



Africa Youth Day Celebration Report

*Theme: “African Year of Human Rights towards
Agenda 2063 – The Africa We Want”*

**African Union Commission HQ Addis Ababa Ethiopia.
11th November, 2015**

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Preamble

1. Africa Youth Day 2015 was marked at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa on the 1st of November 2015, on the theme “*African Year of Human Rights towards Agenda 2063 - the Africa We Want*” with a special focus on the rights of Young Women. The observance of the day included celebrating youth heroes and listening to youth voices presenting their perspectives on Agenda 2063, based on the outcome of the pre-Youth Day 2-day Youth Forum dubbed ‘Model African Union’ co-organised by the AUC, YALDA and the PYU.
2. November 1st is Africa Youth Day, a day set aside every year to promote the increased recognition of youth as key agents for social change, economic growth and sustainable development in all facets of African Society. It is an occasion to celebrate the youth on the continent, opportunity to contribute and channel youth motivation, energy and creativity towards the achievement of the African agenda. All young people contribute to shaping society to lead it towards political, social and economic renewal. The purpose of this event is also, to contribute and channel the youth voices, energy and idealism to reinforce the efforts towards the achievement of sustainable development in Africa.

Opening Remarks

3. Africa Youth Day Celebration on November 1st was officially opened by the Commissioner of Human Resources, Science and Technology **H.E. Dr. Martial De-Paul Ikounga**. He noted the significant sacrifices and impact young people were making in their own spaces and appreciated the fact that most of the young people in attendance had sponsored themselves to the celebrations. He observed that while the liberation of the continent from the colonial masters was the major achievement of his generation, young people today must also identify major continental issues for advocacy including African Integration. He also advised the young people that time was of essence in Africa and the youth should be keen on time management if they are to be taken seriously, adding that “punctuality was the honour of Kings.”
4. Speaking during the occasion, the Pan African Youth Union (PYU) president **Ms. Francine Muyumba** informed the gathering that PYU was keen on doing its part in uniting and empowering the youth of youth and that plans were underway to launch a continental cooperative to spur youth entrepreneurship in the continent. She thanked the youth for attending the celebrations and for their commitment in civic participation.

Outcome From Model Africa Union Sessions (Youth Forum)

5. YALDA moderated a session for reporting back from the two days of special debates on topical issues around Agenda 2063 by youth from across Africa. These debates were centred on four themes namely;
 - a. The right to health including access to timely, acceptable, and affordable health care of appropriate quality.

- b. Right to education and particularly access to quality schools and skills development that is directed towards the full development of the human personality, employability, creativity innovation and entrepreneurship.
 - c. Youth civic space and African Diaspora, specifically engagement and participation including pathways and structures that facilitate dialogue between youth and policy makers.
 - d. Gender equality in Africa, particularly policies that enhance equal participation and inclusivity.
6. The young people presented key resolutions from the debates, hinged upon implementation of existing declarations, decisions and charters by the African Union on these critical issues. Of special mention was the role of youth in Agenda 2063, skills development, enhancement of free movement of persons within the continent and mentorship of youth.
 7. Another highlight of the youth forum was the engagement and tweet chat between the Ag. Head of Youth Division **Dr. Beatrice Njenga** and Youth Heroes as well as youth from across the continent. A wide range of issues on youth development was covered and Dr. Njenga informed youth leaders to continue with their engagement with the AU, and that the division is there to help provide a platform and enabling structure for youth participation.

Outcome on Discussions on African Union Clubs

8. On African Union youth clubs, it was resolved that a clear road map be formulated to give guidance. This should include criteria for registration, best model to be picked, and how the clubs would link to the African Union Commission. Other suggestions given on the AU clubs included existence of a structure to mobilize young people on a Pan African Basis, an integration agenda and free movement of people. Commenting on the issue, H.E. the commissioner stated that there was need to take the issue to heads of state, and that guidance will be given at a later date on how best the clubs would be run. Detailed report in **Annex 1**.

Outcome on AU Youth Heroes

9. During the celebration, 10 Youth Heroes from across the continent were especially commended for their work, and awarded AU Certificates of Recognition. This recognition is important as it demonstrates that in spite of challenges, young people are able to make use of opportunities to contribute to improving the lives of others. They gave short presentations on the activities they were engaged in. They included:
 - a. **Georgina Obonyo** – Kenya. She is involved in Art in SRHR. She founded the dance4life project which targets teenagers in Secondary Schools with age specific sexual education advocacy. The program uses youth culture trends and an edutainment approach. It uses dance and music to begin a conversation with young people on comprehensive sexuality education as a human right.
 - b. **Fatima Ali Abdi** – Somalia. Youth Empowerment in Somalia where she advocates for peace and women political empowerment in her country.

