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**DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE**

**9<sup>th</sup> AFRICAN UNION GENDER PRE-SUMMIT**

**Theme:**

**HARNESSING THE DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND THROUGH  
INVESTMENTS IN YOUTH: EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY YOUNG  
WOMEN, FOR LEADERSHIP AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION**

**22-27 January 2017**

**African Union Commission Headquarters**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

## I. Introduction and background

The African Union Commission (AUC)'s Women, Gender and Development Directorate (WGDD) in collaboration with the Department for Human Resource, Science and Technology (HRST) and the Department of Social Affairs (DSA) and in partnership with Civil Society and United Nations Partners is convening the 9<sup>th</sup> African Union (AU) Gender Pre-Summit from 22 to 27 January 2017 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, at the margins of the 28<sup>th</sup> African Union (AU) Summit. The AU Assembly Decision (Assembly/AU/Dec.591 (XXVI) of January 2016 devoted the theme of the year 2017 to "Harnessing the Demographic Dividend Through Investments in the Youth"<sup>1</sup>. In accordance with established practice, the Gender Pre-Summit will focus on the theme of the Summit.

Further to adopting the 2017 theme, the AU Assembly Decision (Assembly/AU/Dec.591 (XXVI) requested the AUC in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Development Bank (AfDB), the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Coordination and Planning Agency, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), as well as other United Nations partners and development agencies to:

- i) Expedite the implementation of a continental initiative on Demographic Dividend for Africa;
- ii) Develop a roadmap with key deliverables and milestones to be submitted to the next Ordinary Session of the Assembly scheduled for July 2016 through the Executive Council, to guide Member States and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) on concrete actions to be undertaken in 2017 and beyond.

In order to deliver on this important assignment, the Commission, together with the above-named institutions, undertook a multi-stakeholder consultative process towards the preparation of the 2017 AU Roadmap on "Harnessing the Demographic Dividend Through Investments in the Youth" which reflects the inputs and aspirations of a wide range of key stakeholders. The Roadmap adopted by the Executive Council (EX/Dec.921 (XXIX)) focuses on four (4) thematic pillars: Employment and Entrepreneurship; Education and Skills Development; Health and Wellbeing; Rights, Governance and Youth Empowerment.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Gender Pre-Summit will focus on Pillar 4, i.e. Human Rights, Governance and Youth Empowerment, with particular emphasis on empowering young people, especially young women for leadership and civic participation. This is guided by the results of a recently conducted online survey representing the voices of 2041 young people from across Africa. Young people were requested to complete a questionnaire to indicate what they "believe should be the priority for investment in young people in the context of the 2017 African Union theme". The results indicated that 64,9% of respondents (67.1% male and 32.9 female) recommended the AU to prioritize Pillar 4 of the AU Demographic

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<sup>1</sup> According to the African Youth Charter, youth or young people shall refer to every person between the ages of 15 and 35 years

Dividends Roadmap on Human Rights, Governance and Youth Empowerment and particularly youth leadership and empowerment for civic participation.

In addition to the above-mentioned Roadmap, the discussions will be considered within the framework of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (Maputo Protocol), the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA), the African Youth Charter (AC), the Youth Decade Plan of Action, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG), Agenda 2063, and the Declaration on African Human Rights Decade, the Beijing Platform for action all of which promote youth participation among their priority areas of action. These instruments provide a good frame of reference for a rights-based approach to young people's leadership and effective participation in governance and other civic processes affecting their lives.

This Gender Pre-Summit is an opportunity for young people to engage policy makers, share their concerns and opinions, with a view to influencing policies and decisions that will translate into more strategic investments in young people to harness the demographic dividends in Africa.

The Gender Pre-Summit will also host the 2017 edition of the AU Kwame Nkrumah Regional Award, to recognize, award and honor outstanding excelling African Women Scientists for their scientific achievements, discoveries and innovations as well as to promote the participation of African women and address their under representation in science, technology and innovation.

## **II. Rationale and Justification**

There is recognition, in Africa and globally, that investing in young people and empowering them for leadership and effective civic engagement, can contribute positively to the achievement of development outcomes set in Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development Goals. Both Agendas recognize the critical agency of young people and emphasize inclusivity and broad participation as well as the principle of leaving no-one behind.

