

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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Continental Youth Consultation on delivering peace dividends through the implementation of the AfCFTA kicks off.

Consultations on the meaningful engagement of the youth to advance democracy, human rights and governance in Africa have kicked off in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia as a pre-forum leading to the [12th High Level Dialogue](#). Youth from across the continent will review existing modalities and propose recommendations that leverage and foster meaningful participation of young people in delivering peace dividends through the implementation of the [African Continental Free Trade Area](#) (AfCFTA).

The [African Youth Charter](#) underscores the importance of youth meaningful engagement in all the facets of the political and socio-economic development. With over 400 million young, Africa presents a demographic bulge, which is its greatest human capital making it critical to prioritize and guarantee adequate investments are made to enable young people realize their potential and become the driving force for governance, peace and sustainable development, thereby transforming the demographic potential into practical gains.

The consultations will explore the role of African youth in advancing actions aligned to the nexus between the economic development, democracy, governance and peace

and security. Amb Salah Hammad, Acting Head AGA-APSA Secretariat, at the African Union Commission, Department of Political Affairs, Peace, and Security observes that the youth discussions are timely particularly in the current challenging context of a wave of democratic governance reversals, military takeovers and Unconstitutional Changes of Government (UCGs) and in considering the critical role of the youth to drive Africa's sustainable development agenda.

He stated, "the youth's voices and perspectives are important to the African Union. Through hearing young people's perspectives, we will get to listen, understand and act in their best interest. We can jointly work with youth to identify key roles and facilitate their meaningful participation and inclusion in democratic governance, peace and security. Inclusion is key as it provides an enabling environment for AfCFTA implementation, but youth also must also play their part for constructive engagement by developing and sharpening their skills through training to take advantage of opportunities that will be brought forth by the continental free trade agreement."

To broaden inclusiveness in the operation of the AfCFTA through interventions that support young Africans, women, and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) as well as integrating informal cross-border traders into the formal economy by implementing the simplified trade regime, the African Union is developing the AfCFTA Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade. The Protocol will address the specific constraints and barriers youth and women face when trading on the continent and create an environment that allows them to utilise the AfCFTA by accessing wider markets, improving their competitiveness, and participating in regional values chains.

Chido Mpemba, African Union Youth Envoy observes that the AfCFTA is landmark achievement for Africa and can make an immense contribution for the socio-economic development as well as fosters unity, solidarity, collaboration among African countries and among Africans. She added that while peace dividends are the benefits that arise from the reduction and prevention of conflicts on the continent, providing opportunities for the youth through unlocking the potential in the AfCFTA can also improve security, stability, governance, human rights, social cohesion and development outcomes. "Peace dividends are essential for achieving the goals of Agenda 2063 and the African Youth Charter. Without peace, there is no development, without the inclusion of young people, there is no future for Africa, therefore we must have young people at the forefront of the decisions we make. Youth led initiatives are promoting dialogue mediation, advocacy and raising awareness. Young people are engaging in trade and economic activities fostering regional integration, cross-border cooperation and mutual understanding. Youth are contributing to the prevention and resolution of conflicts and building of resilience and inclusive societies", she stated.

The continental youth consultations will seek innovative tangible solutions and concrete actions to address the various challenges and obstacles that young people face in the quest for peace dividends and trade such as lack of information, access to finance, technology, infrastructure and the markets, lack of representation on leadership and decision-making bodies, lack of skills and capacity to compete fairly in the global markets. To further explore this linkage of trade as an enabler of peace dividends, the youth consultations will focus on the following thematic areas:

- Unpacking the role of youth in democratic governance and socioeconomic development: the discussion will focus on establishing the role of youth in democratic governance and socioeconomic development.
- Youth at the center of the implementation of the AfCFTA to ensure peace dividends: discussions will focus on the normative frameworks of the African Union, Regional Economic Communities, and Member States to ensure the AfCFTA will not be a missed opportunity to ensure the youth are meaningfully engaged at every step. Regional and Continental frameworks will be explored during this session to make a case for youth-responsive actions.
- Creating access for youth to realize AfCFTA and Africa's peace dividend. Discussions will focus on the opportunities that will need to be created for youth in line with the AfCFTA implementation and reaping peace dividends. Youth require the space for policymaking, leadership, capacity, access to finance, technology, and space for political and democratic governance. Providing opportunities for youth is an investment that is worth the implementation of the AfCFTA and realizing the peace dividend.
- Africa Talks: This will be an intergenerational conversation to allow the exchange of experiences and showcase youth's contributions to democratic values and socioeconomic development. This session will feature young people's best practices and highlight their key contributions to the areas of discussion.

Recommendations from the consultations will be considered at the High-Level Dialogue to influence policies and actions on the continent. Learn more about the Youth Consultations [here](#).



For further information, please contact:

Doreen Apollos | Information and Communication Directorate | African Union Commission | Tel: +251 115 517 700 | E-mail: ApollosD@africa-union.org | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Ms Hagar Azzooz / Project Officer – AGA-APSA Secretariat, Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department, Azzoozh@africa-union.org

Information and Communication Directorate, African Union Commission | E-mail: DIC@africa-union.org
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