



**CONTINENTAL YOUTH CONSULTATION TO THE 12<sup>TH</sup> 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**

**NARRATIVE REPORT**

3 October 2023  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The African Governance Platform has institutionalized the Continental Youth Consultation prior to the High-Level Dialogue, with the theme of the 2023 Consultation being “**The role of African youth in delivering the peace dividends through AfCFTA implementation.**” The overriding objective of this Consultation was to empower youth in enhancing their contributions to democratic governance, peace, and socioeconomic development in the context of AfCFTA. It equally sought to increase awareness of relevant frameworks, promote youth’s potential in these areas, and provide valuable insights for a peaceful and integrated Africa.
2. The sub-themes discussed during the Consultation centred on empowering African youth to play a central role in both democratic governance and socioeconomic development, with a particular focus on their involvement in the AfCFTA implementation to foster peace dividends and facilitate access to AfCFTA benefits while promoting peace in Africa.
3. This narrative report captures the proceedings of the Continental Youth Consultation. These included a moderated opening and closing session, panel discussions on the three (3) sub-themes of the Consultation, plenary discussions where delegates shared their views on the various session themes, and “Africa Talks.”

## 4. ATTENDANCE

The youth consultation brought together AU Organs and Institutions, Regional Economic Communities, Civil Society Organizations including Youth networks and Women’s organizations; AU Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) Sub-Committee on Human Rights, Democracy and Governance (HRDG); the Peace and Security Council (PSC), Representatives of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Development Partners and Agencies, Private Sector (Multinationals/Local), Philanthropy Organizations and Individuals, Academia, think tanks, and Research Institutions and the Media.

## II. OPENING SESSION

**Ms. Hagar Azooz, Project Officer for AGA-APSA** opened the Continental Youth Consultation. She welcomed all dignitaries and participants to Addis Ababa, the political capital of Africa and appreciated all the delegates present for taking time out of their busy schedules to participate in this timely conversation.

Ms. Azooz invited the **African Union Youth Envoy, Ms. Chido Mpemba** to share her welcome statement. The AU Youth Envoy expressed gratitude to the African Governance Architecture for the opportunity to address the audience. She deemed it an honour and privilege to share her welcome remarks at the 12th Continental Youth Consultation as the African Union Youth Envoy.

Ms Chido Mpemba focused her intervention on a vision of a peaceful and prosperous Africa and the role of youth in delivering peace dividends through the implementation of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). She recounted that two months prior, she had attended the AfCFTA Youth Symposium in Lusaka, where she spoke about the importance of human mobility and free movement of persons in the context of the AfCFTA. She described the AfCFTA as a landmark achievement for Africa which fosters unity, solidarity, and cooperation among African countries, and among the African youth.

Considering that peace dividends result from reducing or preventing violence and conflict, she noted that offering opportunities to youth through the AfCFTA could lead to improved security, stability, governance, human rights, social cohesion, and development outcomes. Peace dividends, she stressed, are essential for achieving the goals outlined in Agenda 2063, the African Union Youth Charter, and the African Union Strategic Framework for the Transformation of Africa. The Youth Envoy also pointed out that the African youth, being the largest demographic in the continent, are meant to drive innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship.

The Youth Envoy stressed the strong connection between peace and development in Africa, highlighting that without peace, there can be no development and no future for Africa without the active involvement of young people. She expressed the conviction that young people need to be at the forefront of decision-making processes, which would be mutually beneficial.

The Youth Envoy stated that meaningful co-leadership and intergenerational cooperation are essential for creating an enabling environment for economic growth, social justice, and human dignity. Peace and development, she added, are both necessary and achievable goals for Africa, aligning with the vision of Agenda 2063. The Youth Envoy also acknowledged that young people have taken the lead in promoting peace through dialogue, mediation, advocacy, and raising awareness citing examples of youth contributions across the continent, such as their engagement in trade and economic activities, regional integration, cross-border cooperation, and mutual understanding.

On conflict, the Youth Envoy noted that youth-led initiatives have significantly contributed to conflict prevention, conflict resolution, resilience building, and the creation of inclusive societies. She affirmed that having the youth involved in these initiatives underscores the positive impact of youth engagement in peace dividends and the implementation of AfCFTA.

