—to demonstrate that democracy is possible in Africa. The Republic of Benin, he added, was honoured to host the dialogue. He expressed the hope that the outcomes of the dialogue will be implemented, given that our continent is prone to developing great strategies but lags behind when it comes to implementation. He shared with participants his ardent desire—that the meeting will be the real beginning to finding lasting solutions to this canker on the continent. On that note, he declared the Continental Youth Consultation dully opened.

V. SESSION DELIBERATIONS

SESSION 1: YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON THE RESURGENCE OF UNCONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES OF GOVERNMENT IN AFRICA

This session sought to unpack the root causes of UCG and its effects on youth, and facilitate the identification of solutions and the role of youth in ending this phenomenon. The session shed light on the impact of UCG on the youth as well as the role of youth in enhancing good governance.

Moderator: **Ms. Luanda Mpungose, Outreach and Partnership Manager, SAIIA.**

Panellists for the session were the following:

- **Mr. Hubert Kinkoh**, Researcher, African Peace and Security Governance Programme, Institute for Security Studies (ISS)
- **Harouna Simbo Drabo**, Journalist, Fact-Checker and Governance Analyst
- **Walter Kasempa**, President, Youth Unite Zambia and International Governance Expert

Ms. Luanda set the stage for the discussions by noting that Africa has experienced democratic regression, evident through shrinking civic space among other challenges.

During the initial round of discussions, panellists shared their views on the root causes of UCG. Mr. Hubert Kinkoh, Researcher, African Peace and Security Governance Programme, Institute for Security Studies (ISS) noted that coups are unfortunate and unacceptable developments in Africa. These coups and UCG, he observed, emerged shortly after most countries on the continent regained independence and began experiencing democratic progress and upholding good governance. He identified three root causes of UCG:

- a) **State Capture:** Across Africa, leaders focus on democratic power but not much attention is placed on whether the affairs of a country are managed in a democratic manner. When governance structures are not democratic, it leads to state capture. He noted that although the holding of elections is a key indicator in a democratic nation, some nations undergo state capture because few elites are administering the affairs of the nation and ensuring

that those who take over power are within their circle. There is impartiality and control of state entities that are supposed to oversee democratic processes, such as electoral bodies, the judiciary (which must safeguard constitutionalism) and legislative bodies which draft and implement laws to allow for constitutionalism. The outcome is that youth are dissatisfied and use various means to challenge the status quo, including through UCG.

- b) **Economic hardships, insecurity and instability as justification for UCG:** Mr. Hubert mentioned that reasons put forth to justify UCG include economic hardship, insecurity and instability. He attributed these challenges to the lack of mutuality between leaders and the masses, especially when failure to deliver on promises leads to frustration among youth.
- c) **Selective and Inconsistent Application of policy frameworks:** In spite of strides at national, regional and constitutional frameworks to tackle UCG, policy approaches are selective. As a result, instead of deterring the occurrence of UCG, it leads perpetrators to be confident about their acts. He noted that there are several instances of UCG that occurred in African countries and for which varying measures were taken. For instance, some countries are suspended from the AU after undergoing coups d'état, whereas other countries that face a similar situation are not suspended.

In addition, Mr. Hubert called for expansion of the concept of UCG in line with the Lomé Declaration. He was of the view that the manipulation of legal instruments and normative frameworks should be explored as this is a key part of the equation and is a subtle technique deployed by political elites. According to him, UCG is mostly conceptualized in terms of military coups, which narrows down opportunities to arrive at lasting solutions.

Mr. Hubert also noted the need to define the limits of state sovereignty, and what kind of UCG mandates intervention of the AU. He bemoaned the fact that even in situations where the African Union attempts to intervene, Member States put forward the principle of sovereignty.

On his part, **Mr. Harouna Simbo Drabo** explained that most often, democratic processes are completely ignored after elections are held. He observed that a root cause of UCG is the Winner-takes-all approach and state capture. For instance, in some countries, elected representatives at the National Assembly adopt laws based on political affiliations, and legal systems are instrumentalized. In the end, aspirations of youth are placed on the back burner. The outcome is that youth protest and call for democracy, social justice and for their needs to be met.

A second root cause of UCG, according to Mr. Drabo, is the inefficiency of state institutions. When that happens over a prolonged period, the military takes advantage of the institutional void and unfulfilled aspirations of the population.

Mr. Walter Kasempa explained that the root causes of UCG are weak democratic institutions, economic instability and inept leadership.

