



# AGA

African Governance Architecture

**2017 HIGH LEVEL DIALOGUE ON DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND GOVERNANCE  
IN AFRICA: TRENDS, CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS**

**THEME:**  
***ENHANCING YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION IN GOVERNANCE IN  
AFRICA***

**DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE**

**6 – 8 December 2017**



## A. Contextual Background

The African population is estimated to be more than a billion people. Of this, about 65 percent are under the age of 35. Each year between 2015 and 2035, there will be half a million more 15-year olds than the year before<sup>1</sup>. As such, Africa's population is young and growing at twice the pace of other continents<sup>2</sup>. These factual observations have been corroborated by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which projects the number of youth in Africa to increase by 42% by 2030, with the current levels likely to double by 2055. These figures present a catch-22 situation for the continent. On one hand, Africa's youth population presents a demographic dividend for positive socio-cultural and politico-economic transformation. On the other hand, the African youth bulge, if not positively harnessed, may constitute a deficit hampering the continent's efforts towards socio-economic development and structural transformation in fulfilment of Agenda 2063-The Africa We Want and the 2030 global agenda for sustainable development.

It has to be recognised that Africa has made significant progress towards democratisation since the late 1980s. Unlike in the 1960s and '70s, whereby one-party rule and military rule were the norm, today, multi-party elections are the medium for alternation of power. By and large, in-between elections, democratic and participatory governance is progressively taking hold through a culture of constitutionalism, human rights, justice, rule of law, accountability etc. This progress has been mostly underpinned by several factors including relatively stable governance space; higher domestic demand, coupled with an improved regional business environment and macroeconomic management; increasing public investment in critical sectors, especially infrastructure; a buoyant services sector and expanded trade and investment ties with emerging economies<sup>3</sup>. Nonetheless, this commendable progress has not impressed the masses of unemployed Africans, particularly the youth who are grappling with unemployment, inequality, poverty and underdevelopment. Given these challenges, the youth perceive the progress on the governance front, thus far, as non-inclusive.

In its Jobs for Youth in Africa Strategy 2016 – 2025<sup>4</sup>, the African Development Bank (AfDB) noted that of nearly 420 million youth aged 15-35 in Africa, one-third are unemployed and discouraged, with another third vulnerably employed, and just one in six in wage employment. In the education sector, despite the surging increase in enrollment particularly between 2000 and 2010, only 6 percent of young people in Africa are enrolled in higher education institutions compared to the global average of 26 percent<sup>5</sup>. Yet, Africa requires both highly trained people and top-quality research in order to be able to formulate the policies, plan and implement programmes and projects that are essential to economic growth and development<sup>6</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Filmer, Deon; Fox, Louise. 2014. Youth Employment in Sub-Saharan Africa. Africa Development Forum; Washington, DC: World Bank and Agence Française de Développement. © World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/16608>  
License: CC BY 3.0 IGO.

<sup>2</sup> McArthur, J. W. 2014. "Pushing the Employment Frontiers for Africa's Rural and Urban Youth." Paper, Foresight Africa, Brookings Institution, Washington, DC. <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Research/Files/Reports/2014/foresight%20africa%202014/01%20foresight%20employment%20rural%20urban%20youth%20mcarthur.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> UNECA (2015) Economic Report on Africa [https://issuu.com/unpublications/docs/e15iik2\\_9789210573184](https://issuu.com/unpublications/docs/e15iik2_9789210573184)

<sup>4</sup> AfDB (2016). Jobs for Youth in Africa Strategy 2016 – 2025

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Sifuna, D. N., & Sawamura, N. (2010). Challenges of Quality Education in Sub-Saharan Africa-Some Key Issues.[http://aadccc.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/e/publications/sosho4\\_1-01\\_02.pdf](http://aadccc.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/e/publications/sosho4_1-01_02.pdf)

In addition, while the continent is experiencing increasing populations generally, its urban cities are also welcoming a huge influx of rural migrants seeking newer opportunities in its city centres. This rural-urban migration comes with attendant challenges. Specifically, young Africans who are the bulk of these migrants' face realities opposite to urban promises of dynamism and modernity including better access to education, wages and services which they hoped for. The result is an increasing urban population and shrinking formal employment opportunities which is contributing to widespread urban poverty and insecurity across the continent<sup>7</sup>. Politically, Africa's youth still endure socio-cultural and politically imposed barriers. These barriers which manifest in the form of structural hindrances and exclusionary laws include, ultra-expensive political processes, limited internal democracy in political parties as well as age of candidacy that is in most cases significantly higher than the legal voting age.

