

African
Union



CONFERENCE
REPORT OF THE
INAUGURAL

**AFRICAN
YOUTH
ECONOMIC
FORUM**



**BUILDING THE
AFRICA WE WANT**

PUBLICATION OF AFRICAN PEER REVIEW MECHANISM

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BUILDING THE AFRICA WE WANT

In partnership with **Youth Bridge Trust**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*African Peer Review
Mechanism (APRM)
Secretariat, Youth Bridge
Trust (YBT)*

The future of Africa is bright, and it is made a lot brighter by the enormous potential of its greatest asset - its youth population. The growth potential of the continent and the many opportunities that come with it can only be leveraged by the inclusion of young people into the policymaking mainstream. No longer should the realm of policy making be the preserve of those perceived to be of the right age group as the winds of change are once again sweeping across the continent and they are calling for adaptability, agility and productiveness, which cannot be realised without its young population being brought into the fold.

It is a critical epoch in history that requires the youth take up space and be the authors of their own destiny. Most crucial, they have a bigger mandate of charting the future of this continent, be it in health response to the outbreak of communicable and non-communicable diseases, government-led responses to climate change, education interventions in the era of 4IR, and the future of work, to mention but a few.

Indications already point to the important role the youth of Africa can play in the economic recovery of

the continent to global economic shocks as well as cushioning against future economic disturbances precipitated by calamitous events such as Covid-19. According to International Monetary Fund and World Bank's estimates, Africa's youth dividend has the potential to contribute over \$500 billion to the continent's GDP, a key factor that necessitates the further amplification of their voice, ideas and aspirations.

The foregoing sat at the centre of the two-day inaugural Africa Youth Economic Forum in which the youth at the forefront of change shared ideas on how these important considerations can be actualised to improve the material conditions of the people of this continent, particularly the young population, as we walk on the path towards a sustainable future for the people of this continent to enjoy. It therefore embodies the aspirations of the youth across all corners of the continent in the rapidly changing world that has witnessed, amongst others, the adoption of the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) which looks set to usher in the dawn of a new era in the areas of intra-Africa trade, continental movements, and exchange of goods and services, amongst others.

The same aspirations are also cognisant of Africa's position in the world and what it has the potential to become, including continent-wide response mechanisms to global challenges, and the role the youth can play in advancing the ideals of Agenda 2063 of the African Union (AU) as well as those of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The future is here. So, here's to building the Africa we want together!

African Peer Review
Mechanism (APRM)
Secretariat
Youth Bridge Trust
(YBT)





INTRODUCTION

The virtual inaugural conference of the African Youth Economic Forum (AYEF) took place from 18th to 19th of March 2021 under the auspices of the African Peer Review Mechanism, Youth Bridge Trust and Reset Global People.

Premised on the aspirations of Agenda 2063 of the AU to champion a democratic approach to development and those of the UN Sustainable Development Goals to create a "sustainable future for all", it sought to find an outlet to chart a way forward for the youth of Africa by drawing participants and speakers from all walks of life to deliberate on the possible solutions to the most pressing issues confronting the continent. It was a wide-reaching event that tackled a wide array of topics speaking to various concerns of the youth, including but not limited to, healthcare, education, economy and climate change.

The conference was also precipitated by the prevailing questions around the shape and form the African Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) will take as it gets into gear, including the role the youth can play in altering the economic trajectory of the continent through intra-Africa trade as leaders and shapers who are ready to take up the baton from the previous generation.

On the policymaking front, the young population remains a rich pool of resources and expertise to tap into, thus calling for a more bottom-up approach and adequate institutional architecture to keep them pushing the boundaries of what is possible. According to the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, about 60 per cent of Africa's population is under 25, a figure that is projected to rise significantly by 2100 with the implications of Africa's young population constituting nearly 50 per cent of the world's youth. These estimates cast this segment of the population as a proximate catalyst that can catapult Africa to greater economic heights.