- c. **Lebogang Motsumi** – South Africa. She is a HIV Activist/coach an inspirational speaker and a member of UNFPA- Youth Advisory Panel. She is also a *ZAZI* Campaigner which encourages women and girls to draw on their inner strength, power, and self-confidence to know themselves and what they stand for in order to guide their decisions about their future.
 - d. **Jacob Oyindamola** – Nigeria. He founded and runs the “Slums to Classrooms Initiative” which seeks to provide young women and children in vulnerable environments and under-represented communities’ access to formal and alternative learning through access to free weekly evening classes.
 - e. **Josiane Kouagheu** – Cameroon. Journalist with The Day, Desk in Douala, Cameroon and women health rights activist. She made an impactful media coverage to show the lives of these women who gave birth in their kitchen, with scissors and razor blades. She also free-lances with several international media including Le Monde Africa and Reuters apart from being a blogger specializing in agriculture.
 - f. **Elbady Doaa** – Egypt. She is a journalist and Human rights campaigner. She brought to light the plight of women in the Egyptian prisons, Sinai girls between poverty and ignorance and has held a series of empowerment meetings with families of victims.
 - g. **Windkouni Ganemtore** – Burkina Faso. SRHR campaigner working particularly with youth and women with a focus on giving age appropriate sexual education.
 - h. **Lily Banda – Malawi**. Artist and women rights campaigner who uses music, poetry and drama. She works mainly on women's rights, protecting the girl child's right to education, campaigning against early marriages and speaking as well as fighting against sexual violence in her country.
 - i. **Yayra Adzofu** – Ghana. Social entrepreneur who focuses on women in Agriculture: She founded Kairos Ladies Network, a non-profit organization that is committed to promoting education among young girls by mentoring them and raising their interest in agribusiness and entrepreneurship.
 - j. **Josephine Kulea** – Kenya. She is a nurse who advocates against Child Marriage and is the Founder and President of Samburu Girls Foundation (SGF). She is also a youth activist addressing harmful cultural practices facing children in the pastoralist communities in Northern Kenya.
10. Commenting on the session, H.E. the commissioner appreciated the wealth of lessons and experiences learnt from the youth heroes. He noted that the youth should choreograph and sync their activities in a harmonious manner for maximum effect. He further commended the youth who respect and recognize the people who have mentored them in their lives. While awarding certificates to the youth heroes the commissioner also underscored the need for all (both men and women) to embrace gender equality.

Exhibition

11. The highlight of the celebrations was an exhibition involving the showcasing of the works and activities of the youth heroes under the theme of human and women rights across Africa.



Pic. 1. Group Photo of participants at the Africa Youth Day Celebrations



Pic. 2. Youth keenly following proceedings during the Youth Forum



Pic. 3. H.E Commissioner HRST, Dr. Martial De-Paul Ikounga listening to one of the exhibitors, Prince Ifoh from Nigeria



Pic. 4. Damola Johnson, one of the youth heroes receiving his certificate.

Annex 1. Report on the Session on Reflection on the Africa Union Youth Clubs

Introduction

1. The “Reflection of the African Union Youth Clubs” took place during the Africa Youth Day Celebrations held on the 1 November, 2015, at the African Union Commission (AUC, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia).
2. The Youth Division, HRST, AUC, organized the session in recognition of Agenda 2063's Call to Action to *“Encourage exchange and Pan Africanism amongst young people through the formation of AU Clubs in all schools, colleges and universities”* and also in recognition of the fact that African Youth across the continent had already begun forming clubs in their countries. The Youth Division therefore organized the session to consult Youth from across the continent on the rationalization of the AU Clubs.

