Economic Commission
for Africa

African Union

Consensus Statement

**The Fifth African
Development Forum (ADF V)**

Youth and Leadership
in the 21st Century

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adf V

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The Fifth African Development Forum (ADF-V)
Youth and Leadership in the 21ˢᵗ Century

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Consensus Statement

In partnership with:
UNDP
UNICEF
ILO
UNFPA
UNESCO
IOM
OHCHR
UN Volunteers
African Development Bank (ADB)
Organisation internationale de la Francophonie

Consensus Statement

1.0   Preamble

1.   We, the youth of Africa and other stakeholders of the fifth African Development Forum (ADF-V) on "Youth and Leadership in the 21st Century",

2.   Noting the central role of youth in economic, social and political development in Africa, and their potential to contribute as current and future leaders,

3.   Inspired by the Constitutive Act of the African Union and in particular the African Youth Charter, NEPAD's Strategic Youth Framework, the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, and the United Nations Global Youth Leadership Summit 2006,

4.   Mindful of the challenges that youth continue to confront on the continent,

5.   Adopt this Consensus Statement in furtherance of maximising the contribution of youth to the peaceful, gender-equal, democratic and rights-based development of Africa in the 21st century.

2.0   Key Challenges of Youth and Leadership in Africa

6.   The Forum acknowledged that African youth have demonstrated their commitment and ability to act as agents of change and leaders in their own right, helping to push forward the development agenda on the continent, including meeting the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

7.   However, youth continue to face a range of challenges that constrain them from fulfilling their potential, covering the entire remit of social, economic, political and cultural issues present in African countries. Girls and young women in particular continue to suffer numerous disadvantages. Also from an age perspective, youth are not a homogenous category with certain groups experiencing greater vulnerability.

8.   The failure to mainstream and coordinate youth policies and programmes and to monitor and evaluate their implementation both within countries and at the continental level has severely hindered the full utilisation of the capacities of youth. The Forum, therefore, stressed that governments, regional bodies, international partners, civil society the private sector and young people themselves should enhance their efforts to provide the conditions and opportunities for youth to take up their right-

ful position in society. This critically depends on the political commitments of all stakeholders and allocation of specific resources for youth.

9.   The Forum underlined that all stakeholders need to work collectively to ensure that youth are provided with leadership opportunities and are able to avail of them to the best of their abilities. Only if such partnerships are created and sustained, with the youth at the helm of all efforts, can African countries accelerate development and put the continent on a path to peace and prosperity.

3.0   ADF-V Responses

Overall Responsibilities of African Youth

10.   Young people recognise that the changes they are seeking can only come when they play a full and proactive role in looking for opportunities to develop themselves, their families, communities and their societies as a whole, while demanding their rights to participation and protection. Youth should preserve and develop their capacities and utilise all opportunities to make a difference while fostering, mentoring, and nurturing their younger brothers and sisters as they also enter the category of youth.

3.1   Strengthening Youth Capacity

Education and Skills Development

11.   All young Africans have the right to an education and to have the opportunity to acquire both vocational and life skills in order to build their capacity to lead and contribute to the development of Africa. Educational programmes should above all provide youth with the skills to compete in a global market and find their own livelihoods.

Recommended Actions:
- To tackle this situation, member States of the African Union should first ratify, implement and monitor the recommendations of the African Youth Charter.
- Governments through the ministries of education and youth should revise curricula to introduce life, "survival" and job-related skills by 2010. Governments, the African Union and all partners should also support distance learning.
- Governments should develop policies and allocate funds to improve educational access for young people with disabilities, including providing physical access to classrooms and computer facilities.

- African governments should also commit to rectify the situation of school dropouts and vulnerable youth, such as street children and young prisoners, through rehabilitation and second chance education and training.
- Governments together with regional bodies led by the African Union and international partners should establish an African youth exchange programme to promote the sharing of intra-African skills and the dissemination of African values and multiculturalism.
- Governments should promote peer education in the school system and provide funds for civil society organizations to professionalize and strengthen these activities. Youth should lead and use these initiatives to inform and educate their peers on a range of issues, including HIV/AIDS.

