



PRESS RELEASE

UNGA HIGH LEVEL EVENT ON THE AFRICAN UNION THEME FOR THE YEAR 2017



New York, United States of America, September 20, 2017 – The African Union Commission (AUC), the Government of Guinea, and the United Nations Population Funds, co-organized a High-Level Event on the AU theme: “Demographic Dividend Roadmap for Africa: Moving from Commitment to Action”. The meeting took place on the margins of the UNGA on the 20th of September 2017 from 3pm to 6pm.

The event was attended by over 200 delegates including a delegation from the African Union

Commission led by the Commissioner for Human Resource Science and Technology (HRST), H.E. Prof. Sarah Anyang Agbor and composed of Dr Beatrice Njenga, Head of Education Division and Mr. Kokou Sename Djagadou, Project Officer in the Human Resource and Youth Development Division. It was aimed at engaging participants on key policies, programmes and investments required. The objectives of the meeting included concrete actions to be undertaken by African governments, development partners, private sector and other stakeholders respectively to support implementation of the AU roadmap on the theme of the year 2017: “Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through investments in Youth”. Interventions made during the event will guide the AU in the development of its report to the summits on the implementation of the above-mentioned road map.

Key interventions were made by AU Heads of States or their representatives, the UN Secretary General, Heads of institutions or their representatives, development partners, young people from Africa and Diaspora.

The Chair of the event H.E. Prof Alpha Condé, AU Chairperson and President of the Republic of Guinea, in his opening remarks, called for ownership of the theme of the year at country level through mainstreaming of youth development and the Demographic Dividend in key development sectors’ policies and programmes. He emphasized that in order to harness the demographic dividend, Africa needs to build on the current momentum on impactful investments in young people especially young girls.

The Leader and Champion of the theme of the year, H.E. Idriss Déby Itno, due to conflict in his agenda could not participate in the event. His representative recalled the commitment of the Champion to promote the use of the theme of the year as a springboard that will accelerate Africa’s transformation toward the realization of the AU Agenda 2063. This and unflinching commitment of the champion of the theme of the year to position youth at the center of the

implementation of the theme led to the Pan African Youth Forum and the subsequent decision of the AU Assembly to establish the African Youth Development Funds.

The President of Guinea Equatorial, the President of Zambia, the President of Burkina Faso and representatives of the Kingdom of Lesotho in their speeches put emphasis on making young people especially young girls the focus of their countries' economic and social development interventions. These include youth and girls' empowerment, responding to harmful practices such as child marriages, and promoting universal access to education. The Government of Lesotho through legislation is enforcing access to primary education for all.

The UN Secretary General H.E. Antonio Guterres congratulated the AU for dedicating the year 2017 on investments in youth. This for him, is a sign of clear commitment toward the greatest asset of the continent. He highlighted the impact of migration on the continent and called for increased effort to improving living conditions in Africa to respond to migration.

The Commissioner for HRST, in her intervention appreciated the efforts made by Member States toward increasing investment in youth and called for the acceleration of the mainstreaming of the demographic dividend in all Member States Policies and Strategies targeting young people.

Representatives of the Presidents of Rwanda, Nigeria, Malawi and Benin, shared their countries experience respectively on the use of ICT to promote education and entrepreneurship, their effort to promote secondary level education, the establishment of Demographic Dividend observatories on youth development, the mainstreaming of youth related investment in national agenda, their long term plan for jobs creation.

Representatives of the Pan African Youth Union and the African youth in the Diaspora called for Member States and development partners to move from rhetoric to action in their efforts toward strategic investment in youth for Africa's transformation. They also called for their inclusion in Africa's development programs.

Representatives of the European Union (EU), International Labour Organisation (ILO), African Development Bank (AfDB), and UNILEVER also shared their efforts in the enhancement of youth employability and entrepreneurship. The EU Director of Cooperation, Stefano Manservigi, highlighted the importance of the AU-EU Summit for the partnership of the two institutions toward the achievement of common objectives included on the Demographic Dividend.

The Event ended with concluding remarks from the Chairperson of the AU who urged the development partners to align their work on the national priorities of member states for more efficiency and improved coordination.

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