Addressing these challenges is at the core of harnessing demographic dividends in Africa. Thus, the ability of the continent to leverage its huge youth demography is largely dependent on the responsiveness of its policies, structures, and processes that seek to address these challenges. Africa's pool of young people today can spur innovation, creativity, enterprise and propel the continent's march to transformation if meaningfully engaged in all spheres of the African society.

The Sixth High-Level Dialogue on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance: Trends, Challenges and Prospects<sup>8</sup> will grapple with these issues. This dialogue is being convened at an opportune moment. It is taking place during the tenth anniversary of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) since its adoption on 30 January 2007. This historical milestone compels us to assess the level of progress in respect of Africa's democratisation. This dialogue is also happening during the year declared by the African Union (AU) Policy Organs as the year of harnessing demographic dividend through investments in youth. Given these two important historical milestones (the tenth anniversary of ACDEG and the year of the youth), the dialogue will explore the extent of youth participation and representation in governance processes in line with both ACDEG and the 2006 African Youth Charter (Youth Charter).

## **B. Youth Participation and Representation in Governance**

At the core of the discussion on youth participation is the recognition of young people's agency and dynamism. Youth Participation is often referred to as active, informed and voluntary involvement of young people to play a vital role in their own development as well as in that of their communities by placing premium on their roles as initiators, enablers and beneficiaries of change<sup>9</sup>. Youth representation on the other hand, speaks to their interaction and engagement with electoral and political governance processes. Particularly, it refers to young people's ability

---

<sup>7</sup> Youth poverty, employment and livelihoods: social and economic implications of living with insecurity in Arusha, Tanzania Nicola Banks Environment and Urbanization Vol 28, Issue 2, pp. 437 – 454 First published date: June-29-2016 10.1177/0956247816651201

<sup>8</sup> The High-Level Dialogue on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance is an annual convening that is intended to provide a frank, open and inclusive space for African Governance Platform Members, AU Member States and non-state actors, including civil society, think tanks, research institutions, media and selected Africa citizens to reflect on the impact of their work towards the consolidation of democracy and strengthening of participatory governance in Africa. The Dialogue that is in its 6<sup>th</sup> convening analyses emerging trends, challenges and prospects of given thematic democratic governance and human rights issues in Africa.

<sup>9</sup> DFID-CSO Youth Working Group (2010) Youth Participation in Development A Guide for Development Agencies and Policy Makers <http://www.restlessassets.org/wl/?id=umaETRcmVyn2VEpSrxu7JWWkHom5RYli>

to voluntarily make choices about their representation in political and democratic institutions including political parties, parliaments, civil society formations, among others.

To further contextualise the issue of youth participation and representation in Africa, there is need to interrogate the age of youth on the continent and how this is implicated in the current discourse.

According to the Youth Charter, youth or young people refers to every person between the ages of 15 and 35 years. Youth are socially constructed and not homogenous in Africa and beyond. Different AU Member States have adopted different definitions of youth in light of the demographic, financial, economic, political and socio-cultural realities of their respective countries.

In most African countries, young people face a challenge of “waithood”. which is the culmination of the inability of young people to meaningfully participate and be represented in all spheres of the African society. Waithood is regarded as a period between childhood and adulthood when many young people are yet to attain the social markers of adulthood; secure gainful employment, get married and form their own families<sup>10</sup>. This phenomenon manifests in several situations and is at the centre of the challenge of youth empowerment and development in Africa. Addressing this challenge of waithood thus calls for targeted policy programming for youths designed to take into consideration the homogenous nature of youth in Africa, their varied contexts and the guarantee of the rights to freely participate and engage in all spheres of the society.

In this regard, the AU has adopted a plethora of normative frameworks to foster meaningful youth participation and representation in governance process at sub-national, national, regional and continental levels. These include the 2002 Constitutive Act of the AU; the Youth Charter; and ACDEG. These frameworks spell out rights, freedoms, and duties that accrue to young people. They provide guidance on how to effectively and meaningfully leverage young people’s potentials for Africa’s socio-economic development and structural transformation. Specifically, the Youth Charter provides “governments, youth, civil society and international organisations with a continental blueprint, which underlines the rights, duties, and freedoms of youth in Africa”, including the right to participate and be represented in all spheres of society.