Information and Communication Technology

12. Africa's development in the 21st century will depend on how information and communication technology (ICT) is developed, adopted and disseminated across the continent. In particular, ICT offers significant opportunities in the area of job creation. The African Information Society Initiative (AISI) stipulates that youth need to be empowered and involved in the processes that seek to establish Africa as a major partner in the information society. Youth have already demonstrated the ability take on a leadership role in the area of ICT and are often the leading innovators and adopters of such technologies.

Recommended Actions:
- Governments should mainstream youth employment and entrepreneurship in broader national ICT policies and align them with strategic development objectives.
- Governments should also expand training and access to ICT to all schools through public-private partnerships.
- ECA in collaboration with the African Union (AU), African Development Bank (AfDB), UN agencies and ICT partners in Africa should support youth employment and entrepreneurship programmes at national and sub-regional levels.
- The AU and NEPAD with the support of ECA, AfDB, UN agencies and partners should establish a Pan-African ICT Youth Programme to support youth entrepreneurship and development of the sector.

Employment

13. Young people with inadequate education and skills and few opportunities face a future of low-wage employment, unemployment and underemployment. Young

women and youth living with disabilities experience particular discrimination in African labour markets.

Recommended Actions:
- Supported by all development partners, governments should establish national youth employment funds and ensure that livelihood programmes have a specific youth focus, with particular reference to young women. Micro-credit facilities should give priority to youth.
- These efforts should also be supplemented by regional and continental funds created by development institutions including the African Development Bank.
- Non-participating countries should join the Youth Employment Network, which would help governments to develop national action plans for promoting youth employment.
- With support from the International Labour Organization (ILO), all African governments should implement national guidelines for equal opportunities for women and men.
- Governments should collaborate with the private sector and other actors to develop non-exploitative internships/apprenticeship programmes to enable young people to accumulate work experience.

Rural-Urban Drift, Migration and the Role of the Diaspora

14. As a consequence of poverty, restrictive patriarchal structures, conflict and lack of opportunities, Africa's young people are compelled to travel to urban areas and migrate across borders in search of employment and a better life often at great risk to themselves. At the same time, young Africans in the Diaspora have a major role to play in supporting the African continent and especially their peers.

Recommended Actions:
- African governments should modernize and diversify the rural economy; for example, by creating linkages between agriculture and processing to create employment for youth. This has to go hand-in-hand with enabling young people to participate in decision making with regard to family and community resources.
- Governments and civil society should also use effective media campaigns via the radio or newspapers to alert African rural youth to the realities of working and living in an urban area and of emigrating overseas.
- African governments should create a conducive environment to attract Africans in the Diaspora to contribute to the continent's development, especially in terms of remittances and investment that support progress in areas such as health, education, and entrepreneurship.

- Protocol agreements between Africa and receiving countries are needed to facilitate the integration and protection of young migrant workers. These countries should also recognize their responsibility for the dwindling human resource capacity in African countries resulting from brain drain.
- Governments together with the African Union, International Organization for Migration (IOM) and ECA should support current initiatives to facilitate internships and inter-cultural programmes.
- To strengthen the Diaspora-Africa relationship, the African Union should include representatives of non-resident Africans.

Entrepreneurship

15. Promoting entrepreneurship is a key element to accelerating Africa's development. Unfortunately, only a minority of African countries try to foster entrepreneurship in all its dimensions. Moreover, the few existing programmes on self-employment activities do not adequately focus on building business and management skills, ethics, innovation, creativity and resource mobilization. Access to finance and credit facilities are crucial but not enough, and need to be provided in conjunction with business-oriented education and training, and the dissemination of information.

