

**DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION****NOTE TO EDITORS****Fifth African Union Commission – United States High Level Dialogue to address Promotion of Opportunity and Development**

A high level delegation from the African Union took part in the 5th African Union Commission (AUC) / United States High Level Dialogue in Washington DC, USA on 16 November 2017.

The High Level Dialogue falls within the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by the AU Commission and the US Department of State on 30 January 2013 which puts in place a structured process for dialogue on matters of strategic importance as well as cooperation. The MoU is also aimed at holding discussion between the two parties in the context of working groups to address the issues of peace and security, democracy and governance, economic development, investment and trade; and promotion of opportunities in development.

The priority areas for cooperation fall within the AU Agenda 2063 Aspiration 1: “*A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development.*” It also falls under the U.S. Government’s Strategy towards Sub-Saharan Africa Pillar 4: Promote Opportunity and Development. The priorities are derived from the First Ten-Year Implementation Plan of the African Union Agenda 2063. These include: Health, Education, Humanitarian resilience; enhancement of the role of Youth and women; higher education, promotion of technical and scientific cooperation, exchange programs, capacity building and research and development in the areas of information technology.

It is worth recalling that, following the 2014-2015 Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak in parts of West Africa, the AU Commission and the US Government signed a Memorandum of Cooperation in April 2015, formalizing the collaboration between the AUC and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention with the aim of establishing the Africa Centers for Disease Control (ACDC). The ACDC has engaged in dialogue with the U.S. CDC to map existing centers of excellence in Africa and supporting the objectives of the AU and the World Health Organization (WHO) with technical assistance.

The Africa CDC was established through The AU Heads of States and Governments with the aim of supporting African countries in their efforts to effectively respond to public health emergencies through prevention of infection, surveillance and response to

emergencies (including outbreaks, man-made and natural disasters, and public health events of regional and international concern), and capacity building to reduce the disease burden on the continent. Since the launch of Africa CDC, the regional center has started implementing its strategic plan in coordination with the Regional Collaborating Centers (RCCs) through activities that include providing a platform for member states to timely share public health information to identify threats and epidemiological trends, but also notifications of public events to comply with the International Health Regulations (IHR). This platform will also share best practices in order to strengthen country preparedness and response capacities to public health events.

Meanwhile, Africa's biggest single asset today is its youthful population which can be both viewed as both a challenge and a window of opportunity for the growing continent. It is with this understanding that AU Heads of State and Government made a commitment towards investing in its youth by dedicating the year 2017 to "*Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth.*" This commitment also aims at ushering in the realizations of the aspirations of Africa's development blueprint: Agenda 2063 and the 2030 global agenda for sustainable development.

There is therefore need to build on the achievements that have been so far realised within the AU-USA cooperation framework while drawing on lessons that would enhance tangible outcomes.

With regard to **Youth Leadership, Entrepreneurship and Employment**, the African Union Commission (AUC) has several programs that serve to promote youth participation, capacity building and empowerment through service and skills exchange, driven by the philosophy of Pan-Africanism and Youth Leadership. These include the African Union Youth Volunteer Corps (AUYVC) which is a year-long program engaging young African women and men (ages 18 – 35) within or outside AU structures. Young African leaders have also benefited from the US Government's Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), which is a fellowship program targeting young African women and men and for leadership skills, mentorship and academic coursework. Furthermore, one of the overarching goals of Agenda 2063 is development of well-educated citizens and a skills revolution underpinned by Science, Technology and Innovation.

Regarding **Scientific Research and Innovation with an emphasis on women**, the First Ten year implementation plan of Agenda 2063 calls for the revitalization of African research systems to enhance competitiveness in global knowledge economy. Through the African Union Research Grant (AURG) Programme, it is expected that Africa's existing scientific excellences will be exploited and utilized to promote greater participation and involvement of African scientists, researchers and institutions in sustainably contributing to Africa's Development.

In the area of **Higher Education**, support and strengthening of the capacity of Higher Education in Africa is vital if Africa is to achieve its goals of Education and STI driven Skills revolution. Meanwhile with **Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment**, the AU Commission is setting the path to achieve Aspiration 6 of Agenda 2063- "An Africa whose development is people driven, relying on the potential of the African people,

particularly its women and youth and well cared for children “and Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals/Agenda 2030 “Gender equality and empower all women and girls”. These goals which are both complementary and fully converge, are closely informed by gains and prior commitments to gender equality and women’s empowerment which now form the basis for the AU’s work in this priority development agenda.

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