If the proceedings of the two-day AYEF conference are anything to go by, it is quite clear that it can no longer be business as usual where the views of the youth are relegated to the side-lines as insignificant. To do justice to the cause of the youth of Africa and the vision of the Africa Youth Charter, whose 15-year anniversary coincided with the inaugural conference of AYEF, requires a much-needed reset and a break from the traditional methods of policymaking, which trivialised youth participation and their input.

DAY ONE: SETTING THE SCENE: THE YOUTH AS AGENTS OF CHANGE OVERVIEW FROM THE OPENING SESSION

The policymaking and decision-making space in key government structure across the African continent needs to change to suit the current times. Essential to making transformative change on the continent is to have space made readily available in key continental organisational structures like the African Union (AU) so that their visions can be made more amplified.

The coming into force of the African Continental Free Trade provides such an opportunity as the youth of this continent are set to drive intra-continental movements in a bid to exploit trade and business opportunities that the signing of this agreement will bring. This is what the concept of the youth dividend refers to in practical terms, as intra-continental movements facilitated and driven mainly by the youth of this continent look set to translate into continent-wide economic opportunities that can improve the economic conditions and standing of the continent and her people.

Indeed, the recent outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic, which the world is still reeling from, shows Africa's adaptive potential even in times of economic uncertainty which has been enhanced by the innovation of the youth and their resilience. It is against this backdrop that health and wellbeing of the youth is placed high on the policy agenda as the resilience of this continent will require a healthy youth segment that can take this continent's visions into the future.

It is therefore worrying that not all states have signed the Africa Youth Charter, which means the continent still has a long way to go empowering the youth to be at the forefront of change and show

the way into the future. It also means the idea of the youth segment of the population driving the national (and continental) agenda is yet to be ripe as a concept and as an ideal. But a truly futuristic approach to growth and sustainable development as exemplified in Agenda 2063 framework is highly dependent on youth participation in political, civil, legislative and economic development sectors and at all levels and stages of policy as well as decision-making processes.

The agency and efficacy of the youth is not only contingent on being given a platform at continental organisational structures alone; it is also dependent on peer learning with their counterparts in the diaspora. Forging these relations is absolutely essential if there is to be a crosspollination and exchange of ideas with the youth from across the Atlantic (and elsewhere in the globe) about the direction the continent should be taking. Delaware State University's participation during the two-day forum served as a reminder of the important role historically black colleges in the United States played in providing much-needed nurturing ground for the forefathers of the African liberation struggle such as Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere and Patrice Lumumba, whose ideals led the continent to freedom.

No doubt the information and knowledge that will be gained as a result of partaking in this process will help the youth of this continent to get a better sense of what the Africa we want will look like. The generation of Kwame Nkrumah were a fine example of how bringing into the fold the vision and ideas of Africans in the diaspora can shape the future of Africa in a way previously unimaginable.

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AFRICAN YOUTH ECONOMIC FORUM

Building Africa's Economic Future
APRM Day Pre-Event

18 - 19 MARCH 2021
5AM ET/ 11AM WAT/ 12PM SAST/ 1PM EAT

ONLINE EVENT

AFRICAN UNION YBT

GOVERNANCE AND EMPOWERMENT:

YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP IN POLITICAL, CIVIC AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS AT ALL LEVELS WITH REGARDS TO THE AFRICA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

The success of the Africa Free Trade Agreement hinges on the participation and leadership potential of this continent as a salient resource whose full potential is yet to be explored. While institutional and governance structures are important to ensure youth inclusion, it is important to take into cognisance the significant role marginalised groups such as women and lessons can play in realising continent-wide socioeconomic aspirations. Gender equity and inclusivity is absolutely sine quo non when considering continental movements and migration patterns which have always been dominated by women due to dispossession during times of conflict.

Equally so, it is important to be mindful of the fact that the African Free Trade Agreement is not a private sector driven initiative, and its success, which is closely tied to youth participation, is inextricably intertwined with the entrepreneurial spirit of Africa's youth population. The political developments that have taken place on the continent that saw the youth at the coalface of political change in countries such as pro-democracy demonstrations in Burkina Faso, #FeesMustFall campaigns in South Africa and #EndSARS clamours in Nigeria are telling of the positive impact they can have on the continent's political, social and economic future. If youth participation can have a positive influence on political outcomes, including in setting previously repressive regimes on a democratic path, the same can be said about the possibilities that the African Continental Free Trade Areas can unleash.