Recommended Actions:
- Industrial and professional bodies, banks and chambers of commerce should establish programmes to support and promote partnerships and knowledge-sharing amongst young entrepreneurs. Mentoring schemes are also important for promoting the development of youth entrepreneurship, especially for young women.
- African governments should establish a youth entrepreneurial fund, and provide legislated incentives such as tax breaks for young entrepreneurs, including those in the Diaspora. Private and regional banks, alongside the AfDB and development partners, should also establish such funds as part of their financing programmes.
- African countries should launch an annual award for young entrepreneurs, utilizing partnerships with international organizations, civil society and the private sector.

Health and Well-being

16. Young Africans face an array of health challenges often related to their socio-economic status: sexually transmitted diseases, especially HIV/AIDS, and teenage pregnancies; substance abuse; and other poverty-related diseases such as malnutrition, parasitic infections, and malaria, to name a few. Additionally, traditional practices such as female genital mutilation have substantial physical and mental

repercussions for young women. Young Africans with disabilities also encounter considerable discrimination and inadequate health services.

Recommended Actions:

- Ministries of youth should work together with ministries of health and national AIDS councils to develop a comprehensive multi-sectoral approach to health problems, recognizing the socio-economic determinants of youth health, in particular, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and HIV/AIDS.
- Priorities should be given to providing youth-friendly health services (YFHSs) and information that is accessible to all youth, particularly young mothers and those living in rural areas. YFHSs need to be well funded with young people actively involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation through youth leadership, networks (committees) and peer education besides other community outreach programmes.
- Governments should enhance and develop proper health and life-planning skills programmes as part of in-school and out-of-school training curricula as well as training programmes to improve the capacity of teachers and young people in this area.
- Interventions for HIV/AIDS should be comprehensive, multi-sectoral and linked with sexual and reproductive health, with particular emphasis on young women. The allocation of resources should recognize the vulnerability of young people, targeting again young women.
- Programmes should also support youth in developing and strengthening their own sexual and reproductive health and rights and HIV/AIDS programmes. Youth should ensure that they actively participate in these programmes and strive to inform other youth of their activities and messages.
- The media should be encouraged to provide regular and detailed news stories about the epidemic, enabling young people to freely debate the issues as they arise and become fully informed to protect themselves.

3.2   Promoting Youth Participation and Empowerment

Sports and Arts

17. Despite the lack of facilities, African youth have a proven capacity to excel at many sporting and artistic activities. They are also the leading force for creative culture including the visual arts, literature, film, fashion, design, music and the other performing arts. Sport and culture have a critical role as means to promote education, health, peace and employment opportunities.

Recommended Actions:
- Governments, international organizations and the private sector should: a) provide infrastructure for arts and sports in- and out-of-school; b) invest in physical education and in sport and art academies; and c) establish an annual award in each country and regionally to support young Africans.

Volunteerism

18. Since the heroic contributions of youth to the independence movements in Africa, young people's enthusiasm has underpinned the most energetic and effective social movements. The idealism and commitment of youth have the potential to enact far-reaching social change and to build up effective institutions for humanitarian action, social development and political change. It is essential, therefore, that African governments, working with their development partners, foster the spirit of volunteerism among young people.

Recommended Actions:
- Along with the African Union, ECA, AfDB, and relevant UN agencies, member States of the African Union should commit to establishing an African Youth Corps by 2008 as a component of the African Union Volunteers (AUV) programme established by the Executive Council Decision on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (DOC.EX.CL/274(IX)). The Youth Corps should also be linked to an African Youth Internship Programme, as well as strengthened national volunteer structures.
- Mechanisms for volunteerism should be clearly defined in terms of objectives and designed to reflect the diversity of youth, and their need for capacity development and financial requirements, ensuring that youth volunteers are not exploited.

Culture and Intergenerational Relations

19. African traditions and customs are a rich source of heritage and inspiration for the young people of the continent. The respect for age and tradition is one prominent characteristic of African societies, but these values need to be balanced with the recognition of the role of youth in renewing society's values with vigour, creativity and leadership.

