

## INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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### **Intergenerational Dialogue addresses complexities of leadership and influence faced by African women and girls.**

Despite progress in recent years, the number of women in leadership positions across various sectors of development remains relatively low. This disparity not only limits the exposure of female leaders but also creates a gap in opportunities for women to engage in mentorship relationships with their peers. In Africa, women and youth comprise the majority of the population, accounting for about 75% of the continent. However, many young women in various parts of Africa still face significant barriers that limit their ability to contribute meaningfully to their communities and countries, impeding continental development.

The lack of inclusion of women in development costs the continent over USD 60 billion annually. This presents a significant barrier to catalyzing the realization of the goals and aspirations of [Agenda 2063](#). While increasing the number of women in leadership is vital, addressing the unique challenges and barriers young African women face as they navigate the complexities of leadership and influence is equally important.

To address the nuanced challenges ranging from societal expectations and cultural norms to unconscious biases and structural barriers, the African Union Office of the Chairperson's [Special Envoy on Youth](#) (OYE) hosted an Intergenerational Dialogue on the 16<sup>th</sup> of July 2024 in Accra, Ghana to explore avenues for a more inclusive and supportive environment for African women leaders. Leveraging expertise from seasoned women leaders from various spheres in life, the intergenerational dialogue focused on the theme "Empowering the Next Generation- an Intergenerational Dialogue on African Women's Leadership in catalysing the implementation of Agenda 2063." This intergenerational dialogue, to be held in partnership with the United

Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The dialogue was critical to encourage a culture of evidence-based policy design to ensure that solutions are co-created and tailored to the specific needs and aspirations of young women.

The African Union has developed strategies and guiding legal instruments that focus on the attainment of gender equality and women's empowerment in all spheres of life including developing and implementing policies and programmes that address issues related to women and girls' rights, advocate for their protection and prohibit violence and harmful practices and other social norms that disempower women and girls. These include, the [AU Strategy for Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment](#), the [Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa](#) (Maputo Protocol), the [Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa](#) (SDGEA) and the [African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child](#).

Further, the AU developed the One Million by 2021, now the [One Million Next Level Initiative](#) (1MNL) to empower young people, especially young women with opportunities for Education, Employment, Entrepreneurship, Engagement as well as Health and Wellbeing. To respond to women's economic development the AU developed the [African Union Women and Youth Financial and Economic Inclusion Initiative](#) (WYFEI) to advocate for parity in employment, unlock financing for African women and youth entrepreneurs, mobilize key stakeholders to provide financial products and services for African women and youth and contribute to business environment reforms in Africa.

Ms. Chido Cleopatra Mpemba, African Union Chairperson's Special Envoy on Youth, underscored the importance of fostering intergenerational collaboration and mentorship to amplify continental efforts intended to empower young women, particularly in leadership roles. She emphasized that the active and full participation of young women, as enshrined in the [African Youth Charter](#), is crucial for achieving the goals of Agenda 2063 and highlighted the power of collective action, saying, "If we want to go fast, we go alone, but if we want to go far, we must go together." She further added that the journey towards women's empowerment is a marathon, not a sprint, requiring our collective strength and resilience.

Ms. Prudence Nonkululeko Ngwenya, Director for Women, Gender, and Youth at the African Union Commission, emphasized that fostering well-rounded female leaders requires a whole-of-society approach, encouraging young women to cultivate essential qualities for success. She highlighted the importance of formal education and training to develop the skills and knowledge necessary for effective leadership. Additionally, Ms. Ngwenya stressed the importance of cultivating a positive mindset, resilience, and confidence to overcome challenges and navigate complex leadership landscapes.

Dr. Wilfred Ochan, UNFPA Ghana Representative, reaffirmed the shared commitment of the African Union and UNFPA to championing initiatives that empower women and girls, recognizing that their full participation in leadership and decision-making is essential for achieving the ambitious goals of Agenda 2063. He emphasized the importance of partnerships in this endeavor, stating that "young women don't only need a seat at the table, but they also need the skills to lead effectively," further

highlighting that meaningful partnerships are crucial for providing young women with the necessary training, mentorship, and resources to develop their leadership potential

Women empowerment is essential for a truly inclusive Africa where the voices and concerns of its 600 million women and girls, which represent about half of the population on the continent, are heard and welcomed at the decision-making tables. Gender equality has been and continues to be important to the African Union as articulated in the Constitutive Act, further, because it is a fundamental human right that is integral to the economic growth and social development of the continent as a whole.

**For further information, please contact:**

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