Ms. Chido also drew attention to the many challenges and obstacles young people often face in their pursuit of peace dividends and AfCFTA implementation. She alluded to the fact that marginalized communities and disadvantaged youth were most affected by these challenges with obstacles including a lack of information about AfCFTA and its benefits, limited access to finance, technology, infrastructure, and markets, as well as inadequate representation and participation in decision-making bodies. Another challenge noted by the Youth Envoy was the shortage of skills and capacity to compete in the global market which leaves young people vulnerable to violence, discrimination, exploitation, and marginalization.

The Youth Envoy expressed her eagerness to participate in the consultation, as it would provide insights into the remarkable efforts of youth across the continent and expressed the hope that the consultation would yield outcomes led by young people, resulting in tangible solutions and concrete actions.

**Ms. Abiola Idowu Ojo, Ag. Executive Secretary of ACHPR, and Chair of the African Governance Platform AGP at the Technical Level** also took the floor to share welcome remarks. She extended gratitude to the African Governance Architecture for the efforts deployed into the organisation of the 12th HLD and its pre-events. Ms. Abiola Idowu noted that her office also participated in the AfCFTA Youth Symposium held in Lusaka in September 2023, where conversations touched on the need to enhance and facilitate human mobility and free movement of persons to accelerate the implementation of the AfCTA.

The African Continental Free Trade Area, she explained, promotes unity, solidarity and cooperation among African countries. Unlocking the AfCTA can therefore bring about development outcomes and is important for achieving the AU Youth. She added that peace dividends come through prevention of violence, given the nexus between peace and development. Peace, she continued, creates an enabling environment for economic growth which can facilitate economic activities of youth. She called for challenges and obstacles faced by the youth when it comes to engaging in trade and economic activities to be addressed, including the lack of information about the AfCFTA especially for youth in marginalized communities; lack of access to finance, technology, infrastructure and markets; lack of representation; lack of skills and capacity to compete in the global market and discrimination.

Ms. Abiola highlighted the existence of several youth-led initiatives that promote peace through dialogue and awareness creation. She expressed her eagerness to learn more about what young people are doing during the Continental Youth Consultation. In conclusion, she shared the hope that the discussions of the consultation would lead to concrete solutions and outcomes.

**Ambassador Salah Hammad Acting Head of the AGA-APSA Secretariat** took the floor to share a Goodwill Statement. Amb. Salah noted that the African Governance Architecture was delighted to host the event in Addis Ababa as the diplomatic capital of Africa and the headquarters of the African Union. He began his intervention by welcoming participants to Addis Ababa. Ambassador Salah highlighted that creating a sustainable and prosperous future for Africa's youth is a pressing endeavour. He further shared statistics showing that over 60% of Africa's population is under the age of 35, that Africa currently hosts 420 million youths aged 15–35, and that this number is expected to double to 840 million by 2040. In view of this demographic strength of youth, he remarked, it becomes imperative to prioritize and invest adequately in empowering them to unleash their potential as the driving force for governance, peace, and sustainable development.

Amb. Salah highlighted that the creativity and innovation possessed by young people is crucial for the effective implementation of the AfCFTA, but this can only be realized when the youth are properly equipped. He opined that in the current challenging context of the continent, characterized by democratic governance reversals, military takeovers, and Unconstitutional Changes of Government (UCGs), the contributions and roles of young people have become more prominent than ever.

He emphasized the importance of dialogue, stressing that the voices and perspectives of the youth were considered essential to the African Union. Through listening to youth concerns and understanding and acting in their best interests, the roles for meaningful participation and inclusion of youth people in democratic governance can be harnessed. Furthermore, inclusion of youth was underscored by Amb. Salah as paramount, because it set the stage for the successful implementation of the AfCFTA. He however stressed that youth must also play their part by enhancing their skills through training to seize the opportunities presented by the continental free trade agreement.

On advancing peace, Amb. Salah highlighted that the youth have a critical role to play in Africa's peace, security, and sustainable development agenda. The Continental Youth Consultation, he noted, provides youth with an opportunity to engage in frank and open discussions on various issues affecting Africa and chart a path forward toward realizing

Agenda 2063—the Africa We Want. He therefore encouraged the youth to network, learn from each other, and, most importantly, propose solutions that can be included in the outcome document of the consultation.