Recommended Actions:
- Continental forums, such as the Pan-African Cultural Congress, should be used to discuss and debate these cultural challenges, while also seeking to preserve and promote African languages and positive aspects of culture and multiculturalism.

- Ministries of education and culture should ensure the accurate and relevant documentation and teaching of African cultural traditions and history to connect youth to their past. Young people should embrace the study of African history and culture and seek to promote positive intergenerational relations.
- Discriminatory laws and practices should be thoroughly reviewed and revised by governments to align them with the aspirations of young people, and African and international human rights conventions and standards.

Equality for Girls and Young Women

20. Women in Africa constitute the majority of the population, contributing more than their share to the economy and welfare of their countries. However, girls and young women are disproportionately affected by poverty, lack of education, food insecurity, HIV/AIDS, harmful cultural practices such as FGM/FGC, early and forced marriages and childbearing, and widow inheritance. They are also victims of trafficking, gender-based violence and inequitable inheritance practices.

Recommended Actions:
- African countries should develop and implement a concrete action plan by 2008 to deliver on their obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979), the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights relating to the Rights of Women in Africa (2003), and the Beijing Platform of Action (1995).
- Governments should also ensure that gender indicators within the African Peer Review Mechanism take into account the indicators in the African Youth Charter, especially on girls and young women.
- Governments should create public awareness and enforce protective laws.
- The African Union should put in place mechanisms for member States to report on their implementation of the Women's Rights Protocol.

Decision Making Mechanisms

21. Representing a large and increasing proportion of the population, the democratic rights of young Africans should be taken seriously by increasing their representation in mainstream community, national and regional political bodies. Without real institutionalized participation of young people, policies and programmes, especially those relating to poverty reduction strategies, Millennium Development Goals and NEPAD, are bound to fail.

Recommended Actions:

- Governments should adopt measures to increase youth representation in parliaments and local councils to at least 25% by 2010.
- Every African government should establish and enhance enacted youth institutions including youth councils and youth parliaments at the local, national and regional levels by 2010.
- The African Union should increase youth representation and participation in the Pan-African Parliament. The AU and United Nations should also increase the representation of youth in all meetings.
- In order to ensure effective youth participation, governments should promote awareness about such programmes and processes in a language and format that youth understand and respond to through civic education centres and school curricula. Special attention needs to be given to disseminating this information to marginalized youth such as young women and youth in rural areas.
- Youth should exercise their democratic right by voting in all elections, and ensure that their organizations are based on democratic principles.

Student, Civic and Political Movements

22.   The role of youth in Africa's political history, and in particular, student, civic and political movements, has been crucial in harnessing the innovative and organizing skills of young people. They were the key to Africa's liberation, and their participation served as a training ground for future leaders. These movements are also now playing an integral role in promoting environmental issues and sustainable livelihoods.

Recommended Actions:

- Governments should protect the rights of youth to participate in student, civic and political movements for social development and transformation.
- Young people should foster solidarity among their organizations, and develop strong institutional linkages with non-youth adult-led organizations. This can be achieved by youth joining political parties, and being proactive in developing their societies.
- Supported by AU and ECA, there should be regional forums for youth to share experiences and exchange skills on political activism and good governance.

Youth and Religion

23. In African societies, religious institutions foster family cohesiveness, contribute to positive youth leadership and development as well as overall community wellbeing.

Youth significantly contribute to social development through the work of religious organizations. However, some religious leaders preach intolerance and fanaticism, which have brought strife and human rights violations to various parts of Africa.

Recommended Actions:
- Religious organizations should provide a moral and ethical framework for young people to achieve their personal fulfilment and the development of their societies.
- Governments should support inter-faith initiatives promoting dialogue and youth development, and craft a socio-religious code of conduct.

Peace Building and Conflict Resolution

24. African youth have an indispensable role to play in conflict prevention, promoting peace, disarmament and reconciliation. At the same time**,** it has been easy to use and exploit young people as an expendable resource by warmongers across the African continent because their development needs have been neglected. In contravention of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, young people aged less than 18 are routinely conscripted into both regular and irregular armies and forced to engage in combat. This is accelerated by the illicit proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons.

