

Our Shared Vision for the Youth Agenda in Peace and Security

We, the youth representatives from the National Youth Councils, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and government representatives from Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, met from the 25th - 27th of July 2022 in Harare, Zimbabwe, to discuss the role of governments, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanisms (RMs) in promoting the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda in the Southern Africa region. The meeting was convened by the African Union (AU), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Save the Children, the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), the Horn of Africa Youth Network, the Institute for Security Studies (ISS)/Training for Peace (TFP) and the Southern Africa Partnership for the Prevention of Conflict (SAPPC).

We, the participants, present to the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, H.E Dr Emmerson Mnangagwa, and the honourable Ministers from the Southern Africa Region, the following:

1. Strengthening the implementation of the AU Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security

On participation, the Conference agreed on the need for governments to expedite the establishment and strengthening of fora that promote inclusivity for various stakeholders to engage on matters of YPS, and identify, address and prioritise the formulation of policy and legislative frameworks to ensure that youth participation is embedded and implemented through affirmative action at various levels to encourage equity in representation of young persons.

On prevention, the Conference acknowledged the structural challenges affecting the youth in the Southern Africa region, including unemployment, inequality, limited economic opportunities, political and security challenges including violent extremism, climate change, and limited effective engagement of youth with disabilities and youth in rural areas.

We therefore call for urgent action by governments to address the above-mentioned challenges through the establishment and strengthening early warning and response systems at national, regional and continental levels. Further, there is a need for mainstreaming youth into national peace infrastructures, advancing the use of various technological platforms for YPS, encouraging the use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and the prioritisation of civic and peace education for the youth which may be embedded in national education curriculum.

On protection, the Conference urged stakeholders and Member States to design sound programmes to curb the threats of human and child trafficking; prioritise the needs of persons

with disabilities, including provision of information in accessible formats, quota based employment opportunities, and access to adequate resources.

On partnerships and coordination, the Conference encouraged the AU, RECs/RMs and CSOs to forge closer collaborations with youth and their networks to advance the YPS agenda. Furthermore, they should facilitate effective communication, coordination and collaboration by creating an environment that promotes, mutual understanding with the youth and other relevant stakeholders as well as called for a level playing field for engagement.

On Dis-engagement and Re-integration, the Conference underscored the important role of the AU and RECs/RMs in conducting a conflict, context and stakeholder analysis to underline intervention strategies, including stabilisation processes. The Conference further acknowledged the increasing threat of violent extremism in the region and urged governments to prioritise the implementation of measures that will prevent further radicalisation and recruitment of young people into armed groups and organised crime. Member states and other stakeholders are encouraged to cooperate in the creation of sustainable mechanisms and support systems for effective reintegration of youth into society.

To demonstrate the national commitment of Member States towards the operationalisation of the Continental Framework on YPS, the Conference urged Member States to initiate the necessary steps to develop and implement national action plans. In this regard, the conference lauded the decisions of the AU PSC requesting AU, RECs/RMs and development partners to support Member States in the development and implementation of the national action plans.

2. Strengthening youth engagement with decision-makers

The Conference acknowledged the need to foster a good working relationship between youth and decision-makers, specifically in policy formulation and implementation at local, national, regional and continental levels. In addition, the Conference identified the need for intergenerational dialogue and mentorship to create ownership, and facilitate learning and ensure continuity.

3. Strengthening National Youth Councils and youth organisations to advance the regional youth, peace and security agenda

The Conference called for the Member States to ratify and implement normative frameworks on youth empowerment. The Conference further urged investment in capacity building of youth leaders and youth institutions, such as National Youth Councils, as well as youth CSOs; commit to the mobilisation and distribution of adequate resources for the National Youth Councils and other youth organisations to enable them fulfil their mandate. Finally, delegates called for

enhanced collaboration and partnership between National Youth Councils and other government institutions and agencies.

4. Research and Development

The youth delegates called on Member States, the AU, RECs/RMs and CSOs to invest in empirical and operational research to inform youth programming and developmental initiatives.

5. Technological Advancement

The delegates acknowledged the importance of technology as a critical tool for information sharing and raising awareness of the various frameworks and mechanisms in place to support youth empowerment. Member States were urged to foster an enabling environment for the telecommunications sector to provide accessible and affordable internet connectivity to better facilitate the use of technology.

6. Strengthening YPS Monitoring and evaluation

For the effective implementation of the YPS agenda, the Conference identified the need for increased investments in monitoring, evaluation and learning noting that these will improve reporting, accountability, and decision-making at national and regional levels.

We, the participants of this Conference, wish to acknowledge and appreciate the Government of Zimbabwe for hosting the Conference, and the African Union (AU), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Save the Children, African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), Horn of Africa Youth Network, the Institute for Security Studies (ISS)/Training for Peace (TFP) and the Southern Africa Partnership for the Prevention of Conflict (SAPPC) for convening the Conference.

**Adopted on 28 July 2022
Harare, Zimbabwe**