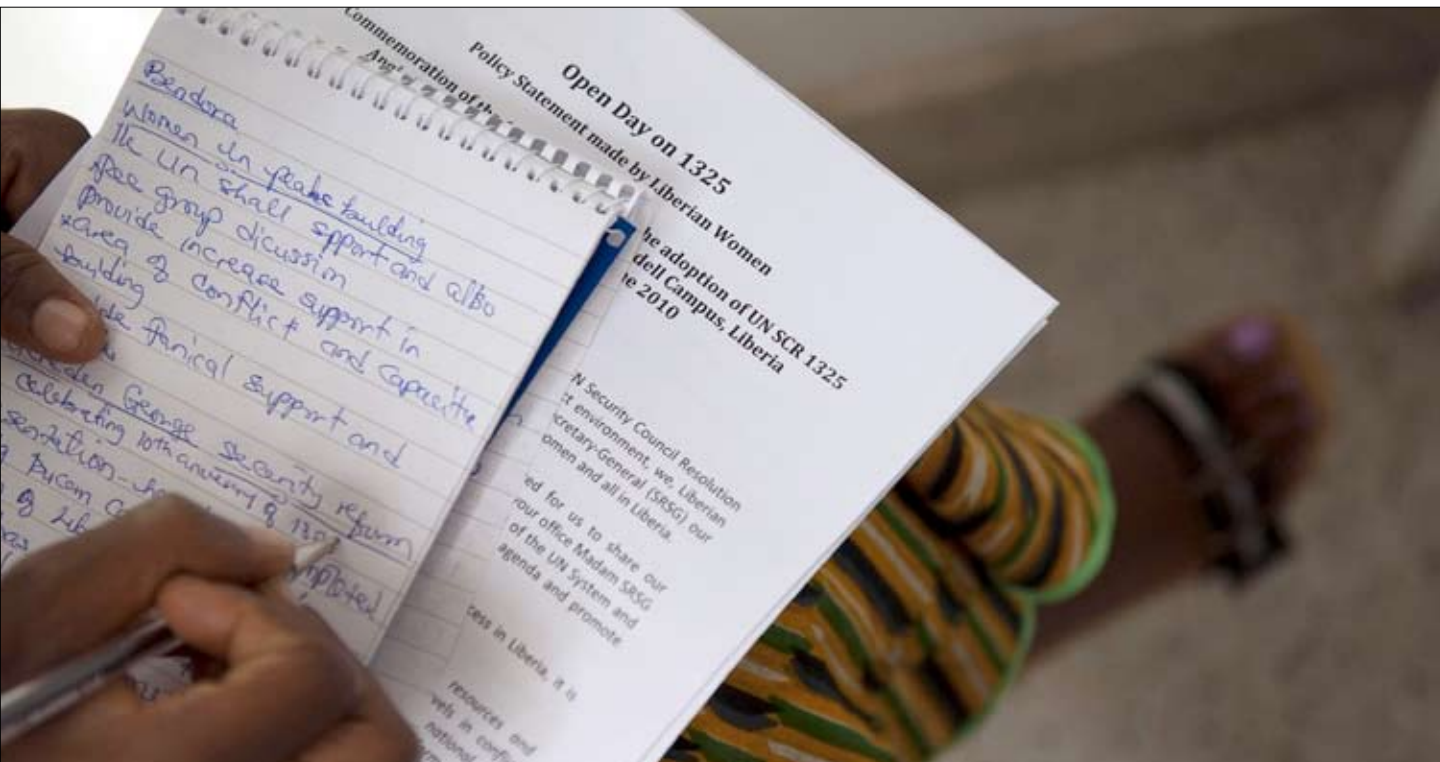


## V. Key messages and Conclusions



This report highlights both opportunities and challenges faced by African young people in the sphere of education and employment in the global economy. It also aims to give key messages to African governments and development stakeholders in further implementing global, regional and national youth policies and commitments. Member states should strengthen their efforts to facilitate a smooth transition for young people from education, inactivity or unemployment to gainful and decent employment, while dealing with the specific challenges posed in a variety of country-specific contexts.