- **Weak democratic institutions:** Mr. Kasempa illustrated that UCG primarily occurs due to weak democratic institutions by sharing the example of Zambia. According to him, Zambia has been known as a beacon of democracy and good governance. In 1997, Captain Solo (Steven Lungu) attempted UCG in Zambia, but the coup was unsuccessful thanks to the strength of the military and the country's electoral system.
- **Economic instability:** Africa is known as a continent with much wealth, but where poverty prevails. He noted that Africa's development agenda is driven by the wants of other countries outside the continent, because African leaders mostly seek their own selfish interest. As a result, citizens become disgruntled.
- **Inept leadership:** Mr. Kasempa observed that the competency of some leaders in Africa leaves much to be desired. Failed political leadership creates an opportunity for military takeovers.

In the next round of discussions, panellists touched on the impact of UCG on the youth. Ms. Luanda explained that UCG affects different segments of societies in varying ways, but its impact on the youth has been most significant. She invited panellists to share their perspectives on the ways in which youth are impacted by UCG.

Mr. Hubert Kinkoh was of the view that the two most significant impacts of UCG on the youth include the diversion of business and investment opportunities and human development. He noted that countries that experience political stability attract investment locally and from the diaspora. Where there is chaos and instability, these opportunities are lost. Young people everywhere, he stressed, aspire to be prosperous and progress. However, UCG drives away business opportunities, thereby leaving youth without livelihoods. In terms of human development, he said that UCG creates displacement and missed opportunities, such as access to education.

Panellists highlighted the role of propaganda, misinformation and disinformation on youth involvement in UCG. Mr. Kasempa noted that CSOs can play a critical role in countering misinformation. He gave the example of the Zambia Peace Protocol, which was made a reality through media campaigns led by CSOs. He stressed that when information is misused, youth get impacted.

Mr. Harouna noted that a solution to countering misinformation would be to provide training to youth on assessing the authenticity of information.

The conceptualization of UCG was a key issue raised by panellists. According to Mr. Kasempa, the current applicability of UCG remains constrained to military coups. He proposed that the concept of UCG be defined as not only the overthrow of a democratic elected government by military force, but also as the manipulation of legal instruments and institutions and state capture.

State capture occurs where leaders do not lead with respect for democratic processes. Political elites use this method to undermine constitutionalism.

Ms. Luanda asked the panellists to share their views on normative frameworks and policies, and whether these give youth agency. In answering this question, Mr. Kasempa mentioned that although normative frameworks are important, their major flaw is that they are not legally binding. Article 5 of ACDEG, he cited, addresses sanctions for perpetrators of UCG, but cannot be enforced. He was of the view that as long as these instruments are not legally binding, the scourge of UCG will persist. He proposed that all normative frameworks and instruments of the AU should be compiled into one legally binding document, thereby creating a system to keep Member States accountable for their actions.

With regards to the agency of youth, Mr. Kasempa urged the youth to play an active role in conducting advocacy through the popularisation and implementation of these instruments. Youth, he noted, can ensure collaborative partnership, especially when they work within CSOs. Youth in CSOs should be key agents of advocating for the implementation of these frameworks.

On his part, Mr. Hubert observed that increasingly, youth perspectives are included into policy documents, although the challenge of lack of implementation still persists. He added that the language used in the drafting of these instruments should be youth-friendly, to facilitate ownership of these instruments by young people.

Plenary Discussions

Participants were given the opportunity to ask questions to the panellists, or to make observations. A participant observed that young people in Africa have decided to use unconventional means of political participation such as protests, because issues that affect them have not been considered by those in authority. She noted that it is possible to use protests in a positive manner. She also encouraged AU Member States to identify political participation processes in which youth prefer to engage, and be deliberate with regards to engaging in intergenerational dialogue.

There was consensus concerning the fact that democratic governance goes beyond the holding of elections, and that a culture of democracy ought to be forged through civic education and awareness raising.

SESSION 2: ANALYSIS OF AU AND RECS' NORMATIVE FRAMEWORKS AGAINST UCG: FOCUS ON THE ACCRA DECLARATION AND MALABO DECISION THROUGH THE LENS OF YOUTH

The session sought to analyze the key normative and institutional frameworks at the regional and continental level on governance issues through a youth lens including the Accra and Malabo Declarations. The session was also an opportunity to reflect on how young people can leverage

on these frameworks and their role in the implementation of these decisions at the national, regional and continental levels.