The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action (BDPA) specially identifies the girl-child as one of the 12 critical areas of concern and advocates for girls' and young women's empowerment through, among others, quality education, health care, non-discrimination and prevention of violence. The BDPA and Sustainable Development Goals also call for gender parity in decision making. Therefore investing in young people, especially young women and girls is not only a legal obligation, but a development imperative that will ensure inclusive and sustainable growth on the continent. Young people, especially young women and girls are fully-fledged members of society and therefore are entitled to the full rights accorded to all members of society to participate in civic processes.

Civic participation is an important component of youth development as it contributes to building human and social capital. Facilitating young people's voices and inclusion in

leadership and civic processes that affect their lives, can contribute to positive outcomes and gains at the individual and community levels. If young people are civically engaged, they will be more likely to develop and exhibit forms of social capital that are conducive to the functioning of democracy, and to peaceful co-existence.<sup>2</sup> Civic engagement may enhance chances for livelihood opportunities and therefore contribute to employment and economic empowerment. Civic engagement teaches young people about their rights and responsibilities and instills a sense of active citizenship to be part of decision-making processes that affect their lives. For young women in particular, their effective and full participation in leadership and civic life is critical to address the deficit of female leadership and to close the gender gap in politics. Greater participation of young women is likely to lead to more youth friendly and gender sensitive policies and thereby, contribute positively to the attainment of gender equality on the continent.

Young people constitute a large and rapidly growing proportion of the population in most African countries. They can be a creative force, a dynamic source of innovations, and they have undoubtedly, throughout history, participated, contributed, and even catalyzed important changes in political systems, power-sharing dynamics and economic opportunities.<sup>3</sup> Young people have the power to transform their communities and the continent. Investments made today in the youth, who represent Africa's greatest asset, will determine the development trajectory of Africa. Additionally, young women's participation in politics and governance and access to decision-making can serve as a key indicator of gender equality and respect of human rights in democratic societies. This is a huge resource, if adequately incentivized, for ensuring meaningful participation, representation and observance of human rights on the continent.<sup>4</sup>

Despite all these, young people, particularly young women are still under-represented in civic spaces, including in politics, economy, social affairs, cultural development and science and technology. Young women, for example, lament the lack of safe spaces to articulate issues and resources for strong mentoring/ support systems, societal discrimination and social/ cultural constructions which make it difficult to participate more effectively.<sup>5</sup> Young women's opportunity to realize their potential is derailed by challenges such as early marriages, unwanted pregnancies, poor access to health care and limited education.

Young women and girls are often unable to enjoy the benefits of secondary education and formal paid employment under decent conditions, which would allow them to build skills, assets and resilience.<sup>6</sup> Young girls accounts for 75% of new HIV infection among

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<sup>2</sup> Mercy Corps. "*Civic Engagement of Youth in the Middle East and North Africa: An Analysis of Key Drivers and Outcomes.*" Mercy Corps, 2012, p18

[http://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/mena\\_youth\\_civic\\_engagement\\_study\\_-\\_final.pdf](http://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/mena_youth_civic_engagement_study_-_final.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-political-participation.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> AU Roadmap on "Harnessing Demographic Dividend Through Investments in Youth", p11

<sup>5</sup> Thatayaone Nnini, Young women participation: The theory and the practice, p 74, [http://www.osisa.org/sites/default/files/sup\\_files/young\\_women\\_participation.pdf](http://www.osisa.org/sites/default/files/sup_files/young_women_participation.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> UNAIDS and the AU, Empower young women and adolescent girls: fast-tracking the end of the AIDS epidemic in Africa, 2015, p 2 [http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media\\_asset/JC2746\\_en.pdf](http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/JC2746_en.pdf)

adolescents, and are at a higher risk of maternal mortality and morbidity.<sup>7</sup> Unemployment, poverty and lack of or limited economic opportunities are some of the key impediments to young people's participation and development. According to the World Bank, youth account for 60% of all Africans unemployed.<sup>8</sup> Young women feel the sting of unemployment even more sharply. The Africa Development Bank (AfDB) found that in most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, it is easier for men to get jobs than it is for women, even if they have equivalent skills and experience.<sup>9</sup> It is estimated that Sub-Saharan Africa loses an average of \$95 billion per year since 2010 due to gender gaps in the labor market. In addition, the lack of sufficient institutional mechanisms, structures, policies and societal norms for encouraging young people's involvement often limits their capacity to be civically engaged and assume leadership roles.<sup>10</sup> These challenges lead to disenfranchisement, exclusion and marginalization of youth, especially young women.