In order to provide a framework for multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional engagement of all stakeholders towards the achievement of the goals and objectives of the Youth Charter, AU Member States adopted the AU Youth Decade Plan of Action (DPOA) (2008 – 2018). The DPOA was developed to facilitate more coordinated and concerted actions towards accelerating youth empowerment and development. In addition, the AU Heads of State and Governments through the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Solemn Declaration adopted Agenda 2063 as the blueprint and roadmap for development in Africa for the next 50 years. Agenda 2063 envisions, “an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena”. By placing citizens at the heart of efforts to attain continental integration, prosperity and development, Agenda 2063 marks a significant

paradigm shift by acknowledging that sovereignty rests with the people. At the core of this assertion is the active participation of citizens as a critical catalyst for the attainment of the developmental goals of the continent. Aspiration 6 of Agenda 2063 envisions “an Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth and with well cared for children”.

Furthermore, policy initiatives such as the African Governance Architecture – Youth Engagement Strategy (AGA-YES), provide a framework for the strategic and effective participation of Africa’s youth in the democratic governance initiatives on the continent<sup>11</sup>. The design of AGA-YES was inspired by a right based approach to youth empowerment premised on the rights of young people to contribute to development aspirations of the continent. It is intended to reinforce the various AU commitments and pronouncements in areas of youth leadership and participation based on the acknowledgement of young people’s agency as beneficiaries, partners and agents of democratisation of Africa.

At the national level, political commitment to enhance youth participation and representation in governance has been exemplified by the ratification of the Youth Charter by 38 out of 55 AU Member States. In an effort to empower young people economically, socially and politically at national, sub-national and local levels, a significant number of AU Member States have taken steps towards the domestication and implementation of the Youth Charter, among other normative instruments. Such steps have included the adoption of legislations that provide for youth quotas in national policies; national youth policies that provide for mainstreaming youth in all spheres of life; as well as establishment of institutions, such as National Youth Councils and youth ministries and agencies.

Despite existing initiatives and efforts, several structural barriers continue to hinder the meaningful participation and representation of youth in governance in Africa, leading to increasing frustrations and feelings of disenfranchisement which continue to threaten social cohesion, peace and security of the continent. These include:

- a) discriminatory cultural practices and norms that affect young people and even more disproportionately, young women’s meaningful participation and representation in socio-economic and political governance spaces;
- b) marginalization and systematic exclusion of youth from socio-economic and political governance and decision-making processes through restrictive and prohibitive laws and legislations;
- c) socio-economic inequalities occasioned by high rates of poverty, unsustainable urbanization and inequitable distribution of opportunities and resources to the rural areas;
- d) limited access to quality education and decent job opportunities resulting in high youth unemployment rate estimated at over 12% by the International Labour Organisation; and,
- e) huge gap between norm setting and implementation of international, continental, regional and national laws and normative instruments by AU Member States.

---

<sup>11</sup> AGA Citizen Engagement. Available at <http://aga-platform.org/index.php/2015-10-20-06-26-8>.

Nevertheless, several young people are grabbing the bull by the horns and leading change within the limits of their realities. Several of them are bringing about significant changes in the social and economic sectors as well as in political spheres. However, the impact of their contribution is limited, relative to the widespread transformation required. Hence, efforts must be put in place to support and increase the number of young game-changers and nurture them into a critical mass for Africa's transformation. Central to this, is putting in place the prerequisite strategic imperatives to facilitate this process,

In recognition of the necessity to cast the light on the challenges faced by African youth and renew commitment among AU Member States to redress the same, the AU Heads of State and Government during the January 2016 Summit held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia devoted the theme of the year 2017 to "Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth". In response to this Decision, the African Union Commission (AUC) developed an AU Roadmap on Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth. The Roadmap spells out the necessary areas for strategic investments for Africa's youth development<sup>12</sup> through four main pillars: Employment and Entrepreneurship; Education and Skills Development; Health and Wellbeing; and Rights, Governance and Youth Empowerment. These pillars point to key actions and areas of investments which have been defined in line with relevant and strategic AU policy instruments and frameworks to position Member States towards harnessing the demographic dividend and ensuring the full implementation of both Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

### **C. About the 2017 High Level Dialogue**

Within the African setting, governance denotes contestation, control and distribution of power, authority and resources at national, regional, and continental levels. Specifically, at national level, governance is about mediating power relations between state and society and this comes in four main dimensions: political, economic, corporate and social. Political governance relates to political power as mediated, inter alia, through regular multiparty elections; while economic governance relates to the management of the national economies including the relations between the state and the private sector. On the other hand, corporate governance relates to how private enterprises (including big corporations) conduct their business and the extent to which they abide by codes of ethics of corporate social responsibility, payment of taxes and fair pricing of their products. Social governance relates to social relations between the state and citizens mediated through policies aimed at improving the livelihoods of ordinary citizens. As such, governance is a critical component for the democratisation and development processes in Africa, with youth participation and representation regarded as key enablers and catalyst for the realisation of the Africa We Want. The sheer size, energy, enthusiasm, innovation and dynamism of Africa's current cohort of young people are critical assets that can be harnessed for the continent with appropriate policies that deal adequately with the challenges they face<sup>13</sup>.