The challenge is that youth participation has been viewed as a favour. It is quite clear now

that this mindset has to change as it is about time that it begins to be viewed as a right. After all the leadership of the population is old and out of ideas on how to kickstart their economies into high gear in a bid to alleviate the soaring youth unemployment levels, ailing and inadequate architecture, underdeveloped road network, and several other challenges that hamper the development of the continent.

It is clear that the current political leadership of the continent will not be around forever, and the youth need to be at the forefront of this change towards a sustainable future. Without the requisite political will, this ideal cannot be realised by putting in place friendly policies. The creation of the right institutional architecture is imperative to ensure that this platform is made a reality as to ensure that the youth hold the leadership of the continent accountable without fear of reprisal and political sanctions.

To ensure that continental flagship projects like the AfCFTA usher in Africa's new golden age that will be characterised by growth and development, the continent would do well to intensify investments in education, policy capacitation mechanisms and healthcare, to mention but three. Putting these measures in place would also usher Africa into the era of the 4IR, which the AfCFTA is poised to be reliant on in order to integrate the latest technological innovations that will facilitate intra-continental movements and trade.

A bottom-up approach to policymaking, which puts at its centre civic and youth participation, must be the mainstay. Indeed, policymaking and decision-making in Africa does not end at signing and ratification.

Implementation is key and the youth can play a significant role in keeping the leaders in check. It is important to stress civic education, norms and values of good governance, and patriotism to the continent in order to spur them into advocacy and policy action because Africa remains policy rich but implementation poor.

One of the ways the youth can effect positive and tangible change is to be emboldened to make noise in order to see continental policy interventions such as the Free Movement of Persons Protocol coming into effect and to ensure that it gets a continent-wide endorsement. It is a grave concern that only four (4) African countries out of fifty (55) have signed and ratified this protocol. It is implausible that the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) has taken effect without the full backing of the whole continent.

With the wealth pool that the youth population presents, the importance of getting right the essential elements AfCFTA cannot be emphasised enough. Some of these are the Free Movement of Persons Protocol, which remain an essential component of the AfCFTA for easy facilitation of continental movement in terms of human migration and trade. Through the Free Movement of Persons Protocol, which still needs full endorsement of the rest of the continent, the AfCFTA will spur the unification of Africa as a cohesive geographic whole that it was prior to the Berlin Conference of 1884 •

SESSION TWO:

PAN- AFRICANISM AND AFRICAN INTEGRATION, AFRICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT AND FREE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE PROTOCOL

Technology is not only meant to make the lives of its end users easier, it also has the potential to bring about the type of change that can get the youth involved in matters of governance. The Africa we want is dependent on this. We live in the world where seismic changes are happening through effective usage of technological resources we have at our disposal.

Thanks to recent advances in technology, information is readily available at our fingertips and there are more opportunities to have it shared easily. In doing so it also makes the soil fertile for the youth to change the orientation of the institutional architecture so that it serves the continent's developmental imperatives in earnest. While no doubt we have benefited from these technological advancements, Africa should also start thinking of the technological innovations it can offer to the world.

For this dream to be realised, we need start at the most basic level and begin to ask ourselves what type of institutional architecture the

continent needs to optimise the benefits of AfCFTA and the role that the youth and women can play as we traverse the road to success. It is imperative that institutions put out information to young people and women and do so in a manner that it can be easily understood by people from all walks of life for wider participation. The youth and women need to start thinking of ways they can create opportunities for themselves as a direct response to the repressive patriarchal system that is intent on keeping them out.

Indeed, addressing the rural-urban divide is paramount, and focus should be placed on women in the rural areas so that they are heard more, and make them realise that their active participation in the opportunities brought forth by the AfCFTA will be essential to the actualisation of Agenda 2063's objectives of a shared prosperity and a sustainable future for the continent. So, the youth and marginalised communities should be empowered through participation in African Union's flagship projects like the AfCFTA, and similar attempts should be made to take its vision to those people who may be at the peripheries of dialogue and discourse in terms of how the trade agenda will be carried out.