Moderator: **Mr. Daniel Stephen**, Research and Policy Analyst, National Assembly, Abuja, Nigeria.

Panel members included:

- **Ms. Orit Ibrahim**, Youth for Peace Programme Coordinator
- **Mr. Andrew Songa**, Charter Project, ACDEG
- **Mr. Lenon Monyae**, Youth Focal Person, APRM

In her initial comment on the theme of the session, **Ms. Orit Ibrahim** observed that ACDEG is a key instrument that should be used to galvanise commitment towards democratic governance because it has an accountability framework—states have to submit reports on progress being made. She observed that some key organs of the African Union are the Peace and Security Council and a PRC permanent representative council that conducts day-to-day work of the assembly. The executive council is answerable to the Heads of State Assembly, the supreme organ of the Union. The following are definitions of UCG by the Lomé declaration:

1. Military Coup
2. Intervention by mercenaries
3. Replacement of democratic governments by armed dissidents.
4. Refusal by an incumbent to relinquish power

Ms. Ibrahim explained that the issue of UCG was elevated on the top of the continent's agenda as a result of the many coups that were taking place in the continent, leading to the Accra Declaration that focuses on UCG and addresses the impact of UCG on women and youth, followed by the Malabo Declaration. The Accra Declaration supports the creation of a conducive environment for peace processes and creating youth programmes that encourage participation of the youth in governance.

Mr. Lenon Monyae shared with participants the APRM's efforts in tackling UCG. He began by noting that the APRM has been influenced by the work of the AGA. The APRM, he said, has set up the APRM symposium, and produces reports (such as the Africa Governance Report 2021) in collaboration with and on behalf of the AGA platform. He informed participants that this year, the report focuses on UCG, and explores the underlying causes of UCG.

He observed that by 1990, with the inception of the normative frameworks, it was believed that UCG would no longer take place on the continent. He mentioned that the APRM's recent symposium in Kampala put forth the following recommendations with regards to UCG: 1. Pre-empting coups by exploring why youth engage in popular uprising 2. That the successes of the AU in terms of engagement be brought down to sub-regional bodies (RECS).

Mr. Andrew Songa responded to a question posed by the moderator, as to whether youth are part of the problem or the solution when it comes to UCG. The youth, he said, are caught in a precarious position of being young and a demographic majority, but they are also seen as a threat on the continent. He noted that unfortunately, the widespread notion is that the youth are the drivers of popular uprising and radical extremism. The youth are at the margins of the decision-making processes in their countries but they are the ones that will bear the impact of instability in the future. Noting this, he emphasized that the effective participation of the youth in governance is important towards addressing UCG. He explained that the ACDEG could be a powerful tool that youth can use to be part of the solution, as it provides guidance on elections, emphasises democracy and rule of law, and speaks to the vulnerable and marginalised groups of people (including youth). Youth should actively participate in advocacy on the ACDEG as it provides an accountability framework, in the sense that if a country is bound by the ACDEG, it has the obligation to report on issues of democracy and good governance. The ACDEG also wields moral authority to chastise states that do not comply.

With regards to the contribution of young people in stemming the tide of UCG, Mr. Andrews Songa explained that youth are at the forefront of technology to expand spaces for governance, and to use technology to break down governance barriers. He informed participants that there are a number of activities that youth are engaged in, including producing podcasts in which the youth themselves drive the conversations and bring in their views. Youth have also come up with innovative ways to develop forms of engagement. He gave examples of youth initiatives, including the creation of a platform where citizens can keep track of the realisation of manifesto promises over 5 years of a government in power in Zimbabwe. This helps to demystify governance, and could be strengthened with civic education and civic engagement.

Ms. Orit touched on the various ways in which programmes on peace and security are being cascaded down to the youth, including the development of a National Action Plan on Youth, Peace and Security. Globally, three nations have developed these plans, namely Nigeria, Finland and the DRC. She also added that a game dubbed “Mission 55” has also been created for that purpose.

Mr. Lennon, on his part, made recommendation about channels that can be used to advance the avoidance of UCG:

1. Support youth groups to understand the constitution, to know that the constitution is a living document and how it can be used.
2. Support the operations of legitimate institutions within Member States such as National Youth Councils at the different levels through financial and technical assistance.
3. Support youth in rural and marginalised areas, as a lot of work is done at the grassroots level and it is at this level that activities and interventions need to be focused.