He expressed gratitude to the dignitaries and delegates present for being a part of the Continental Youth Consultation, and stressed that they have a role to play in ensuring peace and security on the continent and paving the way for the successful implementation of the AfCFTA. Amb. Salah extended their heartfelt thanks to the AGA Platform, the AGA-APSA Secretariat, and esteemed stakeholders and partners, including ISS, IDEA, OHCHR, TFP, and Expertise France, for coming together to make the event a success.

## **SESSION 1: STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF AFRICAN YOUTH IN DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Discussions in this thematic session focused on the role of youth in democratic governance and socioeconomic development.

**Moderator: Bright Sefah**, Desk Officer ECOSOCC Secretariat

The panellists for this session included:

- **Ms. Yavi Madurai**, Founder of Africa Prosperity Fund
- **Mr. Komi Tsowou**, AfCFTA Lead, RSCA, UNDP
- **Dr. Sandra Olachi NDUKWE**, Young Professional and Youth Empowerment Advocate

**Ms. Yavi Madurai, Founder of Africa Prosperity Fund** opened the discussion by sharing her views on the implementation of the AfCFTA in creating a prosperous Africa. She highlighted that first, ratification of the AfCFTA by all AU Member States is essential for its success, and called for Member States to ensure the alignment of their national development plans to the AfCFTA. She explained that in terms of countries that are ready for the implementation of the AfCFTA and the interplay between economic development factors as well as the national development plans, and in terms of government strategies,

there are very few countries that are ready. The unfortunate situation, she noted, is the fact that countries that are strongest economically on the continent will be ready for the AfCFTA.

Ms Madurai emphasised that two factors are key when it comes to the AfCFTA. First, the need to analyse the existing gaps between countries with regards to the implementation of the AfCFTA, and second, the need to reflect over how to put the AfCFTA into the hands of the people that need it the most, mainly women and youth. In view of this, intentionality is required to drive specific agendas so that women and youth understand what they need to do in order to take advantage of the AfCFTA.

Ms. Madurai wrapped up with a plea to the youth stating that the AfCFTA stands as the most powerful instrument ever devised to propel Africa's economic self-sufficiency in alignment with Agenda 2063. She emphasized that it is a resource intended for all, underscoring that the youth require no authorization to harness its potential. She urged the young to take ownership of the AfCFTA and proactively leverage it for their benefit, as it is already theirs.

**Mr. Komi Tsowou** spoke about the capacity and preparedness of youth to engage with and take advantage of the AfCFTA. He began by highlighting the need to place the AfCFTA within a context. The AfCFTA, he noted, goes beyond a trade agreement, as it does not only cover free trade of goods, but it also covers services. He remarked that for instance, many youths on the continent are innovating and deploying technologies to enhance, but their intellectual property is not protected, but this is taken into account in the AfCFTA. He also added that the Agreement also takes into account digital trade. He echoed the views of Ms. Madurai by reiterating that the implementation of the AfCFTA is at various levels, depending on the country.

Concerning the role of the youth, he informed delegates that the UNDP is working closely with the AfCFTA Secretariat to ensure that AfCFTA is inclusive of its key beneficiaries, which are women and youth. Youth in particular, he observed, utilize technology and digitalization in trade which is pivotal in driving development thereby making young people



key drivers in pushing the AfCFTA forward.

He further remarked that for an agreement to be inclusive, it requires some additional and complementary interventions. The protocols dedicated to youth and women, he continued, will foster solutions to ensure the economic empowerment of this segment of Africa's population.

Mr Komi Tsowou stated that research conducted by the UNDP revealed that UCGs on the continent, particularly coups, are usually motivated by the resurgence of terrorism on the continent, which is as a result of youth joining these groups in search of financial gains. He observed that the creation of conducive economic conditions and jobs in cross-border areas will enable youth to engage in more meaningful activities.

He remarked that it is crucial for the youth to seize the opportunities offered by the AfCFTA to understand it fully through advocacy. As such, he urged the inclusion of youth in the AfCFTA from policy design, to implementation and monitoring. He encouraged the inclusion of youth business associations at the national level in the implementation of the AfCFTA. This approach, he affirmed, could yield benefits to young people and contribute to addressing youth interests within the context of AfCFTA.

Mr. Komi concluded by encouraging skills development. He deplored the fact that on the continent, there is a mismatch between what is being taught in educational institutions and what is needed by the market. The key question, according to him, is how to ensure that we have skills that are matching the needs of our industries.