In a bid to bring everyone on board and ensure that no one is left outside, the AU would do well to step up efforts to help the people of Africa own the end goal in a bid to avoid the AfCFTA being out of touch with the fabric of African society. Against this backdrop, the debate should not be about the end game alone, it should also be about how do we get there as this is a major undertaking of the AU. And one of the ways to get there is through an ever-present political will. It is important to humanise the agreement so that it is better suited to uplift marginalized communities and ensure that women are not left out of the equation.

It is also essential that AU organs forge stronger relations with various stakeholders like UN Women and such like in forging collaborative initiatives that will ensure that everyone is brought on board from the social

and economic empowerment standpoints. Care must be taken to ensure that continental initiatives such as AfCFTA prioritise women participation in supply and value chains as opposed to being biased in favour of male dominated large producers as it is the case in most parts of the continent. Furthermore, it is imperative that the AfCFTA does not leave behind other producers, especially small and medium enterprises (SME's). This will require that the AU identifies the requisite tools that will pave the path for inclusive participation by way of making SME's a key constituent of robust and successful intra-continental trade.

Access to information is vital, and emphasis must be placed on governments intensifying information-access interventions as to ensure full stakeholder participation in the process of policymaking. They may be young people without qualification, but the space needs to be adaptable to take in what they bring on the table in the form of ideas. The voice of women must included and there should be concerted efforts to bring them into the heart of discussions regarding how to make the AfCFTA a success. The fact that the implementation and endorsement of the Free Movement of Persons Protocol has been slower than that of the AfCFTA speaks of the journey that we still need to travel as most countries remain apprehensive about the prospects of opening up their economies, i.e., sectors, to external competition.

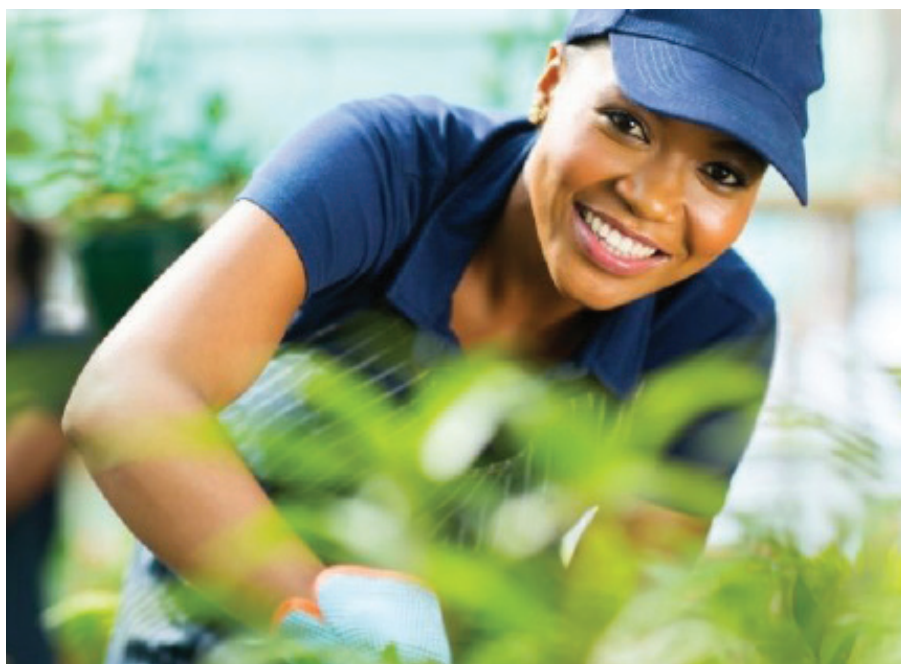
Be that as it may, while we should endeavour to liberalise trade and Africa's economies, it is imperative that we liberalise the mindset of Africans and have the free movement of people initiative receive continental support by all parties and stakeholders concerned in terms of full implementation and continent-wide patronage ●

DAY TWO: CONSOLIDATION AND CHARTING WAY FORWARD

The young people of Africa are full of outstanding innovative ideas that can help drive change and take the continent into the future if harnessed and cultivated properly. To make it work it would be useful to take seriously the importance of facilitating ease of access for the youth so that they may do business and share ideas with each other with less hurdles. It can no longer be business as usual as the old methods of cross border trade and ways of doing business on the continent have yet to yield dividends from a development and growth point of view.

