



DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

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National Youth Councils elect the first-ever COMESA Youth Advisory Panel

The National Youth Councils of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Member States, have elected the first-ever COMESA Youth Advisory Panel (COM-YAP). The elections were held during a two-day meeting convened on the 8th and 9th of September 2021, jointly by COMESA and the African Governance Architecture (AGA), focused on bridging the gap between the young people and the decision makers at the regional level.

The 11 member Advisory Panel will serve in a three-year tenure and is tasked with among other responsibilities, to strengthen the engagement of the youth within the region in democracy, governance and socio-economic development issues, and to promote and advocate for productive and meaningful participation of young people in decision-making processes. The Panel will regularly update the COMESA Council of Ministers and the Secretariat on concerns, needs and interests of youth through reports and contributions to the reports of the various thematic groups; and play an advisory role in the COMESA Council of Ministers to facilitate the participation of young people in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national development plans, policies and poverty reduction strategies.

The institutionalisation of the Youth Advisory Panel in the COMESA structure, is an outcome of the Joint Project on "Youth Engagement in Democratic Governance and Socio Economic Development processes in Africa", between the African Union through the African Governance Architecture (AGA), and the COMESA Secretariat, supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The project is aligned with the COMESA Youth Engagement Strategy and the AGA Youth Engagement Strategy, which are focused on enhancing the meaningful engagement of youth within the COMESA and African Union policy organs and decision making bodies respectively.

Dr. Kipyego Cheluget, Assistant to the Secretary General of COMESA, underscored the importance of the Joint AGA-COMESA project on Youth Engagement in Democratic Governance and Socio Economic Development processes in Africa, highlighting its specific achievements that include, organizing of bootcamps to enhance youth capacities in democratic governance and decision making levels; adoption of

internship guidelines; adoption of the COMESA Youth Engagement Strategy; launching of the [AGA Youth Innovation Challenge](#); and launching of the first [National Training of Trainers on Youth in electoral processes](#) based on the manual prepared for the training. He lauded the role of the AU-African Governance Architecture Secretariat on the success of the project and acknowledged the support by the SDC.

The transformative political, social and economic changes in African countries and communities are mainly driven by young women and men, hence the enhanced participation of young people in the Democratic Governance and Socio-Economic Development in the COMESA Region is touted as a watershed moment for sustained transformation at the national, regional and continental levels. The COMESA Youth Advisory Panel will help in positioning youth in the region to take advantage of the various opportunities in the COMESA programmes and will bridge the gap between the young people and the decision-makers both at the regional and national levels. H.E Joe Kapembwa, the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Youth and Sport and Child Development of the Republic of Zambia, recognised the efforts of the COMESA youth programme under the joint project with the AGA Secretariat. He affirmed the importance of this joint project and encouraged all partners to continue the momentum and extend the project beyond 2022.

Amb Salah Hammad, Acting Head of the AGA APSA Secretariat underscored that Agenda 2063 supports young people as an instrumental driving force behind the continent's political, social, cultural and economic transformation. The AGA, through its Youth Engagement Strategy has been able to advocate for youth inclusion and engagement in the AU and RECs, and this achievement is part of that commitment. He recognized that Member States are increasingly realizing youth's potential and this is demonstrated through the increased support that Youth Ministries, youth policies and youth programming are receiving. This is a recognition that young people are the present and future of their countries' development. He concluded by underlying that the COMESA Youth Advisory Panel can potentially include youth in democratic governance and socio-economic development processes in a REC setting, as the precedent ultimately contributing to the realization of [Agenda 2063](#).

The COMESA Youth Advisory Panel members are; Mr. Almodather Aljilie Ahmed Hammad (Sudan); Ms. Noha El-Maamoun (Egypt); Ms. Rosiane Kabangu Mujinga (DR Congo); Ms. Melissa Sarah Hamalambo (Zambia); Mr. Gcina Petros Dlamini (Eswatini); Mr. Jacob Eyeru (Uganda); Ms. Angel Warira Mbutia- (Kenya); Mr. Alazar Solomon (Ethiopia); Ms. Amal mohammed (Somalia); Ms. Diksha Ramdonee (Mauritius); and Mr. Dean Figaro (Seychelles).

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