On inclusive AfCFTA Mr Komi stated that an inclusive AfCFTA means that the first beneficiaries and the clients should be the youth. Furthermore, Mr. Komi emphasized the importance of implementing the AfCFTA in synergy with other critical development matters that impact the youth and contribute to peace on the continent, such as addressing issues like climate change.

On her part, **Dr. Sandra Olachi NDUKWE** focused her intervention on the importance of youth participation and the need for requisite leadership that responds to the youth needs. She began by emphasizing that youth engagement ought to go beyond planning purposes to placing youth at the epicentre of decision-making. To achieve this, she explained, there is a need to effectively harness intergenerational dialogues and the creation of youth-led platforms and the full utilization of digital platforms. She called for youth empowerment programmes.

Dr. Ndukwe underscored the need to establish responsive structures that are capable of addressing the unique challenges faced by young people in order to enhance their contribution to democratic governance. Additionally, she stressed the necessity of cultivating leadership that is inherently supportive of youth interests/pro-youth, to ensure the effective operation of these platforms.

She emphasized that democratic governance serves as a cornerstone for development, as it fosters a conducive environment for progress. In closing, Dr. Ndukwe urged the youth to leverage the digital platforms they are already actively involved in, highlighting the importance of harnessing these platforms to advance the youth's agenda.

## **Plenary Discussions**

A delegate asked if the continent is walking the talk with regards to silencing the guns. In response to this question, a delegate affirmed that silencing the guns is indeed an aspiration of the continent. She however noted that as much as we want to silence the guns by 2030, this should be a daily and constant aspiration for which consistent efforts need to be deployed. She opined that given the conflicts, governance and leadership issues facing the continent, this is still an ambitious goal, and there is still a lot of work to be done.

A delegate sought to know whether youth should build their own tables and strive to get a space in already established mechanisms to make their voices heard when it comes to the AfCFTA. Ms. Madurai pointed out that youth do not necessarily have to choose between one option or the other; instead, both pathways can be pursued. The youth can

establish their own channels for engaging with the AfCFTA, and simultaneously, youth representation at the decision-making table should be the norm, considering their significant numbers.

She added that the youth are the future and that they are Africa. She encouraged the youth to come forth and take the leadership roles, as it won't be given to them on a silver platter. In addition, Ms Madurai highlighted that based on the demographic majority of the youth, the concept of having or calling the youth to the table should not be for discussion as it is self-evident based on the number of youth.

## **SESSION 2: YOUTH AT THE CENTRE: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AfCFTA TO ENSURE PEACE DIVIDENDS**

This session focused 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.

**Moderator: Mr. John Youhanes Magok**, Mineral Resources Development Expert, AUC

Panelists included:

- **Mr. Bahdon Daher Ismael**, ETTIM, AUC
- **Dr. Girum Hailu Mahetene**, **Regional Coordinator**, Health and Social Development, IGAD
- **Dr. Emmaculate Liaga**, **Researcher**, Institute for Security Studies
- **Dr. Tabani Moyo**, **Regional Director**, Media & Expression Advocacy

**Mr. Bahdon Daher Ismael**, ETTIM, AUC responded to the moderator's question about the initiatives of the AUC to promote development of small businesses and how these are linked to peace and security.

He noted that the AU SME Strategy with a timeframe of 10 years (2023–2032) seeks to foster entrepreneurship; SME development, creating an enabling environment for SMEs and entrepreneurs to harness the full potential of the AfCFTA.

SMEs, he stressed, are the main drivers of economic and sustainable development of Africa and are essential to achieving Agenda 2063.. This becomes difficult in the midst of conflicts all over the continent, UCGs, coups, etc. For instance, he informed delegates that the ETTIM held the second SMEs Forum in Ethiopia for which they invited 80 young people from all over the continent. However, young entrepreneurs from Niger who had demonstrated significant achievements in trade could not attend the forum due to the coups. He concluded by noting that standardization and quality infrastructure is important in the implementation of the AfCFTA.

**Dr. Mahetene** opened the session with a discussion on IGAD and how it functions including its responsibility to the youth. He noted that IGAD has established a University that responds to the needs of the continent, as well as Area Based Development plans which are unique vehicles that protect and facilitate safe healthy movement in trade zones. Additionally, Dr. Mahetene highlighted that in the context of free trade, cross-border areas play a crucial role, serving as trade zones and pathways for migration and that it is imperative to prioritize the development of sufficient infrastructure in these areas. Specifically, the implementation of region-specific development plans becomes instrumental in both safeguarding and streamlining these regions.