Prioritising social impact capacity building and empowering young people to become active agents of change will be an essential component that will see the sustainable development goals becoming realized. While there is no doubt that the African Union appreciates the good work done through philanthropy, charitable organisations and social impact work, they are simply not enough. Focus should be placed on youth empowerment as an important consideration for the success of the SGDs. By empowering the youth, the continent would be better placed to drive social and economic change by effectively identifying areas of priority that speak directly to the issues of the youth of Africa.

Successful youth empowerment interventions must begin with the recognition that the foremost pressing issue for the young



people in Africa today is the lack of economic opportunities. While Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated this problem, it also opened the youth to the many business opportunities that seismic global changes bring, to look at things differently, and most importantly, to begin preparations to take the baton from the previous generations. Africa needs to fight an intellectual fight and nurture ideas, which should be followed by actions. AfCFTA provides an important outlet to do just that as it comes with a plethora of opportunities that need to be taken advantage of by the most enterprising among Africans.

Complaining is no longer important an option as facing the challenges head on and thinking about addressing them collectively in one accord is what will lead us into the future. It calls for a bold approach to recognising the gaps in society and to think about solutions that will help solve those gaps. The young people have time to get into these areas, and it is encouraging to see that the young people are rising to the challenge. However, it is essential that the recognition of these gaps and steps taken to addressing them is pursued wholesale through a continent-wide collaborative movement that surveys the most important priority areas.

The young people in Africa have the requisite skills to perform this task through the usage of recent advances in technology that can take on the task of identifying the problem areas, and bring homebred solutions to the table as a way to chart a way forward. Unlocking these possibilities requires bringing these skills together, working collaboratively as opposed to competing with one another. Despite Covid-19 still raging on, the true test of our agility is not only our ability to survive this pandemic, but to prove that the young population is poised to be change makers even in the midst of economic and health challenges through collaborative efforts that extend to all corners of the continent. That is what is going to help turn the tables for Africa and transform it from a low-income economy to a high-income economic success.

In the quest to drive this change, it is important that there are concerted efforts to build not only the Africa we want, but also the Africa the world needs ●

SESSION ONE:

HEALTH AND WELLBEING:

Reproductive Health Rights, And Gender-Based Violence

The central question around health and wellbeing in Africa should focus on policy and advocacy priorities in ensuring that adolescents and youth of the African continent do not fall within the cracks. It is important to unpack what this means within the context of the Africa Youth Charter and what it has been able to achieve since its formation 15 years ago. Article 16 speaks specifically to health in the charter, and it encompasses big health priorities from HIV to nutrition and has many components around gender and teenage pregnancy to mention but few. HIV is still a big sticking point, but there is also a spike in the rise of non-communicable diseases such as mental health and obesity, which are not covered in the charter.

While regional cooperation is important, national level policy collaboration remains an important factor that recognises the vision of the African Youth Charter as an expression of the young people of the continent with the aim of safeguarding all of their material and health interests. With this in mind, it is worth asking whether the current political structures are sufficiently proactive as well as being fit for purpose.

Further, it is worth asking whether these policies are aligned and whether they have been integrated sufficiently enough into the current universal health coverage systems and whether the proposed ones are capable of delivering this important mandate. It is quite clear in this case that policy coherence is important. Essential to take serious cognisance of is that the age of making policy pronouncements and promises without

meeting them with tangible actions belongs to a bygone era as the youth of our continent are hungry to see this change becoming realised.

Be that as it may, it is important that the continent standardizes health policies as a collective step towards meeting the Abuja Agreement on Investments in Health since no country has recorded notable achievements in this area. Kenya is working towards bucking this trend as it has taken steps around adolescent health policy by integrating costing as well as the integration of roles and responsibilities for key stakeholders. At the policy level this is key. It is essential that accountability and transparency be made the intricate mainstays of policymaking and decision-making processes as to improve the responsiveness of policymakers.

