



THE AFRICAN CAPACITY BUILDING FOUNDATION | FONDATION POUR LE RENFORCEMENT DES CAPACITES EN AFRIQUE

Press Release

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Immediate

Capacity Development is key to unlocking the potential of Africa's youth

African Capacity Building Foundation Chief to address AU Heads of State on strengthening the enabling environment for youth employment

Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, 30 June 2011 (ACBF)

On 30th June, 2011, Dr. Frannie Léautier, Executive Secretary of the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) presents the Foundation's perspective on the issue of youth unemployment in Africa, during the themed debate on "Accelerating Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development".

Several high level and youth representatives from across the continent have been invited to respond to this theme, to be declared at the Seventeenth Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea.

With over 40% of the population below 15 years, Africa is by far the continent with the largest global youthful population. 60% of Africa's population is below 24 years. If managed well, this demographic represents Africa's best development asset over the coming decades. In order for this to happen, it is important to better understand the needs of Africa's youth, the opportunities provided by their ideas, and the sources of innovation and employment at the country and regional level, in order to design and implement the right policies aimed at unlocking the creativity and innovativeness of this group.

Leading up to the African Union Assembly, from 13 to 14 June, 2011, the Mauritanian Agency for the Promotion of Youth Employment (ANAPEJ), in collaboration with the ACBF and the Centre Mauritanien d'Analyse des Politiques (CEMAP), held a workshop on "Entrepreneurship and Youth Employment in North Africa" in Nouakchott, Mauritania.

The workshop, designed to create a platform for dialogue and experience-sharing between stakeholders from North African countries (Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Mauritania and Tunisia), gathered more than 80 participants, notably national youth associations and young entrepreneurs from North Africa, East and West Africa. Key Mauritanian Government representatives and several international organizations, including the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NEPAD Agency), the World Bank and UNDP were also present at the workshop.

A major outcome of the workshop is a "Nouakchott Declaration" containing specific youth-related recommendations, to be presented by Mauritania, to the African Union Heads of States in Malabo.

The work of the Foundation in preparation for the Summit derives from a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed in Kampala, Uganda on 27 July 2010 between the African Capacity Building Foundation and the African Union Commission (AUC). This MoU providing a framework for partnership between the two institutions.

The partnership between ACBF and the AUC aims to enhance and expand the existing collaborative arrangements between the two organizations and NEPAD, as the AU's implementing agency for capacity building, with a view to developing the capacity of African countries in the areas of economic policy analysis, policy formulation, policy implementation and the overall management of economic policy for poverty reduction on the continent.

The MOU addresses the critical aspects of effective regional integration for the continent's socio-economic development, enabling the development of collective solutions to cross-cutting issues within Africa and allowing for complementarities between the two organizations, in terms of skills, experience and future developments.

Speaking ahead of her address, Dr Léautier said: "ACBF's new strategy gives pride of place to emerging issues in African development, and the critical role of capacity development and employment creation for the youth is to strengthen the enabling environment and enhance governance, in order to unlock the potential of the youth, either for self-employment or for their integration into the productive sectors." She added: "ACBF will do this by developing skilled individuals through training and continuous learning; creating an enabling policy environment and a critical mass of policy makers who shape the job-creating potential of economies; creating platforms for dialogue between government, civil society and the private sector that can generate a positive environment for economic growth and job creation and supporting learning and knowledge sharing in order to speed up change and uncover ideas that unlock the potential of young people. Working with NEPAD's Capacity Development Strategic Framework, we expect to support African countries in their identification and strategic use of capacity development to solve development problems including those of creating jobs for young people."

Dr Ibrahim Mayaki, NEPAD Agency CEO, highlighted that African governments and development practitioners had found a competent and ready partner in the African Capacity Building Foundation, as Africa's premier capacity building institution, saying: "Throughout its 20-year history, ACBF has built formidable partnerships with African governments, universities, civil society and other in-country and sub-regional development stakeholders. With its unparalleled African regional coverage and growing African ownership and visibility, we see great scope in this collaboration with ACBF as we continue to address the capacity gaps on the continent."

ACBF is committed to working with the NEPAD Planning and Co-ordinating Agency to enhance collaboration and streamline capacity development initiatives in Africa. The Foundation has also collected capacity priorities in 45 countries as a follow up to the Kigali Resolution, which was issued by high level delegates who attended ACBF's 20th Anniversary summit in Kigali, Rwanda. A number of countries have identified capacity development for job creation as a major area of opportunity when setting their national priorities.

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About ACBF

About the African Capacity Building Foundation

ACBF was established in February 1991. It is the outcome of collaboration between African governments and the international donor community. Its mission is to build sustainable human and institutional capacity for sustainable growth and poverty reduction in Africa. ACBF's vision is for Africa to be recognized for its socio-political and economic capabilities and endowments – a continent with effective institutions and policies acquired through sustained investment in people and institutions. The Foundation aims to become a leader, major partner, and centre of excellence for capacity building in Africa.

The African Union currently serves as an Observer on the ACBF Board of Governors.

For further information contact:

a.mpunzwana@acbf-pact.org

b.kone@acbf-pact.org

r.kambarami@acbf-pact.org

African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF)

PO Box 1562, Harare

ZIMBABWE

Tel: + 263 4 700208/210