

Statement of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on the occasion of Africa Youth Day

Today, November 1st 2021, I join Africans on the continent and in the diaspora to celebrate celebration of Africa Youth Day. This date is commemorated every year and was proclaimed on the adoption of the African Youth Charter in Banjul, Gambia in 2006 and it recognizes youth as key agents for Africa's socio-economic growth and sustainable development.

As part of my renewed commitment to amplify the voices of young people and broaden their participation in the development of the Continent, I am pleased to announce the appointment of Ms. Chido Cleopatra Mpemba, a native of Zimbabwe as my next Envoy for Youth.

Ms. Chido Mpemba was selected following a rigorous recruitment process of hundreds of applicants. I am confident that, with her profound knowledge of issues affecting young people, and working in close collaboration with the relevant Departments of the Commission, she will contribute to the effective implementation of African Union youth policies and programs.

As we look ahead to the future of the continent, we must pause and look back at the past year to appreciate the unyielding resilience of Africa's youth. This is why this year's theme "**Defining The Future Today: Youth-Led Solutions For Building The Africa We Want**" is of great significance.

It is indisputable that the past year has posed tremendous challenges, more than ever before. COVID-19 brought with it many painful lessons and as the world navigated a global pandemic, young people are making strikes in contributing to our collect effort of building the *Africa we want*. Innovations came to the fore and youth-led initiatives that focused on engagement became dominant. I am hopeful that the same resilience will prevail as Africa continues to grapple with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and shape a better future of development and prosperity for all.

This year, as we commemorate Africa Youth Day, it would be remiss not to mention the importance of a youth mobilization that is rooted in responsibility and accountability. It is imperative that mobilization be used to promulgate the youth agenda, and to come up with strategically sound and long-lasting solutions to the problems which plague the continent.

The ongoing Institutional Reform process taking place at the African Union Commission places particular emphasis on our duties and responsibility to increase focus on women and youth. It is to this effect that the African Union Commission's Division in charge of youth has been merged with the Women and Gender Divisions, bringing to the fore a new Directorate; the Women, Gender and Youth Directorate. This will allow for the formulation of targeted initiatives that address Agenda 2063's sixth aspiration which calls for "*An Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of the African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children*".

Allow me to mention that, in 2019 the Commission launched the 1 Million by 2021 Initiative, to provide opportunities for youth in the areas of Education, Employment, Entrepreneurship and Engagement. I am encouraged by the efforts made by relevant stakeholders, including Member States and partners to support the initiative and expand opportunities for Africa's young people. As we draw the curtain on 2021, it will be imperative to note that the work does not stop here, we must recommit and recontextualize the initiative as we continue to create an environment in which young people can succeed.

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Commission, to express my gratitude and appreciation to the outgoing Envoy, Ms. Aya Chebbi along with: Ms. Petrider Paul; Ms. Monbolade Urhele Pamela; Ms. Metour Mouini Vanessa; Dr. Shakira Choonara; Ms. Aminetou Bilal; Mr. Simon Marot Touloung; Mr. Serigne Ndiaye; Mr. Nair Abakar and Mr. Dario Abdula Camal – all members of the Youth Advisory Council, for fulfilling their mandate with diligence and passion.

It is my hope that they will continue to deploy their skills and expertise in the service of the Continent.

Allow me to use 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 aspiration, hope and dignity.

As young people you must resolve to overcome obstacles in our path and build a resilient and robust future that is predicated on the values of the *Africa we Want*.

Happy Africa Youth Day.