In South Africa, the national health insurance has a glaring gap since it does not have a platform for youth, nor does it focus on this segment of the population which, according to Statistics South Africa, continues to experience an upsurge in HIV/AIDS infections and teenage pregnancy. This continent does not need too many policies that never get to see the light of day as there is a need for action to be taken. Further implementation monitoring is also missing, and the young people don't take time to learn about these policies, which they need to do in earnest if they are to keep the checks and balances going. These policies need to be disseminated in a manner that can be easily understood so that the youth of all walks of life can be proactive in the policy and decision-making space.

Another essential consideration is the role of international and domestic investments in health for adolescents and youth people. Development Partners need to remain committed to funding towards sexual and reproductive health, and rights. The commitment of international donor agencies recognises that Africa has a youth population that leads a perilous existence as a result of lack of access to sexual and reproductive health as a chief health concern.

They recognize the need to make sure that the young people of Africa remain healthy, hence it remains an important part of global development assistance. It is important to have official development assistance flow in accordance with the national development needs of countries. According to United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) there is a finance gap of \$66 billion in Africa for health per year. This crisis provides opportunities for building better resilience, improving our domestic health care infrastructures and systems. Further, there is a need for sexual reproductive health and rights to take the lion's share of health expenditure for young people at a national and continental level.

While Africa considers the healthcare, challenges faced by the youth segment of the population, it is important to consider inclusive leadership principles, plans, and policies across the continent between now and 2030, and how it will alter the continent's future from a sustainable development point of view. The big conversation is the need to mainstream feminist movement building and

leadership into government structure. There are gaps between policies and implementation, which is a function of the absence of political will. The policy structural reforms call for gender-sensitive and equitable approach to leadership. The position of women should not be reduced merely to representation. As a continent, it is important to start talking about structures and how they perpetuate violence against women, which in itself remains a sad consequence of both colonialism and patriarchal societal structures that systematically oppressed and excluded women from the political, economic and social mainstreams.

Hence, Africa cannot separate gender-based violence from economic exclusion, which is institutionally and structurally biased against women. Access to resources in championing pro-women causes and feminist realities must be driven by inclusivity and be unapologetic about the right of women to lead as well as be the agents of change. Human history is awash with facts and details that show that equitable distribution of resources does not contribute to the advancement of women alone, but it also contributes positively to the advancement of the society as a whole. To be at the peak of innovation will require that Africans as a society undo colonial remnants of control and oppression as to bring the kind of equity that knows no gender.

Another key consideration in relation to gender equity and representation, is how can pan-african institutions such as the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) create opportunities for activists and advocates to demand greater accountability at all levels. The APRM understands that accountability towards gender equity begins with the usage of the right tools. In this perspective the APRM has developed a gender toolkit to produce disaggregated data on gender in relation to governance key issues on the continent. This data lays down the foundation to enrich countries' National Plan of Actions (NPOAs) by considering gender sensitive policies and strategy for implementation.

It is important to note that the participation of the civil society is central to the successful development of gender sensitive NPOAs. To further strengthen women's participation and the participation of the civil society in advocating for gender equity and equality in governance processes; governance institutions and stakeholders (both public and private) should engage into a gender mainstreaming strategy to ensure an effective and inclusive governance at both on continental and national level. It has become ever more important for countries to carry out the gender equity agenda in every sphere of society in an accountable way. Integrating gender priorities into continental structures will ensure harmony on the policy front and the further standardization of methods to carry out the gender equity agenda at national levels.

This integration requires the involvement of national government councils as key structures that could be tapped into, and thus represent all stakeholders through bottom-up methods of integration. Media involvement is equally important for purposes of information dissemination and rallying society behind specific policy ideals. The APRM is trying to leverage the role of the media in shaping attitudes towards women and gender equality in order to change perceptions often influenced by customs and traditions. As a partner for the Safety of journalist digital platform, the APRM noted that the media which are watchdogs for good governance, often face challenges and particularly women journalists as they are most vulnerable to physical and online abuse. In that sense, it is important to think innovatively of ways such a digital platform for women journalists to advocate for women's rights and media freedom which are key to good governance. Essentially, inclusion should not be a by the way or an afterthought, it should be a policy priority that must be pursued with vigour.