Plenary Discussions

A participant sought to know the extent to which the APRM is a strong accountability organ, considering that it is composed of peers who are reviewing their peers. Mr. Lenon explained that not only states, but individuals also have to ensure accountability. He noted that the African Union

is made of people who should be in the lead in addressing the issues that are present within their Member States and following that, the African Union can then intervene. Second, he noted that having shared values means that Member States have a shared responsibility to ensure that frameworks and instruments are adopted and ratified. According to him, instruments from other continents are usually easily and quickly ratified and adopted by African countries as compared to instruments in Africa, thus pointing towards the need to have a larger support for African solutions.

Some recommendations were formulated by Ms. Ibrahim concerning how young people can collaborate. She urged youth to respond to and apply for calls for participation in programmes and initiatives launched by the AU and RECS. Second, she encouraged the creation of a youth programme within the programme activities of the AGA platform members. She also urged youth to be abreast with the Continental Framework for Youth, Peace and Security, which has been published and is available online.

AFRICA TALKS—INTERGENERATIONAL CONVERSATION

Mr. Bernadus Haragiep, a Youth Practitioner, held a conversation with **H.E. Oswald Homeky**, Minister of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Benin, on issues surrounding youth participation, democracy and ways in which youth can take action.

Mr. Bernadus Haragiep welcomed the Minister and began by asking what he wished he knew now, which he ignored during his days as a youth in the field of politics. H.E. Mr. Oswald Homeky observed that indeed, there are many things he was not aware of during his days as a young activist in Benin. He explained that the positions he has occupied in government have taught him that it is not always possible to transform situations and implement programmes quickly, given that many issues are to be considered although resources are limited. There is a need to define priorities and identify implementation opportunities while managing resources.

H.E. Mr. Oswald Homeky responded to a question on the frustration of youth vis-à-vis the way in which democracy is practiced on the continent. He explained that most of the unconstitutional changes of government happen because the youth feel their governments are not working on their behalf. The high number of promises that are given to the populations are seen to be untrue and as a result, youth are frustrated and pursue UCG as a recourse. Youth begin to participate less in elections and there is lack of trust between youth and their governments. He noted that many young people support democracy but unfulfilled commitments pose a challenge.

He explained that as the socio-economic situation of a country exacerbates, soldiers who have no knowledge of governance assume power undemocratically but quickly begin to experience the reality that governance is not simple. He added that regardless of the ambitions of the military who engage in UCG, governance requires knowledge and practical skills to handle. As a result, the aftermath of UCG usually creates more problems. He admonished political figures to speak truthfully about what can or cannot be done based on the available capacities and resources when requesting for the votes of the populations.

Mr. Bernadus Haragiep asked about how governments can be more responsive to the needs of the people. In his response, H.E. Mr. Oswald Homeky stated governments have to be realistic and analyse the needs. He noted that the situation all over the continent is almost the same, and the challenges are obvious. Solutions must be realistic based on the government's capacity to mobilise financial and human resources. According to him, resources should not be a challenge to implementation, because the development of programmes is always accompanied by budgets. It would therefore make no sense to develop budgets while being fully aware that the funds are non-existent or will be difficult to mobilise.

Concerning the advice he would give to youth who want to enter public office, he encouraged youth to strive to be the best wherever they find themselves, and be role models. He urged youth to actively participate in politics. Speaking on the issue of unemployment in Africa, he observed that the skills available do not match the requirements of the job market, as a result youth are unable to land jobs after they complete their studies. He recommended that training offered in educational and professional institutions should be adapted to the job market.

In conclusion, he admonished the youth to strive to be the best in whatever field they find themselves in, and leave a mark so that they can be remembered.

Mrs. Lindiwe Khumallo, in sharing the vote of thanks for this session, expressed gratitude to the Minister for his presence and for engaging with the youth of the continent. According to her, the key indicator for the success of the Consultation is the opportunity for the outcome of the Consultation to be on the agenda of people who can take action. She therefore reiterated that the outcome of the discussions will be presented to Africa's leaders at the HLD.

SESSION 3: MEANINGFUL INCLUSION OF YOUTH IN POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC SYSTEMS AS KEY IN THE PROMOTION OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

The session sought to interrogate and examine the engagement and involvement of youth in the socio-economic systems as key in the promotion of good governance. The session also sought to explore strategies for fostering youth engagement in the political, social and economic spaces.

