

Foreword

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The greatest asset of any nation is its youth. The African Youth Charter defines a youth as a person between the ages of 15 and 35 years. In his address at the 17th Ordinary African Union Summit held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea from 23 June–1 July 2011, Dr Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director of UNFPA, stated that “... if youth make up 40% of the population, and people under the age of 35 make up over 65% of the entire population of the continent, then 65% of the continent’s resources should be allocated to this age group”.

The unemployment crisis in Africa is a critical challenge to a majority of youth. This situation demands a clear policy framework, accompanied by clear budgetary allocations. It is sad that even as some of our African countries have celebrated 50 years of independence, little has been done to introduce employment policies to address youth unemployment. For the continent to realise the opportunity that comes with the numbers of youth, this population must have the opportunity to find gainful employment and the promise of a livelihood.

Throughout the history of conflict in some African states, youth have been at the frontline in waging wars that have hindered development. A mechanism to engage them is thus important for durable peace, stability and development. At this moment, the youth of the continent should be involved in planning for their future. Due to the increased challenges of the continent’s development, new dynamic energy needs to be harnessed from the youth.

Ignoring the youth is putting oneself and the continent in danger. This is the population that will change the face of Africa. This is the generation that will be held accountable for all the challenges that face the continent. The youth are our greatest asset, it is critical that we engage this youthful energy to create meaningful productivity for the development of the African continent.

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