LEVERAGING THE AFRICAN YOUTH DIVIDEND FOR YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND WOMAN EMPOWERMENT AS WELL AS INVESTMENT, INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP WITH A FOCUS ON AGENDA 2063 AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS / FUTURE OF WORK POST-PANDEMIC

Leveraging the African youth dividend particularly for African women requires an alignment of thought where young Africans, policy makers, influencers and all those stakeholders engaged in the spaces of entrepreneurship and innovation to get involved in forums such as this the African Youth Economic Forum. It also requires resource and collective mobilization as well as making do with whatever the youth have at their disposal. No longer should the role of young people be reduced to protests and destruction, as Africa's true potential relies on its abilities to take ownership over our participation at national and AU policy level.

After adoption of policies and protocols, young people tend to relax their positions, which is what will kill the accountability steam – a huge part of making sure that policy pronouncements are a matched by successful implementation. In so far as accountability is concerned and the active participation of the young populations on that front, it simply means the youth can no longer create excuses for non-participation as the policy landscape is open for them to participate in. Various protocols championing youth participation in policymaking and decision-making processes exist at a continental level and they call for the youth of this continent to take full advantage of. Indeed, young people need to engage and find areas of interest, as it can't only be government doing the work all the time. It is important that the youth make follow ups to instil a culture of urgency to policy implementation and accountability.

Outside the AU structures, the question is how are initiatives that champion women causes being pursued and how do they crosspollinate with AU-driven initiatives in this sector? Focus should also be on young men in terms of empowering them to hold governments accountable. The responsibility to do so does not solely lie in the hands of women as the realisation of gender equity cannot simply be the responsibility of women. It is imperative that men are also brought at the forefront of efforts to bring about societal transformation if change is to happen.

It is for this reason that agencies like UN Women Empowerment have endeavoured to focus on the boy child as an attempt to change mindsets that can go on to set in motion the rewiring of societal mindsets. Resources need to be diverted to change perceptions and mindset, as well as to run empowerment initiatives for young people to continuously challenge male patriarchy and all forms of oppression

meted against women – systematically and otherwise.

The youth as an important consideration for realising the Sustainable Development Goals is an important policy priority. There is a need to strengthen policies that seek to empower the youth segment of the population. In Morocco, for instance, young people are an important pillar of the country's economy. They participate in national and local politics, and policies have been put in place to promote youth entrepreneurship. Young people must be considered as development partners as they are actors of development. There is no doubt that Morocco's example is something that can be replicated elsewhere on the continent as it shows clearly what the youth population can bring to the development discourse.

The best form of empowerment that the continent can give would be the improvement in education outcomes for the youth, providing access to internet facilities to facilitate exchange of ideas and development of skills. For instance, Morocco is constantly working on improving its educational and pedagogical systems, adopting a holistic approach to education and making use of modern technology including access to internet to bring about positive development outcomes in the realm of the economy. It is important that the skills the young people possess and leadership contributions they can make be harnessed in a way that can help change the economic trajectory of the continent for the better.

While this is deemed of paramount importance holistic education outcomes cannot be achieved without bringing the teachers on board. Indeed, improving skills and teaching quality is an essential ingredient for improving education outcomes that will ready the young people of the continent for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and the many opportunities it brings. This is indeed a pivotal juncture in human history in which robotics, the internet of Things and artificial intelligence (AI) gain immeasurable currency as intricate elements of our everyday existence as a human race.



