

## Statement of the Director of Women, Gender and Youth in Celebration of the International Youth Day

It is a privilege to be afforded the opportunity to address you on this occasion of the commemoration of International Youth Day. The world comes together every year on the 12<sup>th</sup> August to reaffirm and recognize young people's contribution, potential and boundless love that they have for the continent and the world.

International Youth Day offers a platform to honor the qualities of youth and the necessity to unleash the potential that they hold towards development of the global economy. The day also acknowledges the challenges faced by youth and the collective goal all concerned stakeholders have to eliminate these issues.

This year, the African Union Commission joins the world on International Youth Day to commemorate the celebration with month-long activities on the theme, "**Green Skills for Youth: Towards a Sustainable World.**" Young people are entering the labour market at a time when the momentum of the "green transition" continues to build, therefore it is a critical time to understand their perspectives on the emerging green economy and support inclusive opportunities for young people to access green jobs and develop green skills

Young people need to be sufficiently prepared to participate in emerging and changing sectors. What jobs exist for them and what more needs to be done to equip them with the skills to lead and support in this transition to a green economy. The 1 million next level Initiative aims to create direct opportunities for young Africans in the areas of education, employment, entrepreneurship and engagement and health and wellbeing (4Es + H) and is an accelerator towards ensuring these opportunities are created to prepare them to flourish in this new lived reality.

In alignment to our commitment to young people through the continued achievement of aspiration 6 of Agenda 2063, which recognizes young people as crucial in attaining people-driven development on the continent. For this reason, I am imploring each one of you to own your growth, explore your potential and recognize the power you hold, through available opportunities, to advance the development of the continent.

I want to use this platform to specially invite you to be an integral part of this celebration, use the platforms at your disposal to interact with the robust youth led activities being implemented globally that will continue equip you to become change-makers, and advocates for a greener and more sustainable future.

Africa Youth Day is celebrated on 1<sup>st</sup> November annually, and to prepare for its commemoration I would like to take this opportunity to announce the theme of this year 2023 "**1 million Next Level is knocking: Youth-led Movement that Transcends Borders**" in one word- *Pan-Africanism*

This theme will allow us to continue to highlight the immense contributions of young Africans to the cultural, political and socio-economic development of their communities

through the implementation of the 1 million next level initiative, a movement that transcends borders. The theme is a resounding call to all youth development stakeholders – youth led movements, governments, international organizations, development partners, private sector, civil society, and all African youth on the continent and in the diaspora to take up the mantle of implementing the 1 million next level initiative.

As we commemorate International Youth Day, I encourage each and every one of you to seize this opportunity to be the change we wish to see and keep your eye on this space for details of specific events and activities planned for the Celebration. Your enthusiasm and active participation will make all the difference. Join us in commemorating the 2023 International Youth Day as we journey towards a greener and more prosperous future.

Thank you for your steadfast support, commitment to excellence and love for our continent. Happy International Youth Day

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