



**Statement of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission,**

**H.E. Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat,**

**On the Commemoration of Africa Youth Day**

**1<sup>st</sup> November 2020**

**Theme: Youth Voices, Actions, Engagement: Building A Better Africa**

We celebrate Africa Youth Day this year in extraordinary circumstances forced upon us by the global Covid19 pandemic. As the world continues to learn painful lessons from this unprecedented threat to global wellbeing, I wish to salute all frontlines workers working tirelessly in our communities to keep our families safe and healthy. Many of these frontline workers are the Youth, using innovation and creativity to help track, trace the virus while informing populations with compelling and accurate information, often in our local languages, on how to stay healthy and protect our loved ones and communities. The Youth also raised their voices against the unseen impact on mental health that the pandemic was wreaking. The Youth have also stepped up to support their communities and countries to continue working, keeping our communities fed during these challenging times. Overall, we have seen Africa come together acting early and aggressively at all levels to contain the virus through a coordinated Continental strategy.

The Continental strategy was built on African solidarity and it is this solidarity and unity of purpose that Africa needs more than ever as we look to rebuild our economies during and after the pandemic. The youth are among the hardest hit by the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic, and their participation and voices must be part of the solutions to a healthier, safer Africa.

As the continent strives to ensure that this pandemic does not reverse the hard-won developmental gains of the past three decades, a commitment to improving the lives, access to education and opportunity for the Youth remains paramount to our goal of achieving the aspirations of Agenda 2063.

The centrality of Youth in the actualization of Agenda 2063 further reinforces the ideals enshrined in the African Youth Charter, which demands youth empowerment and equally requires Youth to be the main actors for their own development. The work of the AU Commission on Youth Development reinforces this symbiotic relationship through continued investments in human capital.

In 2019, I launched the 1 Million by 2021 Initiative, to provide opportunities for Youth in the areas of Education, Employment, Entrepreneurship and Engagement, and since then, we have seen concerted effort from Member States and partners to support the initiative and expand opportunities for Africa's young people. The Commission continues to strengthen these efforts with policies, advocacy and partnerships for the advancement of our youth agenda.

This is why we are celebrating Africa Youth Month this November under the theme **“Youth Voices, Actions, Engagement: Building A Better Africa”**. As we work to create conducive environments for youth to unlock the full extent of their potential, we remain inspired by voices, actions and engagement of youth all over Africa towards a continent that is peaceful, prosperous and integrated.

I also take this opportunity to encourage Member States to accelerate and intensify investments in Youth, and increase Youth engagement, to ensure a future where every young African has agency, hope and dignity.

***Happy Africa Youth Day!***