To best foster the development of civic engagement and leadership skills, young people must be provided an environment where there are opportunities for active participation.<sup>11</sup> Meaningful youth participation and leadership require that young people-led organizations have opportunities, capacities, and benefit from an enabling environment and relevant evidence-based programmes and policies at all levels.<sup>12</sup> In order to respond to the needs of young people and to guarantee that their basic human rights to participation are recognized and enforced, young people should take the lead in defining the policies and programmes that promote inclusive civic engagement.

Capitalizing on demographic dividends demands of Africa to harvest the huge human capital at its disposal created by the youth, which form the majority of African citizens. Realizing the demographic dividend also requires multiple intersecting investments. Yet the most essential, without which no progress will be made, are building the capabilities of young people and ensuring their rights and freedoms to achieve their potential. Harnessing the incredible energy and ambition of a young and growing population will be critical for Africa to achieve its intended target. Africans must work hard to take advantage of this growing pool of talent, and move quickly to create opportunities for them to succeed. Africa's youth have proven that with the right support, they are capable of achieving more than we could ever have imagined.

Investments in youth particularly education, foster opportunities for developing a skilled labor force. Education allows young people to learn skills to take on higher-quality jobs in a changing and growing economy. Through these investments, nations develop a labor force well equipped to move into new opportunities that emerge from a demographic dividend.

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<sup>7</sup> UNDP report on Africa , 2016

<sup>8</sup> World Bank Report, Youth Employment in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2014

<sup>9</sup> AfDB, Youth , Job and Structural change: confronting Africa's Employment Problem", 2012

<sup>10</sup> Camino, Linda , and Shepherd Zeldin. "From Periphery to Center: Pathways for Youth Civic Engagement in the Day-To-Day Life of Communities." *Applied Developmental Science*, 2002: 213 - 220.

<sup>11</sup> Yvette Daniel, S. Nombuso Dlamini, Jennifer Stanton, Natasha Koustova, "Engaging Girls in Civic Life: Challenges and Opportunities". *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* Vol. 3 No. 18; October 2013, p47. [http://www.ijhssnet.com/journals/Vol\\_3\\_No\\_18\\_October\\_2013/5.pdf](http://www.ijhssnet.com/journals/Vol_3_No_18_October_2013/5.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> United Nations Youth, <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-political-participation.pdf>

Improvements in the quality of education and school completion prepare young women and men with the abilities they need to move into formal-sector jobs, earn higher wages, and contribute to a demographic dividend.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Gender Pre-Summit will create an opportunity for intergeneration dialogue on how best to harness the abilities of young people, especially young women, to participate more effectively in leadership and civic processes in Africa, learn from each other's experiences, problem solve and design strategic interventions to strengthen young people's, particularly young women's participation in civic life.

The AU Kwame Nkrumah Regional Awards will be used to raise the profile of science and technology and encourage young people, especially young women to consider careers in that sector.

### **III. Objectives of the Gender Pre-Summit**

The overall objective of the 9<sup>th</sup> Gender Pre-Summit is to identify strategic areas of action for the realization of Pillar 4 of Africa's Demographic Dividends agenda on "Human Rights, Governance and Youth Empowerment", with particular emphasis on empowering young people, especially young women for leadership and civic participation

The specific objectives are to:

- ⇒ Define critical priority areas of investment in young people, especially young women to harness Africa's demographic dividend through leadership and civic participation.
- ⇒ Identify concrete strategies, including policy interventions, to empower youth, especially young women for leadership and civic participation towards Agenda 2063.
- ⇒ Adopt a "Call for Action" for greater participation of young people, especially young woman equal participation in leadership and civic life.

