



**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 OUTCOME STATEMENT

18 – 19 NOVEMBER 2022,

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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 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 UCG through the lens of youth; meaningful inclusion of youth in political and socio-economic systems as key for UCG reversal; youth leadership: fostering the next generation of political leaders against UCG and inclusive implementation of the Accra and Malabo declarations against UCG – youth at the center.
3. This Outcome Statement presents the general trends, challenges and recommendations of the Continental Youth Consultation.

II. ATTENDANCE

4. 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. GENERAL TRENDS

The following were identified as general trends:

5. Africa’s population is the youngest in the world. About 60% of Africa’s population is under the age of 25 and it is estimated that the youth population will increase by approximately 42% by 2030 and double by 2055. As such, the adverse impacts of UCG on youth populations are significant and call for lasting solutions.
6. The African Union has spearheaded the development of frameworks which empower and encourage youth participation in governance such as the African Union Youth Charter, the Youth Decade Plan of Action, and the ACDEG among others.

7. 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.
8. The youth in 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.
9. The narrow conceptualization of the concept of UCG has meant that UCG is usually defined as military takeovers, leading to missed opportunities to arrive at solutions that encompass the varying dimensions of this phenomenon.
10. Occurrences of Unconstitutional Changes of Government in Africa have increased over the past decade, thereby dismantling governance systems, weakening state institutions and undermining development at the national, regional and continent levels.
11. A direct correlation exists between UCG, thriving business environments and human development. UCG undermine opportunities for a conducive business landscape and drives away business opportunities, thereby leaving youth without livelihoods.
12. Increasingly, perpetrators of UCG have utilized propaganda, misinformation and disinformation via online platforms to garner support from the youth to advance their agenda.
13. Youth are at the forefront of technology to expand spaces for governance, to use technology to break down governance barriers and have come up with innovative ways to create forms of engagement and demystify governance.
14. National Youth Councils play a key role in promoting youth participation in governance processes and can be used as implementing platforms for policies and frameworks that are meant to forge participation of youth in governance processes.
15. Acknowledged the PSC open sessions on YPS and Governance, and the different programs of the AU on youth which ensures meaningful participation of young people in Governance, peace and security in Africa.
16. Also acknowledged the importance of the domestication of the Continental Framework on Youth Peace and particularly the development of National Action Plans (NAPs) in order to institutionalize meaningful participation of the youth in all levels of decision-making in all Member States.

IV. CHALLENGES OF UCG:

Challenges brought about by UCG were noted as follows:

17. Undemocratic governance structures across the continent have led to state capture, where few elites administer the affairs of a nation and ensure that those who take over power are within their circle. State capture is evident through control of state entities that are supposed to oversee democratic processes, such as electoral bodies, the judiciary and legislative bodies.
18. In spite of strides at national, regional and constitutional frameworks to tackle UCG, selective and inconsistent application of policy frameworks has contributed significantly to recurring use of UCG by perpetrators, as policy approaches have been different.
19. The non-binding nature of normative frameworks developed by the African Union and Member States make it challenging to bring perpetrators of UCG to book.
20. Distrust and lack of mutuality between leaders and youth accounts for the increase in UCG on the continent, especially due to the failure of political leaders to deliver on promises. This leads to frustration among youth and the tendency for youth to support UCG.
21. Weak and inefficient state institutions have contributed significantly to the occurrence of UCG, and in settings where this persists over a prolonged period, the military takes advantage of the institutional void and unfulfilled aspirations of the population.
22. Proliferation of fake news was also noted as a challenge that charges the atmosphere as there are many young people that have acted based on false information. Coupled with fake news is the challenge of propaganda which is eagerly consumed by an uninformed audience.
23. Economic instability, driven by widespread poverty exacerbates the precarious conditions of African populations and its youth, and creates fertile ground for UCG.
24. Although National Youth Councils have the potential to ensure effective youth participation in governance processes, these Councils struggle to function in many African countries due to lack of funding, politicization and being led and driven by non-youth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made:

TO THE YOUTH:

1. Youth must effectively participate in governance processes, especially via online political activism which is not limited to geographical spaces, in order for them to build a critical mass to contribute in addressing UCG.
2. Emphasis was placed on the need for young people to pursue and advocate for the ratification and domestication of protocols and normative frameworks which will intensify the voice of young people at a continental level.
3. Young people must avail themselves within their local spaces and also seek requisite capacity building to become useful citizens with or without a leadership position.
4. Youth must deliberately exercise caution when engaging in political discourse on digital platforms to avoid being unintentionally used as instruments to fuel the occurrence of UCG.
5. Youth that are privileged to participate in consultations and forums such as these should engage youth in marginalised and rural areas to share information and insights to build a critical mass of youth.

TO THE AFRICAN UNION:

6. The AU was called upon to expand the conceptualisation and responses to UCG to include state capture through the manipulation of legal instruments and institutions and the deliberate manipulation of the constitution to lengthen terms in office.
7. Youth-focused normative frameworks and policies ought to be framed in language that youth can identify with, as this enables youth to take ownership of these instruments, express themselves freely and engage their peers in a way that will impact them most.
8. The African Union ought to increase its absorption capacity in spaces for youth inclusion in all aspects of governance particularly in civic training to increase the number of youth that are trained and empowered to effect change within Member States.
9. Encourage each AGA platform member to have a youth-focused programme that can be a vehicle for championing youth activities.

TO AU MEMBER STATES AND STAKEHOLDERS:

10. Member States ought to sustain and increase engagement with 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 youth in the promotion of democracy, good governance, sustainable peace, security and development in the Continent.
11. Provide training to youth on assessing the authenticity of information to counter the use of misinformation, disinformation and propaganda by perpetrators of UCG.
12. Support the operations of national youth councils at the different levels through financial and technical assistance.
13. Establish programmes targeting youth groups to strengthen their understanding of their country's Constitution, as well train youth to utilise Constitutions to sustain democratic governance.
14. Beyond the drafting, ratification and adoption of policies for youth participation, the adoption of quotas for youth can ensure their participation and representation within political spaces and platforms at the national, regional and continental level.