

**AFRICAN UNION**

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## **AFRICA YOUTH DAY CELEBRATION 2016**

*“Promoting youth mainstreaming as a catalyst towards harnessing the  
Demographic Dividend”*

**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. ERASTUS MWENCHA, DEPUTY  
CHAIRPERSON, AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION**

**TIME: 1 NOVEMBER, 2016**

**VENUE: SMALL CONFERENCE HALL 1**

**Commissioner - HRST Dr. Ikounga**

**Directors,**

**AUC staff,**

**Our dear young generation and youth representative,**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

**Good morning.**

I am always delighted whenever I interact and address the young people on our continent because you hold the key to the transformation and development of our continent now and in the future. Your energy, your drive, enthusiasm, fresh ideas and ambition are magical. And Africa is blessed with this huge asset, over 400 million of you across the continent. Let me begin by welcoming you here, we are always happy when you work at the African Union Headquarters or even our regional offices and organs because then we are sure, you get to connect with experts from different fields and you also get access to educational and informative resources that expand not only your knowledge, but also your understanding of the African Union, Africa as a whole and the unexplored opportunities in its diversity.

May I call upon the all the AU Youth Volunteers sitting here today to stand up in recognition.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

**Our dear youth,**

As the continent is now, Youth take up the larger percentage of the continent's population. We therefore have to empower our young people and maximize on their potential, otherwise we will be wasting at least 50 percent of our productivity. We have to put deliberate efforts to invest in this generation of African innovators, change-makers, and leaders. The critical question we must ask today is **“How do we harness the dividend from the continent's youthful population?”**

The African Youth Day presents us all, an opportunity and platform to highlight the roles, prospects and challenges of the African youth. The implementation and realization of the development agenda of our continent rest in part, on the significant contribution of the most important demographic of our continent- you the youth.

I must tell you that the African Union is keen on ensuring that every young person, benefits from the needed investment and space to become a key player in Africa's development agenda. The theme for today's celebrations **“*promoting youth mainstreaming as a catalyst towards harnessing the Demographic Dividend*”** affirms this important commitment.

## **Dear young Africans home and abroad;**

You represent an untapped great pool of talent and resources that are required for our continent's growth. Africa cannot afford to lose out on your immense potential and energies. This is why it is important for all leaders, institutions and development partners to use this day to reflect on the practical actions in ensuring that young people are accorded the needed opportunity to play their part in our continent's development.

***Aspiration 6*** of our Agenda 2063, the continental development framework, states that we want *“An Africa where development is people-driven, unleashing the potential of its women and youth.”*

In taking this commitment forward, the African Union through the decision of our Heads of States has dedicated the year 2017 towards the development of all young Africans. All major developmental activities across the continent will be geared towards harnessing the Demographic Dividend through investments in the youth, which makes 2017 a symbolic year of getting things right for the millions of young people of the continent.

In order to deliver on this important objective, the youth have to take charge and play an important role in the development sphere. Investments made today in the youth, who represent Africa's greatest asset, will determine the development trajectory of Africa over the next fifty (50) years and position the continent towards realizing the ***"Africa We Want"***, a strong, united and influential global player and partner as envisioned in Agenda 2063.

The African Union Commission on its part has identified youth development mainstreaming as a priority in all its activities which is one of the key priorities of the Commissions Strategic Plan 2013 – 2017. The proposed youth development framework elements for mainstreaming will be geared towards, policies, programs, people that is the youth and youth development practitioners, as well as institutions. In a bid to ensure that the youth development mainstreaming becomes a continental initiative, the African Union Commission will today launch the **African Union Commission Youth Mainstreaming Guideline** and follow through with its implementation. We are hopeful that all AU Member States, Regional Economic Communities and developmental partners will equally join this important mainstreaming exercise in all their development activities.

I call on all young Africans to come out strongly with innovative ideas, speak out, have your voices heard and take your rightful place as the key drivers of our continent's transformation and development. Yours is a world that is rapidly changing. Presently you have to be armed with great tools, ideas and opportunities to respond to the challenges you face as young people. We are relying hugely on your great potential to help drive the African development agenda and we shall strive to support you on this.

That creativity, I am sure, will be seen during the **logo competition** to design the Logo that captures the essence of the 2017 theme and we wish those who will participate the very best and we look forward to honouring the winner on the 9<sup>th</sup> of December 2016.

Let me conclude by applauding and celebrating the many of you who have already taken centre stage in making impactful contributions in their homes, communities, and across Africa, demonstrating that, given the right skills, you can make a difference. I urge you to be passionate and positive, authentic and principled in whatever you do and I wish you the very best.

**I thank you and Happy Africa Youth Day to you all.**