He called for increased support to Regional Economic Communities (RECs) given that they possess an intricate understanding of the unique characteristics and dynamics within their local contexts, which in turn, contributes to the effective functioning of borders. The role of SMEs as drivers of economic and sustainable development was equally underscored and identified as essential to achieving Agenda 2063. In the implementation of the AfCFTA, he highlighted that the standardization of border infrastructure is key.

Dr. Mahetene further stressed that there remains an ongoing imperative to advance efforts in promoting peace and public health, as these two factors are pivotal in the overarching goal of sustainable development.

**Dr. Emmaculate Liaga** from the Institute for Security Studies focused her submission on the nexus between peace and development. From the onset, she highlighted that creating a secure environment is a catalyst for economic growth and trade facilitation.

She emphasized that the implementation process of the AfCFTA holds significant influence over both peace and conflict dynamics and has the potential to yield peace dividends for the continent. She further stressed that the implementation of the AfCFTA is not something that can be done in isolation stating that several factors, including election violence, conflicts, and weak governance, can detrimentally affect trade.

Dr. Liaga pointed out that the Democracy Index highlights the failure of various African nations to meet the essential democratic criteria, emphasizing the necessity for enhanced governance. Furthermore, she highlighted that seemingly minor concerns like education can have significant repercussions for trade. She underscored that peace is a critical element in the successful execution of the AfCFTA and harnessing its advantages. She remarked that the challenges surrounding peace have given rise to a debate on whether to prioritize peace or trade, leading to a confluence of perspectives. In her view, the quest for peace and enhancement of trade must go hand in hand. To conclude, Dr. Liaga stressed that the youth population is often marginalized, and their participation in implementation processes is often tokenistic. She called for the integration of youth perspectives from the early stages of policy development.

**Dr. Tabani Moyo** opined that a poor state of governance is an impediment in realizing the benefits of the AfCFTA. Within poor governance young people are not included in the planning of programmes but are called upon to participate just to meet the requirement for youth participation. To effectively communicate on peace and security Mr Moyo highlighted that there is a need to have youth approaches that are owned and developed by the youth. He stressed the need to harness contemporary platforms where youth are digital natives which increase the reach of the information citing platforms like TikTok and X.

### **Plenary discussions**

A delegate shared his views on the appropriate communication channels that can enable the youth to understand and participate in the initiatives of the AU, including the AfCFTA. He called for the development of a media strategy that understands the ethos of the youth,

which requires going beyond reports. He noted that a key question that needs to be addressed is how to encourage youth to yearn to be part of Agenda 2063.

To achieve this, the delegate argued, youths' views should be collected on how to popularize Agenda 2063 and this requires harnessing the platforms where youths usually spend their time. He stressed that collective effort is needed to communicate stories of success within the AfCFTA to learn what youth are doing with the Agreement and to scale these up. This involves sharing the stories of youth who are using technology in order to enhance our agenda. He called for the co-creation of communication strategies with the youth and ensure that this agenda is part of the broader conversation online and offline.

A delegate addressed a question to Dr. Mahetene about the plans of IGAD regarding migration of youth to the west in search of better opportunities such as jobs and education. Dr. Mahetene explained that IGAD has invested in resolving peace and security challenges to create an enabling environment for youth in the region. He observed that the root cause of migration is lack of opportunities and basic services. This calls for improving access to health, infrastructure etc to improve governance.

What is needed, he stressed, is good governance. He encouraged AGA to take issues of good governance seriously and to work on this through active and full engagement of the youth and civil society. Dr. Mahetene reiterated Member States' commitment to resolving these challenges through mediation among warring factions. According to him, past experiences have demonstrated that external influence and solutions from outside the continent usually exacerbate security challenges. He therefore called for internal solutions to address the challenges facing the continent.

Mr. John Youhanes Magok concluded the plenary discussions by affirming the commitment of the African Union to the education of youth on the continent. A key demonstration of that commitment, he explained, is the establishment of the Pan-African University (PAU) by the AU to promote the education of youth in Africa. He noted that the PAU is currently hosted at various universities in Africa and offers full scholarships for African youth. He encouraged the youth to find out more about the Pan-African University and take advantage of the opportunity.