In an effort to give effect to Pillar 4: Rights, Governance and Youth Empowerment of the AU

---

<sup>12</sup> African Union (2016) Roadmap on Harnessing Demographic Dividends through investments in Youth

<sup>13</sup> Gyimah-Brempong, K. & Klmenyi M. S. (2016) Youth Policy and the Future of African Development [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/04\\_youth\\_policy\\_african\\_development\\_kimanyi.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/04_youth_policy_african_development_kimanyi.pdf)

Roadmap on Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth, the African Governance Platform<sup>14</sup> coordinated by the AGA Secretariat based at the Department of Political Affairs of AUC dedicated the theme of the Sixth High-Level Dialogue to “**Enhancing Youth Participation and Representation in Governance in Africa**”.

The Dialogue is intended to provide a frank, open and inclusive space for policymakers and practitioners to interrogate policy and practice imperatives for enhancing meaningful participation and representation of youth in governance, particularly in the political, economic, social as well as peace and security processes in Africa. In addition, the Dialogue will focus specifically on appropriate governance responses that could guide state and non-state interventions at national, regional and continental levels.

#### **D. Thematic Focus of the High-Level Dialogue**

The Dialogue will be centered around the following five (5) thematic areas:

- (i) **Youth and Political Governance** – with focus on assessing as well as making policy and practical recommendations on deepening youth participation and representation in political governance processes in Africa;
- (ii) **Youth in Society** – with special emphasis on governance imperatives for ensuring decent quality of life for young people in Africa, including access to education, health facilities, housing, and general improvement of their livelihood. Discussions will also centre on the issues of urbanisation and development beyond the urban centres, making a case for issues of decentralisation and local governance response to local needs;
- (iii) **Youth Participation in the Economy** – with focus on policy imperatives for accelerating economic transformation on the continent that will facilitate wealth creation and entrepreneurship. Special attention will be given to emerging opportunities in the knowledge, digital, green and blue economies on the continent;
- (iv) **Youth, Peace and Security** – focus will be on countering terrorism and violent extremism and leveraging the youth population for peacebuilding, social cohesion and constructive management of diversity. Discussions will focus on building a culture of peace and democracy in Africa and how young people can contribute to building national infrastructures for peace in AU Member States; and,
- (v) **Young Women’s Place** – special focus on young women will facilitate deliberations on the peculiarities of young women in relation to participation and representation in governance spheres in Africa. This aspect is critical because young women suffer a double jeopardy: they are marginalised on the basis of their gender; they are excluded on the basis of their age.

In addressing these five main issues, the specific issue of youth organised and mobilised as a cohesive movement advocating for responsive policy and practice in Africa will be central to the discussions. As such, a High-Level Panel conversation is envisaged as an over-arching

---

<sup>14</sup> The African Governance Platform is the institutional mechanism for the African Governance Architecture (AGA) – a platform for dialogue between various stakeholders who are mandated to promote and strengthen democratic governance in Africa, in addition to translating the objectives of the legal and policy pronouncements in the AU Shared Values. The African Governance Platform is composed of all AU Organs and Regional Economic Communities with the mandate to promote and strengthen governance, democracy and human rights on the continent.

session to highlight the state of the youth movement today in Africa and how it can be rejuvenated to support Africa's transformation.

#### **D. Goal and Objectives**

The overall goal of the Sixth High-Level Dialogue is to explore the barriers hindering meaningful youth participation and representation in governance processes and propose policy recommendations as well as practical measures to redress the challenges. Specifically, the Dialogue will provide a platform to share evidence-based knowledge and analysis as well as Exchange comparable lessons and experiences on enhancing meaningful youth participation in governance processes.