Moderator: Mr. Michael Aboneka, Civic Space and Good Governance Expert

Speakers:

- **Ms. Ruth Kay Kangawa**, Youth and Gender Activists Zambia,
- **Mr. Romaric Muftau**, Youth Organisation in Benin
- **Mr Prince Ifoh**, President of Young Africans Leaders Forum

Mr. Michael Aboneka asked panelists whether youth on the continent are really participating in decision-making, or whether the decisions are taken on their behalf.

In responding to this question, Ms. Kangawa noted the need for young people need to be part of governance in each of the African Member States. She stressed that participation at all levels is

essential—civic awareness and advocacy are important; and politics needs to be taken as a personal matter. In her view, if young people continue to see themselves as leaders of tomorrow, they will continue to be beneficiaries and not participants.

Ms. Kangawa further listed some prerequisites to facilitate youth participation in political and governance processes. She noted the need for access to information to ensure that youth have access to information through various channels, including the internet and social media. This is crucial for keeping them informed and engaged. Ms. Kangawa also mentioned the necessity for deliberate youth inclusion in political processes through the allocation of quotas for youth, where youth from different backgrounds, genders, and regions have equal opportunities to participate.

According to her, another prerequisite to youth participation is civic education which must be integrated into education curricula to instill an early understanding of democratic principles, governance, and the importance of political participation. She also called for youth-targeted campaigns that resonate with young voters and address their concerns, and engaging with youth through technology, social media. Lastly, she observed that economic opportunities ought to be created for youth, including job creation and entrepreneurship, as economic stability can positively impact youth political participation.

Mr. Romaric Muftau observed that the typical African culture is one that “mandates” the youth to elect the old and in continuing to do this, one can be guaranteed that young people will continue to sit on the margins power. According to him, youth representation, voter education and the development of youth-friendly policies are key to ensuring youth participation in political processes and in governance:

With regards to youth representation, Mr. Romaric stressed the need to ensure that youth are adequately represented in political bodies, including parliament, local councils, and other decision-making institutions. This might involve setting aside a certain number of seats for youth representatives. He also urged African governments to provide comprehensive voter education programs to empower young people with the knowledge and skills necessary to engage in the political process, from understanding the electoral system to making informed choices. Furthermore, he called for the development of policies that specifically address the concerns and aspirations of young people, such as education, employment, and healthcare. These policies, he urged, should be developed in consultation with youth representatives.

On his part, Mr. Prince Ifoh noted that policies should be designed to allow meaningful participation. He affirmed that the laws that promote meaningful participation of youth in politics exist, but the implementation of these is selective and thus not producing an impact. He was of the view that the non-politicization of National Youth Councils, Political Will, implementation and M&E are key ensuring meaningful youth participation. He called for a percentage of the cabinet of African countries to be composed of young people. This, in his opinion, mandates inclusion and can help to increase the number of active young people in governance.

Overall, panelists made the following recommendations concerning youth participation in political and governance spaces:

- Youth Empowerment: Encourage and facilitate youth leadership in political parties, civil society organizations, and other platforms where policy decisions are made. This includes mentorship and training programs.
- Mentorship Programs: Establish mentorship programs connecting experienced politicians with young people interested in politics. This can help bridge the generation gap and provide guidance to aspiring youth leaders.
- Youth Advisory Councils: Create youth advisory councils or similar mechanisms that allow young people to directly advise decision-makers on policy issues.
- Access to Political Networks: Facilitate access for youth to political networks and platforms, enabling them to build relationships and alliances with established politicians and activists.
- Youth-Focused Initiatives: Support and fund initiatives that promote youth engagement in politics, such as youth-led advocacy groups, youth parliaments, and youth-centered media outlets.
- Non-Discrimination: Ensure that young people are not discriminated against on the basis of their age, gender, ethnicity, or any other characteristic when participating in political activities.
- Monitoring and evaluation: Establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of policies and programs aimed at enhancing youth participation, with regular reviews and adjustments as needed.
- Legal Framework: Review and reform legal frameworks to remove barriers that may restrict the participation of youth in politics, including age requirements for candidacy and voting.
- Youth-Driven Initiatives: Encourage and support youth to take the lead in organizing events, campaigns, and initiatives that promote political engagement and awareness among their peers.

SESSION 4: YOUTH LEADERSHIP: FOSTERING THE NEXT GENERATION OF POLITICAL LEADERS AGAINST UCG

This session sought to discuss the importance of youth leadership and agency in addressing issues of Democratic Governance and the role they should play in addressing issues of Unconstitutional Changes of Government.

