



THE AFRICAN CAPACITY
BUILDING FOUNDATION

FONDATION POUR LE RENFORCEMENT
DES CAPACITES EN AFRIQUE

Building Sustainable Capacity for Poverty Reduction in Africa

Renforcer durablement les capacités pour réduire la pauvreté en Afrique



ZB Life Towers, 7th Floor
Cnr. Jason Moyo Avenue/Sam Nujoma St.
HARARE, ZIMBABWE
P.O. Box 1562 HARARE

Telephone:(+263-4) 702931/2, 790398/9, 700208,
700210/4, 799783, 799787 Cell: (+263 912) 253384
Fax: (+263-4) 702915, 792894, 700215
E-mail: root@acbf-pact.org Web site: www.acbf-pact.org

THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

ADDRESS TO THE ASSEMBLY OF THE UNION

**Seventeen Ordinary Session
30 June – 01 July 2011
Malabo, Equatorial Guinea**

**Your Excellency President Obiang Nguema Mbasogo,
President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea and
Chairperson of the African Union**

**Distinguished Heads of State and Government of the
African Union**

**Your Excellency Jean Ping, Chairperson of the African
Commission,**

**Excellencies, Honorable Ministers, Ambassadors and Invited
Guests,**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great honor and pleasure to address this important session of the African Union Assembly.

I thank His Excellency President Obiang Nguema Mbasogo and the Government and people of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea for their warm hospitality.

***Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,***

The African Union meets at a critical juncture of Africa's search for sustainable development, in greater peace and security. I have no doubt that you share with me the conviction that long-term stability is a key factor for development, and that lack of access to employment is a threat to stability.

With over 40% of its population below 15 years, Africa is by far the continent with the largest global youthful population. Managed well, youth represent Africa's best development asset over the coming decades. It is important to better understand Africa's youth in order to design and implement the best policies aimed at unlocking their creativity and innovativeness.

***Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,***

Youth unemployment is a global challenge, but it is more acute in Africa due to the pervasive poverty that many of our countries are still facing making it more difficult to allocate any social benefits to the unemployed youth.

Youth unemployment in Africa has been worsening over the recent years, mainly because: (1) Countries have had difficulty achieving above 7% growth rate per year over a sufficiently long period and in a consecutive manner to allow economic transformation; (2) every year we are adding 10 million young people to the job market, and the growth of young entrants in the job market is increasing; (3) higher education institutions, release graduates who are neither equipped with the skills expected by the productive sector nor mentally prepared for the labor market and; 4) there are inadequate policies and space for youth to unlock their resourcefulness, inventiveness and ingenuity.

The problem is fresh in mind since youth unemployment is largely at the heart of the social instability in a growing number of African countries.

Leading up to this Assembly, the Government of Mauritania, in collaboration with ACBF, held a workshop on “Entrepreneurship and Youth Employment in North Africa” in Nouakchott, Mauritania.

The workshop created a platform for dialogue and experience-sharing between stakeholders from 12 countries, 6 institutions, notably national youth associations,

representatives of public services and employment agencies, young entrepreneurs and private sector and women's organizations. Several international organizations, including the NEPAD Agency, ILO, World Bank and UNDP, also participated.

***Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,***

A major outcome of the workshop is a 'Nouakchott Declaration' containing specific recommendations:

1. Address the skills and competency gaps to create individuals ready for the labor market through partnerships with universities and training institutions, and ensuring that training matches the needs of the labor market. *This includes looking at curriculum review to introduce technical skills in high demand by the labor market, access to education for disadvantaged youth and science and technology;*
2. Work with the RECs to create an enabling policy environment, support decision-makers to develop appropriate legal frameworks, and generate the critical mass of practitioners who can shape the job creating potential of economies. *Policies impacting labor markets, trade, trans-border migration and multi-country infrastructure investments are particularly relevant in creating opportunities for the young;*

3. Create platforms for dialogue between government, civil society and the private sector to generate a positive environment for economic growth and job creation with particular focus on public-private partnerships for supporting entrepreneurship and creating jobs for young people. *Regional solutions to conflict are extremely critical for providing alternatives to young people caught up in difficult choices between famine and active soldiering ;*
4. Support learning and knowledge sharing to speed up change and uncover ideas that unlock the potential of young people at the national and regional level *particularly ideas for encouraging entrepreneurship among the young in the areas of agriculture and the green economy;*
5. Examine alternative *investment and* financing instruments for their adequacy to micro, small and medium enterprises for young people and to investigate the possibility of creating an Africa-wide fund for youth employment;
6. Uncover and share successful practices in supporting young entrepreneurs at the pre and post enterprise-creation stage; and
7. Strengthen labor market data systems including development of sector, age and gender disaggregated data and utilize them for decision-making. *Labor market*

information on job search techniques and career guidance play an equally important role.

Underpinning all these recommendations is the need to explicitly integrate job creation, and specifically youth employment, into country development policies [incidentally out of 45 countries surveyed as part of the follow-up to the Kigali Resolution adopted at ACBF's 20th Anniversary, less than 30% had identified job creation as a priority].

Your Excellencies

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Nine years ago you adopted a *Declaration on the Proclamation of a Capacity Building Decade in Africa*. Many lessons can be drawn with direct implication on the issue of job creation. In the interest of time, I will list only two:

- The macroeconomic environment has significantly improved in many African countries rendering the continent more resilient to crisis. Think tanks and policy units supported by ACBF played a decisive role in achieving this result;
- The supply of qualified economists, policy and development managers has increased in many countries, enabling Africa to create high end analysis and policy jobs, translating into a drastic reduction on reliance on foreign technical assistance.

Despite these results, efforts should be kept up as many challenges remain. Effort should especially go to prioritizing capacity in the development process and when budgets are allocated.

Developing human and institutional capacity is one of the best investments Africa can make in its search for sustainable economic growth, good governance and job creation that will eradicate poverty. I hope that you will renew your commitment to capacity development, and give your explicit support, leadership and commitment to implementing the recommendations reflected in this address.

Your Excellencies

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, kindly allow me to express my most sincere appreciation to the Heads of State and Government of African countries who honor the ACBF through their moral and political support, the African Members States for their ownership and membership contributions, our sponsoring institutions – the World Bank, AfDB, UNDP and all the bilateral donors for their belief and support of ACBF.

I would also like to thank H.E. President Mohammed Ould Abdel Aziz and the Government of Mauritania for hosting the Nouakchott workshop which resulted in the recommendations presented here today.

I would also like to thank H.E. President Paul Kagame, the Government and people of Rwanda for hosting the celebrations of the 20th Anniversary of the Foundation on 08 and 09 February 2011 in Kigali, which provided the platform for assessing the capacity priorities of 45 countries which will be used in the upcoming summit on aid effectiveness in Busan, South Korea at the end of this year.

Finally, I would like thank the African Union, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission – H.E. Jean Ping and his team for the fruitful partnership.

***Your Excellency Prime Minister Meles Zenawi,
Your Excellencies
Distinguished Ladies and Gentleman***

I thank you for your kind attention and for the exceptional opportunity to address this august Assembly.