



**WELCOMING REMARKS BY**

**H.E. AMB. FATHALLAH SIJILMASSI**

**DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE AUC**

**AFRICAN UNION 1<sup>ST</sup> YOUTH TOWN HALL  
MEETING**

**16 FEBRUARY 2023**

**ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

**Your Excellency Evariste Ndayishimiye, President of the Republic of Burundi and Chair of the EAC Heads of State**

**Your Excellency the First Lady of the Republic of Burundi, Mrs Angeline Ndayishimiye**

**Your Excellency Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission**

**Your Excellency Wamkele Mene, Secretary General, AfCFTA Secretariat**

**Excellencies, Representatives from AU Member States, Diplomatic Corps, Our Distinguished African Youth, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Welcome to your Home, the seat of the African Union.

I want to first of all want to extend my warm congratulations to the African Union Special Envoy on Youth, Ms Chido Mpemba and her team for putting together this great initiative; the African Union Youth Town Hall meeting. I strongly believe that there is no better time to implement this intervention than this period, where the Continent is experiencing an accelerated rhythm in its developmental model.

Africa is witnessing a more rapid economic and social development and much of this achievement is owed to the great contribution of Young Africans.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Key Sectors like the creative, digital and green economy, coupled with innovations in tech enabled finance and education have provided an additional capacity to the Gross

Domestic Products of AU Member States over the past few years.

Between 2016 - 2022, Africa generated more than \$5.4 billion in Start Up funding alone with more than 70% of the Start Ups being Youth led.

This example is one of many clear demonstrations of the great contributions Young people have made to further advance the Continent's Development Agenda.

These achievements send a clear message to all Leaders, that **“Africa's potential and ambition can be further realized when Young people are provided with an enabling environment, given a seat at the decision-making table and ensuring that their contributions at the table are supported politically, economically and socially”**.

The Commission's strategy on mainstreaming youth aims to strengthen its relationship with youth and equip them with the platforms needed to amplify their voices to audiences of influence.

In the drive for concrete actions towards the youth, the African Union Assembly and its member states adopted the decision to increase the percentage of the employment of young people to 35%. We are working with every Organ, Agency and Department to lead by example through providing youth empowerment opportunities within their various structures.

Furthermore, in fostering gender and youth engagement, there is the African Union Youth Volunteers corps, a flagship programme of the AU.

The AU-YVC promotes volunteerism to deepen the status of young people in Africa as key actors in Africa's development targets and goals, enhancing their participation in policy development as well as design and implementation of relevant interventions towards the AU Agenda 2063, The Africa We Want.

### **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The African Union considers African Youth as its strongest resource that requires special attention. The AUC is at the forefront of promoting the constructive involvement of youth in the development agenda of Africa and their effective participation in the debates and decision-making processes in the development of the continent.

Mainstreaming is particularly pertinent to the AUC, as investments in young people to participate in economic, social, and political life provide an opportunity to yield this demographic dividend.

Young people are at the very core of Africa's development agenda. We need, as they are so legitimately saying, to stop talking about them and to start talking with them.

Let us continue to give them a "SEAT AT THE TABLE".

I thank you for your time and I wish you the best of deliberations.