Moderator: **Mr. Shawgi Omer Nawai**, Director of Public Leadership, Place Network and UN-OHCHR Youth Advisors board

Speakers:

- **Mr. Elias Ouma**, Good governance expert and EAC youth Ambassador Kenya
- **Ms. Dacia Munezero**, SDC—Plateforme digitale Yaga Burundi
- **Mr. Bernardus Harageib**, Youth development practitioner
- **Ms Katlego Nawa**, Researcher, Governance, Peace and Security issues in Africa

The moderator began by asking what the panellists believe to be the role of youth leadership. Mr. Elias Ouma began by noting that UCG have been understood along a narrow perspective whereas current literature and frameworks including the Malabo Protocol, highlight that it also includes a change of electoral laws without consent, in the build-up to elections. He noted that the legitimacy of the election is one that is always called into question but, the inclusion of young people is often perceived as an afterthought. Involving the youth from different spaces ensures that the messaging will reach the populations in remote areas through the dissemination of information among their spaces.

Mr. Elias urged participants to reflect on the following:

- Positive participation needs to be clearly defined, as young people are sometimes directly participating in election rigging activities which does not better the prospects for the youth.
- Funding—all youth movements that have been formed need to be funded to ensure that they are sustained.
- African governments need to take the issue of election rigging seriously as this has implications on the behaviour of other Member States across the continent.
- There is a need to have meaningful participation of youth in election observation considering that the elections are a key avenue for democratic expression.

Ms. Dacia Munezero, on her part, noted that the impact of the youth on governance processes is undeniable and that can be seen in how young people are also used in negative pursuits that do not better their lived experiences. She deplored the fact that when it comes to the issues that affect young people, they are not given a voice.

She urged for the use of innovative digital platforms among youth, adding that theatre and music are also avenues through which young people can express themselves particularly in difficult environments.

Mr. Bernardus Harageib stressed that young people need to take up a seat at the table but beyond that there is a need to have a stronger demographic representation because youths who sit at the table remain far too few to make meaningful change. In his view, there is a need for a critical mass of youth who will champion the youth agenda.

Ms Katlego Nawa added that the youth need to use those elements that are native to them to ensure that there is deliberate impact that is driven by them. For example, youth can produce music to address issues of governance, democracy and rule of law, etc. Concerning female leadership, she emphasized that women are born leaders, they take care of the home and the community but they are hardly included in issues of governance and leadership. Women are equally peacemakers and therefore critical stakeholders in UCG and need to be included at all levels.

Presentation of the Outcome Statement

The outcome statement of the Continental Youth Consultation was read by the Lead Rapporteur, Ms. Ady Namaran Coulibaly

CLOSING STATEMENT

Ms Patience Chiradza, Director, GCPD, PAPS gave the closing remarks for the Continental Youth Consultation. She began by extending the warm greetings of Chairperson of the African Union, H.E. Mr. Moussa Faki MAHAMAT and the Commissioner of Political Affairs, Peace and Security, H.E. Ambassador Bankole ADEOYE. She began her intervention by noting that Africa is certainly experiencing significant challenges and issues but is not to be outdone in its quest for political modernization and the induction of national and continental policies aimed at the accelerated promotion of full parity at all deliberative decision-making levels.

Ms. Patience Chiradza listed the Constitutive Acts of the OAU/AU, the Maputo Protocol, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG), the Guiding Principles on Elections in Africa, the Common Vision 2030 and Agenda 2063 as major instruments among many others that contribute to the effective implementation of the Pan-African Global Strategy that we embody. She added that these instruments aim above all to fully achieve total parity in Africa through the adoption of subtle sequential mechanisms both qualitatively and quantitatively. These instruments, she stressed, are meant to tackle the challenges and issues arising from the economic and systemic, legal, political and socio-cultural contexts. They also seek to transcend existing limiting factors and bottlenecks aimed at delaying the full and effective achievement of these specific Africa-wide objectives.

She deplored the fact that despite the many efforts made in this direction, much still remains to be done on the strategic level with regard to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the relevant continental instruments relating to them mentioned above and the Resolution 1325 of the United Nations.

She informed delegates that the African Union will take into account the recommendations shared during the Consultation in order to strengthen its strategy to better consolidate the democratic achievements and the pluralist rule of law in Africa for a better effective and efficient participation of youth in the electoral processes of the Continent.

On this note, Ms. Patience Chiradza declared the Continental Youth Consultation duly closed.