With regards to infrastructure, he also mentioned that the AU has come up with the Programme in Infrastructure Development in Africa which should ensure that we have the infrastructure needed to drive the economic development of the continent.

### **Session 3 CREATING ACCESS TO REALISE THE AfCFTA AND AFRICA'S PEACE DIVIDEND**

This session explored how providing opportunities for youth can be an investment that is worth the implementation of the AfCFTA and realizing the peace dividend.

**Moderator: Mr Hubert Kinkoh**, Researcher, ISS

The panelists were:

- **Mr. Walter Kasempa**, Governance Expert and Author
- **Dr. Langton Mabhanga**, Managing Partner, Africa Trade North Strategy Institute
- **Ms. Bijek Biel Nienkel Nyak**, Youth Rep. Juba—South Sudan
- **Stanley Nyamanhindi**, Chief Executive Officer—Policy Advocacy, SDAC Lawyers Association.

**Mr Walter Kasempa** began by highlighting that young people in Africa have consistently encountered obstacles when trying to disrupt the existing norms and even when trying to access education and information to achieve this. Additionally, he highlighted that the dynamics of trade come with intricate intellectual challenges, particularly hurdles related to the free flow of individuals and commodities. In addition to this, Mr Kasempa stated that a number of businesses operate within the informal sector, lacking awareness about the AfCFTA. He however noted that despite the existing challenges with accessing information about the AfCFTA, it is incumbent upon the youth to search for and to disseminate the information embedded in the AfCFTA.

Mr. Kasempa further commented that inclusive growth plays a crucial role in quelling social unrest and that when youth are actively incorporated into various processes, they become integral contributors, exerting greater effort in achieving the desired peace dividend.

**Ms. Bijek Biel Nienkel Nyak** began her intervention by stressing that in order to carry out the AfCFTA successfully, emphasis should be on the involvement of young people in peace-building endeavours, as peace will unlock a wealth of opportunities for Africa's youth.

Furthermore, she stressed the importance of incorporating financial literacy into the educational curricula of African institutions, emphasizing its crucial role, especially in the context of trade. She highlighted the necessity for such programs to educate young individuals about the intricacies of trading, thus providing them with a competitive edge in the business world.

In addressing potential steps for young individuals to enhance their contributions to the AfCFTA, Ms. Nyak recommended that youth engage in awareness-raising, enhance their communication skills, and actively promote the localization of the plan to attract greater youth participation.

In his remarks, **Mr. Stanley Nyamanhidi** emphasized that the youth are not heard and are excluded from accessing decision-making forums. He pointed out that as a result of this exclusion, they often had to create their own spaces and, regrettably, were sometimes exploited as resources in conflicts. Furthermore, he noted that youth being used as resources in conflicts exacerbated their marginalization. He strongly emphasized that youth should be involved in peace-building efforts rather than conflict, and that there are mechanisms available to prevent such misuse.

**Dr. Langton Mabanga** in commenting on the state of youth and how to enhance their participation stated that there is a need to encourage young minds to think and create with their hands. He proposed fostering youth innovation and empowering them to excel in their strengths. He further stated that this path would pave the way for them to secure livelihoods that would contribute to the realization of a "Peace Dividend." Dr. Mabanga emphasized the importance of breaking the shackles of youth marginalization, placing our unwavering trust in their potential, and understanding the urgency of the moment. To conclude, he stressed the need to guide and harness the energy of our youth responsibly while offering trade incentives to businesses that had actively engaged young people in their operations.



## **Africa Talks**

The Africa Talks session was designed as an intergenerational conversation to allow the exchange of experiences and showcase youth's contributions to democratic values and socioeconomic development.

The Africa Talks conversation was between Ms. Yavi Madurai, Founder of Africa Prosperity Fund and Ms. Rose Anne Osamba, Executive Director, Uzalendo Africa.

**Ms. Rose Anne Osamba** is a trained journalist, certified digital specialist and a Youth Development Expert who does communication for development especially on how to leverage digital media for advocacy, branding and strategic communication. She is passionate about youth and women's involvement in decision-making, peace-building and the AfCFTA. Over the past years, she has been strengthening the capacities of youth and women in engaging with public processes (policy, governance and public participation) and amplifying their voices at regional and transnational levels for collective solidarity and efforts.