Attendance

3. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. Dr Martial De-Paul Ikounga, Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology (HRST), AUC. He was assisted by a panel that comprised of: Ms Francine Muyumba, President of the Pan-African Youth Union (PYU), and Amb. Febe Potgeiter-Gqubule, Deputy Chief of Staff in the Bureau of the Chairperson, AUC. Around 300 Youth from all 6 regions of Africa (including the diaspora) were present.
4. H.E. Commissioner Ikounga, opened the session with a brief overview of the Call to Action in Agenda 2063 which had sparked the initiation of African Union Clubs noting that the AU Clubs were not intended to replace the PYU but to complement its efforts. He then acknowledged the youth attendees who had already started forming clubs and emphasized that he was not there to talk but to listen to the experiences of those youth that were implementing the AU Clubs and to also hear youth inputs on key considerations such as: how the formation of AU Clubs should be carried out, what role youth want to AU to play, how the clubs will be connected and managed, and how they will be structured. He then handed the floor over to Ms. Francine Muyumba to discuss PYU's perspective on the AU Clubs.
5. Ms. Muyumba began by emphasizing that the PYU was open and committed to working with youth organizations across the continent. She stated that even, the PYU has to protect the sovereign rights of Member States to determine who can make statements on their behalf, it is also important to create a space for civil society to be heard. She noted the importance of Youth being united, especially when contacting potential partners who sometimes are overwhelmed with requests from fragmented youth groups.
6. Amb Potgeiter-Gqubule explained that the AU Clubs were conceptualized to complement and link to the PYU. There was a desire to establish a local level structure that could mobilize young people on a Pan-African basis to contribute towards overcoming social and economic challenges to key social and economic continental initiatives such as: silencing the guns, universal access to education, and the integration agenda-including the free movement of people. The AU Clubs were intended to help monitor and facilitate the domestication of continental initiatives, particularly concerning women and youth. As such, discussions on how they would be registered and linked to the PYU and the AU, should be prioritized. She also

suggested that the first batch of AU accredited AU Clubs, be presented at the next Intergenerational Dialogue.

Discussions and inputs from the 6 regions of Africa (including the Diaspora)

7. East Africa: The 3 clubs established in Ethiopia and the 5 sister clubs currently being established in Cameroon were established with the aim of popularising the activities of the AU among youth in the country. The priorities for the AU Clubs should be establishing a constitution and a centre.
8. West Africa: A robust structure with a clear delineation of duties will be the most important component of the AU clubs. The Clubs should function under the Youth Division and connected to it by National Youth Ambassadors who will also provide national level oversight. They should elect Local-Level Youth Ambassadors and then AU Club Level Ambassadors who can connect with youth at the grass roots level.
9. Southern Africa: The formation of AU Clubs should include a system of monitoring and accreditation. Country reps will need to be trained on how to do this and equipped with a model for doing so. The AU Clubs should submit quarterly and monthly reports to the PYU and should organize annual or biannual conferences across the different regions for learning, including the sharing of best practices.
10. Diaspora: The AU Clubs should ensure that Youth in the Diaspora are not marginalized as often tends to happen. African Youth in the diaspora are facing different but equally challenging realities as Youth living on the continent. Although they are well-educated, they have been disconnected from the continent and this is a tragedy because they are keen to connect with Africa not just in the sense of getting to know their heritage but also in terms of bringing back their skills for the benefit of the continent and reversing “brain drain”; they represent a huge untapped network.
11. Central Africa: It is important to ensure that AU clubs are duly recognized at national levels with accreditation from the AU; as such they should work closely with the PYU whose national councils have a broader scope and can therefore play a supervisory role.

Closing

12. The H.E. Commissioner thanked the Youth for their valuable, concise and clearly articulated statements. He noted that the AU Clubs were a way of adding value to the work being done and recognized the need to consider their legal status and how to set up an international headquarters in the AU. He reassured participants that the AU Youth Division would contact them in the very near future, with a follow-up on their recommendations.

Recommendations

13. The Youth Division should share this report with all attendees as soon as possible for comments and allow them one week to submit additional comments via an online form. The information on the form will be consolidated and will guide the Youth Division.
14. The Youth Division should begin researching best practices and use them in formulating a constitution and structure for the Youth Clubs which will then be shared with the Youth for comments.
15. The Youth Division should identify a core team of Youth that will establish the first AU

accredited Youth Clubs in each of the 6 African regions (including the Diaspora), based on their experience and commitment to working with the Youth Division. While all Youth will be consulted, this core team will be highly involved in the process and will be responsible for setting up the first AU accredited clubs on the continent by the next intergenerational Dialogue as suggested by Amb Potgeiter-Gqubule.