



**ECOSOC
YOUTH
FORUM**

#YOUTH2030



8th Economic and Social Council Youth Forum

SUMMARY

AFRICA

***Theme: “The Empowerment and Inclusion of Young People in Africa:
Towards Durable Solutions for Refugees, Returnees and
Internally Displaced Persons in Africa”***

**8 April 2019
CR 5, 1.45-3.45 p.m.
United Nations Headquarters, New York**

1. Background

The Africa Regional Breakout Session was held on 8 April 2019, as part of the overall 2019 ECOSOC Youth Forum. The Breakout Session was organized by the United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (UN-OSAA), with collaboration from the UN Department of Global Communications, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the African Union, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the African Development Bank.

The Africa Regional Breakout Session is an annual signature Africa-centric youth forum at the global level. It provides a direct and unique platform for young Africans and their interlocutors to interact, lend their voices and contribute proactively towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the attainment of its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as the African Union’s Agenda 2063 and its First Ten-Year Implementation Plan.

The Africa Regional Breakout Session offers a unique, open and safe space for all stakeholders – including politicians, Ministers, United Nations Member States, policymakers, decision makers, parliamentarians, development actors, academics, researchers and young people – to forge ahead on the SDGs and Agenda 2063 on the same platform and on the same footing with the guiding principles of equality, integrity, joint responsibility and reciprocity.

The interactive round table nature of the session aims to provide solutions, mitigate challenges, share best practices, cross-fertilize and foster peer learning on a level playing field. The 2019 Africa Regional Breakout Session was attended by African Ministers of Youth including the Minister of Youth, Sport, Arts and Recreation of Zimbabwe, the Minister of Youth and Sports of Liberia, the Minister of Youth Entrepreneurship of Niger, the Minister of Youth and Sports of The Gambia, the Deputy Minister of Youth and Sport of Ghana, Parliamentarians, State Secretaries, Presidential advisers on youth matters, high-level Government officials, UN Member States, representatives from the private sector, civil society organizations, academia, researchers, media, philanthropic organizations, youth delegates and UN officials. Participants engaged vibrantly throughout the session, and youth on the continent and in the diaspora engaged remotely via social media.

The session was moderated by a young female youth activist, **Ms. Gogontlejang Phaladi**, a philanthropist and development practitioner from Botswana who is Founder and Executive Director of the Gogontlejang Phaladi Pillar of Hope Project (GPPHP). The Breakout Session was held in Conference Room 5 and was attended by close to 200 participants.

The Africa Regional Breakout Session provided a platform for young people, especially young Africans, to engage with a broad array of stakeholders to address the theme of the session, ***“The Empowerment and Inclusion of Young People in Africa: Towards Durable Solutions for Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa”*** as well as to review progress on the SDGs in particular quality education (SDG 4), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), climate action (SDG 13), peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16), and partnerships for the goals (SDG 17). The theme for the Breakout Session was an amalgam of the African Union theme for 2019, ***“Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa”***, and the theme for the ECOSOC Youth Forum 2019, ***“Empowered, Included and Equal”***. The 2019 Africa Regional Breakout Session featured a preambular part to discuss the progress report “One Year Later”, which highlighted and reviewed progress made on the commitments made by participants in implementing the SDGs and Agenda 2063 at the 2018 Africa Regional Breakout Session.

Participants vigorously addressed the theme, identified challenges and proposed solutions on the way forward towards the accelerated attainment of the SDGs and Agenda 2063. They agreed that targeted and deliberate investments and action in quality education and health and the creation of decent jobs for young people are central to leveraging the demographic dividend on the continent. They also pledged to continue the discussion on the theme on the continent and to take back to their networks the recommendations emanating from the Breakout Session as well as to transplant the proposed solutions. The Session was held in an interactive format with open dialogue and was also webcast (UN Web TV and Facebook) to encourage and enable remote participation.