Her work in peace building and conflict management included working with young people to co-create homegrown solutions that speak to the larger global resolutions. She is equally passionate about internet governance, digital inclusion and transformation in sub-Saharan Africa with a particular interest in gender digital divide. She writes the stories of young Africans who do exemplary well in their community but are not covered through her blog.

**Ms Yavi Madurai:** The issue of voter apathy by youth is a challenge in many parts of the continent. What are some initiatives you undertook to change the youth apathy and get youth involved in the elections in Kenya?

**Ms. Rose Anne Osamba:** Voter apathy is a significant issue, originating from the low voter registration rates. It is crucial to educate the youth about the importance of their democratic rights. The "Youth Please Take Action" initiative which my organisation

undertook aimed to foster productive conversations and develop diverse strategies for engaging various segments of the youth population. We engaged juvenile gangs and the wives of the juvenile gangs and got the buy-in and support. There were also partnerships with the private sector which helped to bolster the efforts of the initiative.

Additionally, there was the “County Integrated Development Plan,” a five-year blueprint designed to benefit young people, including employing the assistance of “Matatu touts” who are our ambassadors. The youth demonstrated their agency by actively participating in these efforts. The “Youth Please Take Action Campaign” also collaborated with juvenile gangs and the spouses of gang members, in partnership with the Ministry of Interior and the private sector. The main idea was to create an intervention during and post-election which would create the continuity of the plans. The role that Uzalendo took was to give the space for these initiatives to prosper because among themselves they had created ad hoc committees.

**Ms Madurai:** Was there an increase in voter turnout?

**Ms. Rose Anne Osamba:** I would say there was an increase but beyond that there was an increase in the number of people being interested in county elections and additionally having young people give their suggestions and having those suggestions being acknowledged in forums boosted the confidence of the youth as they could see that their voices were being heard.

**Ms Madurai:** How have you worked with the private sector?

**Ms. Rose Anne Osamba:** It is important to look at what the private sector does and what the youth want to do and look at areas of commonality. We created the “Country stakeholder’s roundtable” to explore issues such as youth unemployment and youth economic empowerment. This created an intergovernmental and intergenerational conversation. One key success was the employment of youth in the tourism sector. Looking at the success of this, one can see that it is possible to have a relationship with

the private sector. The private sector should not be perceived only with the lens of being funders because they do much more.

### **Presentation of the outcome statement**

**Mr Kudakwashe Bandama**, a rapporteur for the Consultation was invited by Ms. Hagar Azooz to present the outcome statement of the Continental Youth Consultation.

### **Closing Ceremony**

**Ms. Hagar Azooz** informed delegates that the Continental Youth Consultation was drawing to a close. She invited Ms. Tendaiishe Chitima, Zimbabwean delegate from the creative sector to share a vote of thanks.

**Ms. Tendaiishe Chitima** thanked all delegates and dignitaries for their active participation in the Continental Youth Consultation. She shared her experience about how moving from her country to South Africa opened up opportunities and enabled her to excel in her field, especially as she featured as the main actor in a movie titled “Cook Off” showing on Netflix. She emphasized that due to her ability to leverage on the infrastructure and skills she learned in South Africa, she was able to contribute to the movie industry in Zimbabwe. This, she highlighted, is a clear demonstration of regional integration and the need to make Africa more open and enable African youth to travel with ease within the continent.

Ms. Chitima opined that the creative sector could be a tool to build awareness of the AfCFTA among youth. According to her, there are untapped opportunities to use storytelling, media, film and music to create awareness, and to take policies of the African Union and transform them into products that the youth can easily understand and relate to. Storytelling, she added, is a means to inculcate values, concepts and ideas about the continent into African youth.

**Amb Salah Hammad** took the floor to share his closing remarks with the audience. He began by noting that as Africans, we belong to the continent and we should consider Africa as our home. Other continents, he stressed, went through their fair share of difficulties but managed to emerge and grow. Similarly, Africa, he remarked, will also overcome its challenges to build the continent into a prosperous and peaceful place.

He expressed gratitude to all dignitaries and delegates for participating in the Continental Youth Consultation and sharing useful insights and perspectives on the theme, and reiterated the commitment of the African Governance Architecture to ensuring that the outcomes from the Consultation is presented to the Member States of the African Union. On that note, he declared the Continental Youth Consultation to the 12th High-Level Dialogue on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance in Africa duly closed.