



REMARKS BY AMB SALAH S. HAMMAD HEAD OF THE AGA-APSA SECRETARIAT PAPS, AUC

WEBINAR ON "YOUTH BULGE AND DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND: HARNESSING THEIR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POTENTIALS IN KENYA"

13 AUGUST 2024 VIA ZOOM

Y.E.Brig (Rtd) Dr. R G Kabage, PhD, EBS, Chief Executive Officer of MRPC;

Distinguished Experts, Friends and Colleagues;

All Protocol Duly Observed;

I wish to start by warmly thanking the CEO of MRPC and his entire team for bringing us together to discuss this important policy brief on "*Youth Bulge and Demographic Dividend: Harnessing their Economic Development potentials in Kenya*".

Youth meaningful engagement in democratic governance processes is of critical importance to the African Union. Despite the Union's current efforts to promote youth innovation by highlighting innovations on the continent, much remains to be done.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Africa has the largest youth population in the world and current trends suggest that this number will double by 2045. However, poverty and socio-economic desperation has led thousands of young Africans each year to embark on a dangerous crossing of seas only to be stranded on the beaches of the West. In addition, there is a silent exodus of the Continent's young elite to Europe and Northern America to make use of their knowledge, skills and ideas to benefit Western societies.

The challenges facing African youth meaningful participation in the advancement of good governance, democracy and peace and security agenda in Africa have largely been attributed to the gaps between policies, strategies and their implementation at the national level.

This has further been worsened by institutional capacity gaps and inadequate budgetary allocations to support and scale up effective and evidence-based youth programmes.

Further to this, socio-economic inequalities continue to have a negative structural impact on the abilities of young women and men to play active roles in the peace making and peace building processes in Africa.

Moreover, capacity gaps at national, regional and continental levels in implementing normative frameworks, such as the AU Youth Charter, the limited capacity of youth networks and organisations to effectively engage with decision-makers continue to hinder meaningful youth participation at all levels as well as slowing down the creation of youth leadership in Africa.

Specifically, young women and girls continue to face many challenges alongside their male counterparts. Similarly, socio-cultural and economic exclusions continue to manifest in the form of limited women's access to opportunities for recovery from the effects of violence, the ability to get redress for human rights abuses, and the opportunity to participate in reforming laws and public institutions in post-conflict situations.

Despite these challenges, Africa's growing youth population is characterized by great potential, skillfulness, resourcefulness, resilience and aspiration. After all, youth are the majority of citizens in Africa as they represent more than 65% of the population.

Today, African youth are increasingly claiming their rightful place as peace leaders as well as agents for change. Young people are prominently contributing to the efforts that aimed at Silencing the Guns in Africa and implementing Agenda 2063, the blue print for building the Africa we want, the Africa we deserve.

The African Union has set out a 50-year vision, the Agenda 2063, in which we would like to improve the state of human rights and living conditions in Africa. This can be achieved by leaving no one behind. Such platform as this webinar creates intellectual engagement with young brilliant minds on the continent that are vital in achieving the 50-year vision.

However, In order to move ahead with the development of Africa, it is important for the youth to support each other and create strong networks. This strategy can be particularly effective in ensuring that we - as a continent - move forward on the implementation of the development Agenda of the continent.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Throughout history, youth have played a central role in liberation movements and post-liberation efforts for democratisation. They have always been the driving force behind calls for free, democratic and prosperous nation in every part of the continent. However, they are often instrumentalized and have been the poster child for popular uprisings – yet the full story of youth is not told often.

African youth are a force to reckon with, their deep understanding of current social and economic issues as well as their knowledge of new technologies and digital tools makes them key players in improving democratic governance in Africa.

To address this situation, the African Governance Platform, through the AGA-APSA Secretariat, the AU has taken on board the various calls made by youth for a more meaningful contribution to the African democratic governance space. In an effort to heed to this call - the AU through the AGA-APSA Sec. under the auspices of its Youth Engagement Strategy (YES) have among other things successfully;

1. Opened up the space for youth innovation and participation in democratic governance in Africa. This initiative widely opened the space for young people;
2. Launched a comprehensive manual on Youth participation in Political and Electoral Cycle in Africa and conducted subsequent capacity building trainings; and
3. Created space for intergenerational dialogue on issues of democratic governance by institutionalizing Youth Consultations at regional and continental levels.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

What you are embarking on today, is pushing the envelope in a space that can potentially deliver the African we want and, the Africa we deserve. Putting Youth in the center of our work and focus is a key for unlash their dividends and potential.

Allow me to conclude by thanking the organizers for the kind invitation. I look forward to receiving the full policy brief on "***Youth Bulge and Demographic Dividend: Harnessing their Economic Development potentials in Kenya***".

Asante Sana!!