- Youth in the informal sector need to be paid most attention to from a policy and/or institutional standpoint as they face the greatest risk of being swept out of the economic mainstreams.
- The same is true for youth in rural areas as their integration will make the AfCFTA more inclusive and far-reaching.
- Leveraging the youth dividend around economic integration, trade, and standardised interventions to health challenges remains the key that will unlock Africa's success as it gears up to participate in the 4IR.
- Africa's full participation in the 4IR calls for 21st century education reboot that will capacitate the youth to be at the forefront of innovation, economic solutions, and technological advancements so that Africa may claim her rightful place in the world.
- To achieve this the AfCFTA agreement should facilitate the ease of cross border movements, and address skills gap and knowledge sharing amongst the youth for purposes of taking full advantage of the benefits of 4IR-driven intra-continental trade.

IN SUMMARY

Key Take-Away Points From The Inaugural Ayef Conference

- **T**he AfCFTA needs to act as a catalyst for inclusive and sustainable development that will facilitate active participation in key areas of intra-continental trade and policy making. Youth participation in these areas remains an ongoing challenge that needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.
- Public institutions need to help the youth in the rural areas to spur development and collective participation. To this end AfCFTA needs to lobby governments to take seriously youth participation if it is to be a success.
- The future is now, and the leaders of this continent should start acting proactively. It is the right of young people to hold leaders accountable, to be empowered and to champion the cause of women and marginalised groups on the continent in a bid to stem the tide of social and economic exclusion.
- Indeed the young people of this continent are the torch bearers that will lead us into the future as they have the makings of leaders who will complete the good work started by our forebears with unquestionable distinction.

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Lennon Monyae @LennonMon... Mar 18
 Setting it up for Africa youth 🤝 Many thanks to all participants who joined the #APRMday #APRMMyouth #AYEFORUM event today . We do it again tomorrow 🙌
twitter.com/morelearnysta...



🗨️ 5 ❤️ 10 ...

Youth Bridge Trust @YBTSou... Mar 18
 Day 1 of #AYEForum comes to an end. Thank you for joining us! Join us again tomorrow for day 2, as the conversations continue.
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Youth Bridge Trust @YBTSou... Mar 18
 Ms. Nicolatte Bullani Mutuku advises young people and women in Africa to start participating in decision-making processes within their counties. She also says young people need to start traveling the continent to boost idea stimulation.

#AYEForum
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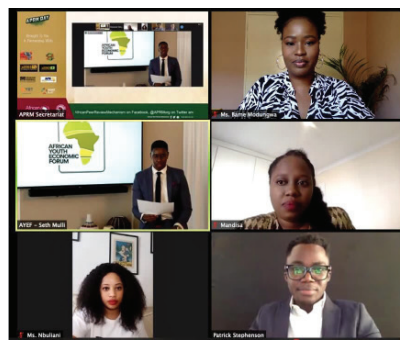
Youth Bridge Trust @YBTSou... Mar 18
 Ms. Bame Modungwa, UNDP Botswana and Co-Founder Minds for Tomorrow Association Botswana, notes that African Governments need to make concerted efforts to amplify the voices of young people and women.

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Youth Bridge Trust @YBTSou... Mar 18
 "Let's start looking at areas where we would usually not dive into. Let's research, let's start connecting with other young people on the African continent, to make it more impactful for us"

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Youth Bridge Trust @YBTSou... Mar 18
 Professor Ezrahe Aharone speaks on how emerging technologies are creating spaces for African youth to participate in economies.



Seth Mulli @SETHMULLI Mar 11
 Honored and excited to be launching the African Youth Economic Forum a continental wide platform in partnership with the @APRMorg and the @AfricanUnion that aims to give young leaders a platform to contribute towards building Africa's economic future.

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African Peer Review Mecha... Mar 10
 As a build-up to the #APRMday Celebrations. #APRMYouth in partnership with the @YBTSouthAfrica and @resetglobalpeop is hosting the 2-day African Youth Economic Forum on the theme: Building Africa's Economic Future.

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Naya Queen @NayaQueen4 Mar 10
 African Youth Economic Forum 18-19th March 2021
 #AYEFORUM #APRMMyouth #buwaafrica



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Youth Bridge Trust @YBTSou... Mar 10
 Registration is essential, register here >> -syf.us/DYY
 For more information >> [-- ayeforum.org](https://ayeforum.org)



SPEAKERS



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