Recommended Actions:
- Governments and partners should enhance the funding and building of young people's capacity and their organizations in conflict resolution and peace building at the national, regional and continental level.
- Governments should also continue to establish rehabilitation programmes for victims of conscription and violence with specific focus on education, employment and psychosocial support.
- Governments and partners should use peace education as a means to prevent conflicts, focusing especially on cross-cultural competency training.
- Youth should create solidarity amongst young people during times of conflict and should subsequently be involved in the monitoring of peace efforts.

4.0 Operationalization of the African Youth Charter

In order to achieve the above recommendations,

1. All member States of the Africa Union should ratify, popularize, disseminate and support the effective implementation and monitoring of the African Youth Charter by:

    a. Setting-up/strengthening implementation committees of the African Youth Charter composed of representatives of the ministries in charge of youth issues, national youth councils, young people's organizations (ensuring representation of youth of all age categories) and networks, international agencies, parliaments and the private sector;

    b. Establishing/strengthening cabinet level youth-focused agencies, ministries, and commissions to address youth development and empowerment issues, supported by youth focal points in all areas of government;

    c. Holding national advocacy forums on the African Youth Charter, to mobilize civil society organizations, national assemblies, the judiciary, the economic and social councils, diplomatic representatives, international institutions, governments and the private sector;

    d. Disseminating the Charter to young people and youth associations through appropriate local forums, and popularizing the Charter in communities, national media, professional training institutions, schools and universities in appropriate languages and formats, including posting information on the African Union website; and

    e. Developing, reviewing and implementing national youth policies and action plans with commensurate budgetary allocations for youth promotion and development based on the African Youth Charter.

2. As endorsed by the AU ministers responsible for youth, member States should recognize and commemorate the African Youth Day from 1st November 2007.

3. The African Union should set up a task force for the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Charter in member States periodically, with reviews to be undertaken on an annual basis.

4. The African Union should build the capacity of national authorities to implement the Charter, and document lessons learned and best practices for sharing knowledge and experiences among member States.

5. The African Union should ensure that indicators to monitor the AYC implementation are included in the African Peer Review Mechanism.

6. The African Union should strengthen the Pan-African Youth Union (PYU) to increase its responsibilities beyond a political mandate to include the social and economic development of youth and to coordinate the implementation of the Charter among youth organizations in Africa.

7. All UN agencies and development partners with a mandate on youth issues should financially support member States and the AU to effectively implement and monitor the Charter.

8. African youth should ensure that they carry out their obligation to inform and educate all young people about the Charter, and to actively monitor the implementation of its recommendations. Youth should also develop and propose action plans to operationalize the Charter at the national level.

5.0   Partnerships and Follow-up Mechanisms

The implementation of the recommendations of ADF-V will be the responsibility of an expanded ADF-V Steering Committee including five representatives of youth, two representatives of ministers responsible for youth, and the key partners, notably, AU, ECA, NEPAD, ILO, IOM, OHCHR, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, and UNV. ECA will continue to provide the secretariat during the post-Forum phase for the follow-up actions arising from the Consensus Statement in consultation with the Steering Committee. This secretariat will facilitate and support the implementation of the recommendations.

Partnerships should be sort with both traditional and new media in the implementation of the African Youth Charter. The media will be an integral part of raising public awareness on youth issues, and on the rich reservoir of their potential, the investment they hold for their countries' futures, and the valuable projects undertaken by them. The media could serve as watchdogs for governments to ensure that youth-friendly policies are designed and implemented.

This Consensus Statement should be presented to ministers of youth, to the Permanent Representatives' Committee (PRC), to the Executive Council of the African Union, and finally, submitted to the African Heads of State for adoption. In 2007, the African Union should also organize a regional meeting of young people and experts to develop a more detailed action plan and monitoring framework for the African Youth Charter.