### **IV. Expected Outcomes of the Gender Pre-Summit**

- ⇒ Challenges and barriers hindering the effective participation and full empowerment of the youth, especially the young women and girls, are identified and discussed
- ⇒ Strategies to accelerate their effective participation and for multi-sectoral partnership developed
- ⇒ Critical areas of investment in youth, especially young women and girls are identified
- ⇒ Call for Action adopted
- ⇒ The outcomes of the Gender Pre-Summit developed with the view to integrate into AU Heads of State and Government (HoSG)'s Declaration on the AU Theme for 2017.

## **V. Organization of the Gender Pre- Summit**

In line with the theme of the year, the Gender Pre-Summit and all its associated activities will ensure that young people's voices, especially young women's voices are amplified. To that effect, a Young Women's Consultation Forum will be held prior to the Gender Pre-Summit, to create a safe space for young women, whose voices are often lost in broader women's or youth meetings, to dialogue among themselves and come up with policy recommendations that will feed into the Gender Pre-Summit. The Young Women's Consultation Forum will take place on the afternoon of 23 January 2017.

As per established tradition, the 9<sup>th</sup> Gender Pre-Summit will be preceded by a civil society pre-summit under the auspices of the Gender is my Agenda Campaign (GIMAC) from 22-23 January 2017. Two consultation meetings on the new AU Gender Strategy will be held on 23 January 2017: The Ministerial Consultation of AU Ministers responsible for Gender Equality and Women's Affairs will take place in the morning followed by the Consultation meeting of Regional Economic Bodies and Regional Mechanisms in the afternoon.

The two-day AU Gender Pre-Summit will be held from 24-25 January 2017. AU Ministers responsible for Gender Equality and Women's Affairs will be encouraged to include more than one young person in their delegation. The different discussion points will be presented through a variety of medium. For example, poetry, story-telling/ drama and music will be used to highlight key issues through the lenses of young people. In addition, there will be social media discussions throughout the two-days, to enable young people who will not be present at the meeting to add their voices and be part of the discussions. The event will be live-stream on the AU website. The Gender Pre-Summit will culminate in a Call for Action to be integrated into the AU HoSG's Declaration on the AU Theme for 2017.

The AU Kwame Nkrumah Awards will take place on the evening of 25 January 2016. Two outstanding women, per each region of the continent will receive the award. Since inception in 2008, 30 African women have received this prestigious award.

On 26 January 2017, the AU International Centre for Girls and Women's Education in Africa (AU/CIEFFA) will host a High Level Dialogue on Gender Equality and Education. The High Level Dialogue seeks to secure clear political commitments, such as outcome statement on the rights of girls to access schools and complete at least secondary schooling in spite of eventual break-ups in their schooling.

In addition, on 26 and 27 January 2017, the AUC will convene the Africa Pre-Commission on the Status of women (CSW 61) consultative meeting to supports efforts to strengthen consensus on common Africa position on gender equality and women's empowerment and to ensure that Africa speaks in one voice when engaging at the global level and in particular at the forthcoming CSW61 taking place in New York from 14-23 March 2017.

## **VI. Profile of Participants**

The AU Gender Pre-Summit will bring together:

- ⇒ African Union Ministers responsible for Gender and Women's Affairs;
- ⇒ African Union Organs;
- ⇒ Civil Society Organizations, especially those dealing with young people's affairs;
- ⇒ Youth formations/networks and young leaders across the continent, including young women and young women with disabilities;
- ⇒ Regional Economic Communities;
- ⇒ United Nations agencies;
- ⇒ Private sector;
- ⇒ Development partners;

### **VIII. Date and Venue of the AU Gender Pre-Summit**

The 9<sup>th</sup> AU Gender Pre-Summit and associated side events, will be held from 22 to 27 January 2017, at the margins of the 28th AU Ordinary Summit of the Heads of State and Government in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

### **IX. Organizers**

The AU Gender Pre summit will be organized by the Women, Gender and Development Directorate (WGDD), in collaboration with the Department of Human Resource, Science and Technology (HRST) and the Department of Social Affairs (DSA).

### **X. Working Languages of the AU Gender Pre-Summit**

Simultaneous interpretation will be available in English and French languages.