The specific objectives are to:

- a) Facilitate an intergenerational understanding and appreciation of the barriers to youth participation and representation in political governance processes;
- b) Identify practical and strategic approaches towards the enhancement of youth abilities as social change agents;
- c) Examine policy imperatives for accelerating economic transformation of the Continent through harnessing the demographic dividend;
- d) Motivate for an enhanced participation of young people in formal and informal peace and security processes on the continent;
- e) Reinforce the centrality of young women's inclusive participation in the social, political and economic spheres towards harnessing Africa's demographic dividends;
- f) Proffer policy and practice proposals on improving youth participation in Africa's economic spaces including guidance on governance imperative for improving employment and jobs in Africa

#### **E. Expected Outcome**

It is expected that the 2017 High-Level Dialogue will meaningfully contribute towards the realisation of Aspiration 6 of Agenda 2063 which envisions "an Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth and with well cared for children".

The Dialogue will also assist with identifying specific roles of AU Member States, Regional Economic Communities and non-state actors towards enhancing youth participation and representation in governance spheres

#### **F. Expected Outputs**

- One (1) Discussion Paper on enhancing youth participation and representation in governance processes in Africa;
- Four (4) Policy Briefs focusing on each of the thematic focus of the HLD;

- One (1) Proceedings Report that will be creatively disseminated widely through traditional and new media;
- One (1) Short Documentary on the HLD Proceedings and the Regional Youth Consultations;
- Revamped AGA Website;
- Press Releases (Various);
- Media Interviews (Various)
- One (1) Special Issue of the African Governance Newsletter on the HLD

## **G. Methodology**

The methodology to be followed in preparation and execution of the project will include:

- (i) Data collection, collation and analysis (Research)
- (ii) Peer Review of papers produced
- (iii) Validation of the papers
- (iv) Consultations and dialogue (one main forum and pre-forum events including three regional youth consultations and a gender dialogue)
- (v) Publications
- (vi) Dissemination of the publications
- (vii) Policy influence and advocacy

Specifically, Dialogue discussions will be conducted through several interactive strategies including TV-Style moderated Panel Discussions, Evening Baobab Conversations with high profile individuals, Marketplace interactions and plenary forums. The Panel Discussions will be designed to ensure an intergenerational exchange as well as ensure a mix of policy and practitioner’s perspective in the conversations.

In addition, the High-Level Dialogue will include opinion pieces in the media, interviews, robust social media engagement, a video documentary and other innovative means to spur debate before and during the Dialogue, engage the virtual audience in the deliberations, and disseminate the outcomes of the Dialogue.

## **H. Documentation**

In the interest of protecting the environment, the Sixth High-Level Dialogue will, to the extent possible, be paperless. Most of the documentation for the Dialogue Forum will be shared electronically. Very few basic documents will be reproduced in hard copy. All High-Level Dialogue documents and news updates will be available on the [www.dgtrends.org](http://www.dgtrends.org) website, Twitter @AUC\_DPA, Hashtag #DGTrends.

## **I. Participation**

The key stakeholders to be invited to the High-Level Dialogue include the following:

- |   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| • Heads of State and Government of the AU Member States | • AU organs and institutions       |
| • Former Heads of State and Government                  | • Regional Economic Communities    |
|   | • Youth networks and organizations |
|   | • Women’s organizations            |

- Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)
- National and State Institutions
- Political Parties
- Development Partners and Agencies
- Private Sector (Multinationals/ Local/Informal trade groups)
- Philanthropy Organisations and Individuals
- Trade Union Movements
- Religious Organisations
- African Traditional Authorities
- UN agencies and other International and continental financial institutions (e.g. AfDB, IMF, World Bank)
- Media
- Academic and Research Institutions as well as Think Tanks.

## **J. Partnership**

The Sixth Annual High Level Dialogue on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance is a Flagship Initiative of the African Governance Platform to foster dialogue. It will be jointly convened by the Department of Political Affairs of AUC as the Secretariat of the AGA and the Government of the Republic of South Africa. Other partner Organisations will provide technical and financial support towards the dialogue.

## **K. Working Languages**

The Meeting will be conducted in Arabic, English, French and Portuguese.

## **Q. Contact Details**

### **Dr. Khabele Matlosa**

Director of Political Affairs,  
African Union Commission  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
Email: [matlosaK@africa-union.org](mailto:matlosaK@africa-union.org)  
Tel: +251-11-551-7700 (Extension 2610)  
+251-11-518-2610 (DL)  
+251-911-23-05083 (M)

### **Amb. Salah Hammad**

Ag. Head, AGA Secretariat  
African Union Commission  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
Email: [HammadS@africa-union.org](mailto:HammadS@africa-union.org)  
Tel: + 251-11-518-2625 (DL)  
+251-91-305-7711 (M)