2. Current Landscape

During the Breakout Session, participants shared the following important insights and messages on the current landscape:

- 60 per cent of Africa's population is under the age of 25 making Africa the world's youngest region.
- It is estimated that by 2030 Africa's working age population will increase by two-thirds, moving from 370 million in 2010 to over 600 million in 2030.
- The above statistic is very encouraging and sobering as well. It reinforces the need for youth to be empowered, included and equal to achieve the SDGs for sustainable development.
- 15-20 million young people are expected to join the African labour force every year.
- Over one-third of the world's forcibly displaced are in Africa, including 6.3 million refugees and asylum seekers and 14.5 million internally displaced persons.
- Significant impacts on the forcibly displaced include limited social capital and few or no assets, coupled with the uncertainty of displacement.
- The peace-security-development nexus is critical in tackling the root causes of forced displacement since conflict is among the key push factors of forced displacement as well as climate change.
- Africa has a framework that addresses the implementation the of SDGs, which is Agenda 2063 and its First Ten-Year Implementation Plan.
- African countries are in the process of signing and ratifying the transformative African Continental Free Trade Agreement, which will create a market of 1.2 billion people, drive growth, and spur industrialization and regional integration, as well as enhance the development of infrastructure.

3. Youth Solutions and Actions

Participants proposed the following solutions and actions:

- African youth emphasized the need for the creation of decent jobs through multi-stakeholder partnerships, including public-private partnerships, to achieve empowerment and promote inclusivity and engagement.
- African youth stated the need to be supported to attain political leadership roles where they could better serve the needs of their constituents. (Around 60 per cent of Africa's population is classified as youth.)
- African youth recognized that inter-generational relationships are a key tool to promote and foster empowerment and inclusivity.

- African youth strongly advocated for the peace, security and development nexus to be the golden thread in finding durable solutions for refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons, highlighting its effectiveness in rolling back the causes of mass and forced displacement, as well as the devastating effects of climate change.
- African youth are investing in quality education, mapping and matching skill sets to labour market demands to obtain decent jobs, related to SDGs 4 and 8 respectively.
- Government Ministers highlighted some actions underway on the continent, including setting up funds of millions of dollars to support youth to transform their innovative ideas into entrepreneurial activities. This is aimed to provide an alternative path to job creation outside of government. These actions have been taken by government to implement SDGs 8 and 10.
- Some of the solutions highlighted during the Breakout Session include the ratification of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, which has the potential to boost domestic growth, drive demand and strengthen industrialization whilst reinforcing integration and curtailing xenophobia.
- The need to reinforce the spirit of African solidarity was highlighted.
- The African Development Bank launched its Jobs for Youth in Africa (JfYA) Strategy (2016-2025) in 2015 to support African countries to scale up responses to the youth unemployment and underemployment challenge on the continent. This will be achieved through practical, high-impact solutions aimed at creating opportunities via education and training, transformative jobs and a business environment conducive to entrepreneurial activities (i.e. youth entrepreneurship).

4. Looking to the Horizon – Commitments

Breakout Session participants made the following commitments:

- The array of stakeholders that attended the Africa Regional Breakout Session shared that targeted and deliberate investments must be made to quality education and the creation of decent jobs to fully leverage the demographic dividend.
- Youth voiced the need for the United Nations to provide support to them in areas of quality education, better and more jobs, and enhanced investments in health to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs.
- Government Ministers underscored the need for stronger partnerships with all stakeholders including the United Nations to achieve the SDGs.
- The meeting agreed that the concerns and priorities of migrants, refugees and Internally Displaced Persons must be integrated into policy making to ensure inclusivity.
- Participants encouraged the criminalization of xenophobia and persecution of people committing crimes of xenophobic nature.

- The Parliamentarians who attended the Africa Regional Breakout Session pledged to enact laws that further domesticate the SDGs and Agenda 2063 into national legislation as well as enact laws that protect and ensure that migrants and the forcibly displaced are guaranteed all their rights.
- Participants stated that the United Nations should support national governments in domestic resource mobilization and in halting and reversing capital flight including illicit financial flows.
- The participants urged the United Nations to encourage Members States to respect their Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitments of 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product to developing countries and 0.15 - 0.2 per cent of gross domestic product to the Least Developed Countries, as well as climate financing to strengthen the fight against climate change and mitigate its effects.
- The UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (UNOSAA) as a key partner of the Africa Regional Breakout Session pledged to continue its support to African Member States towards the attainment of the SDGs and Agenda 2063, including by providing platforms to foster partnerships, support resource mobilization for the financing of the SDGs, encourage deeper dialogues among stakeholders, share best practices and encourage peer learning.

5. Conclusion

At the end of the Africa Regional Break-Out Session, the participants renewed their pledge and commitment to the SDGs and Agenda 2063 and emphasized the need for the outcomes to be implemented and monitored and progress evaluated. The recommendations from the Session were presented to the plenary session of the ECOSOC Youth Forum by the moderator of the Breakout Session.