



Summary of the African Youth Charter

The African Youth Charter is a political and legal framework, which serves the purpose of providing a strategic framework and direction for youth empowerment and development activities at continental, regional and national levels across Africa. The Charter is inline with the efforts of the African Union Commission to provide an avenue for effective youth participation in development process and is part of the efforts to implement the AUC's Strategic Plan (2004-2007), which is geared towards its own institutional transformation, to strengthen its outreach within the continent and improve its working relationship with regional economic communities and international development partners.

The Charter defines youth as any individual between the ages of 15-35 years. This puts to rest the age long argument of defining the youth within the African context and based on Africa's development realities. It took into consideration provisions and successes of previous declarations, Plan of Action and charters particularly, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the NEPAD Strategic Framework for Youth, the World Programme of Action for youth and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

The African Youth Charter was informed by a research on the state of the African Youth, which was commissioned by the African Union Commission and has undergone various stages of development. An initial youth and experts meeting was held in January 2006, to discuss the first draft of the document and various recommendations and amendments to its content were suggested. After the initial discussions, the draft charter was sent to member states for national consultations with youth and youth organisations. During May 22-28, youth, experts and ministers met at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa to discuss the final draft of the charter to make amendments and adopt the charter. After critical discussions, the charter was adopted by youth, experts and ministers. The charter was finally endorsed by Heads of government at their meeting in Banjul in July 2006.

Key issues affecting youth in the areas of employment, sustainable livelihood, education, skills development, health, youth participation, national youth policy, peace and security, law enforcement, youth in the Diaspora and youth with disabilities, among others, are adequately addressed within the framework of the Charter. It calls on state parties to ensure the freedom of movement, expression, private life and property.

- On **National Youth Policies**, the Charter calls on member states to develop cross sectoral policies and programmes, which take into consideration the inter-relatedness of the needs of youth with a view to integrating and mainstreaming the perspectives of youth into decision making and development processes.
- On **Participation**, it calls on state parties to guarantee the participation of youth in parliament and other national decision making bodies as well as facilitate the

establishment or strengthening of national, regional and continental platforms for youth participation.

- The charter recognises that every young person shall have the right to **education** of good quality and that the multiple forms of education including formal, informal, non-formal, distance learning and life long education shall be embraced in order to meet the diverse needs of young people. In this light, the charter calls on member states to provide free and compulsory basic education and take steps to minimise the indirect costs of education; revitalise vocational education and training relevant to current and prospective employment opportunities and expand access by developing centres in rural and remote areas.
- On **Sustainable livelihood and youth employment**, state parties shall ensure the availability of accurate data on youth employment, unemployment and underemployment so as to facilitate the prioritisation of the issue in national development programmes and Promote youth entrepreneurship by including entrepreneurship training in the school curricula, providing access to credit, business development skills training, mentorship opportunities and better information on market opportunities.
- On **Health**, state parties shall take measures to make available equitable and ready access to medical assistance and health care especially in rural and poor urban areas with an emphasis on the development of primary health care and institute comprehensive programmes to prevent the transmission of sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS by providing education, information, communication and awareness creation as well as making protective measures and reproductive health services available.
- On **Youth in the Diaspora**, the Charter calls for the establishment of structures and networks that encourage and assist the youth in the Diaspora to return to and fully re-integrate into the social and economic life in Africa and Promote and protect the rights of young people living in the Diaspora.
- On **Girls and young women**, the charter calls for the Introduction of legislative measures that eliminate all forms of discrimination against girls and young women and ensure their human rights and fundamental freedoms and ensure that girls and young women are able to participate actively, equally and effectively with boys at all levels of social, educational, economic, political, cultural, civic life and leadership as well as scientific endeavours

The charter outlines a number of responsibilities for the African Union Commission and Youth. The AUC by the provisions of the charter will: collaborate with governmental, non-governmental institutions and developmental partners to identify best practices on youth policy formulation and implementation and encourage the adaptation of principles and experiences among States Parties, as well as invite States Parties to include youth representatives as part of their delegations to the ordinary sessions of the African Union and other relevant meetings of the policy organs to broaden the channels of communication and enhance the discussion of youth-related issues. Youth are being expected to contribute to the promotion of the economic development of their countries and the continent by placing their intellectual and physical abilities at its service. The African Youth Charter is a unique opportunity to unite the youth movement in Africa to speak same language and move along the same strategic programming lines.