## A. Key messages

This report puts forward seven key messages:

### 1. There must be a change of attitude towards African youth

Often African young people are seen as a challenge and not an asset and are portrayed as dependent, whereas they should be seen as autonomous agents, responsible for their own acts. This is also to a certain extent reflected in policy agendas on youth, which tend to overemphasize the challenges, missing the opportunities that young people bring or can potentially bring to the continent.

The increased focus on evidence-based policy is welcomed, but at the same time raises the question of the kind of knowledge and data collected. The emphasis on evidence-based policy increases the will to measure, monitor, predict and control the ideal development of young peoples' lives. However, most of our policies rely on data based on information on pessimism rather than on their well-being. Hence the need for a more balanced combination of evidence, which requires identifying diverse indicators.

Additionally, young people should be actively involved in all phases of policy and programme development including design, management and decision-making, as well as monitoring and evaluation of activities.

### 2. There is a need for knowledge-sharing and cooperation

There are different priorities and means of implementation across the policy levels of the AUC and African States, across subregions and the region and in the United Nations. Therefore, there is a need for increased coordination across the different jurisdictions and organizations working on youth and development. Beyond that, there is also a need for more coherent policies in the different jurisdictions and intergovernmental organizations. Knowledge-sharing and cooperation on youth issues is essential to identify best practices and useful lessons from past experience that can be instrumental in improving the impacts of future interventions, in addition to avoiding duplication of effort and strengthening efficient resource mobilization.

### **3. Youth unemployment must be addressed as a way of fighting poverty**

Many interventions aimed at poverty reduction have been based on targeting vulnerable groups, including young people. However, poverty is essentially a structural and economic problem which should be addressed through social change. Mainstreaming youth issues into PRSPs or national plans of action will not solve youth unemployment as long as the underlying causes of youth unemployment are not addressed. Youth mainstreaming should go beyond making the concerns and experiences of young people an integral dimension of the design of policies and programmes. Instead, it should be complemented by concrete actions that address young people's underlying current problems. Mainstreaming of youth issues into development plans should also take account of future challenges and opportunities.

### **4. An innovative culture must be fostered through creative education systems, entrepreneurship education and access to enterprise start-up**

Fostering an innovative culture and entrepreneurship education should be started at an early age, and young entrepreneurs should be supported by their countries through the provision of access to effective entrepreneurship development tools to enable them to realize their full potential.

Several African countries have adopted youth entrepreneurship policies that encourage youth delineation from the economic mainstream. This has led to the fostering of job creation and contributed to economic development and growth, as well as addressing the socio-psychological problems and delinquency that arise from joblessness. Youth-run enterprises have been established in Eastern Africa in Kenya and Uganda; in Southern Africa in Malawi, South Africa, Swaziland and Zimbabwe; in West Africa in the Gambia, Ghana and Nigeria; and in North Africa in Egypt.

Through entrepreneurship education, business start-up training and support programmes, young women and men can acquire the necessary attitudes, knowledge, skills and behaviours that increase their chances of obtaining decent work by becoming more employable or acquiring the assets needed to start their own businesses.

The creative economy offers a significant potential to promote socio-economic development and, more importantly, the creation of employment opportunities, particularly for young people. As the global economy continues to change,

Africa needs to change with the times, as opportunities are now packaged quite differently, and if they not embraced, missed opportunities will eventually affect Africa socially and economically.

## **5. Education is a prerequisite for gainful employment**

For effective youth employment to take place, education and training is critical. Governments have particular responsibilities in the areas of education, training, certification and licensing. Significant strides have been made in Africa towards achieving universal literacy and ensuring access to educational opportunities that are both relevant and of high quality. But countries need to focus more on the quality of education, especially at the post-primary and secondary levels, while sustaining gains made in attaining universal primary education.

## **6. African economies are becoming more and more integrated in the global economy**

Continuing globalization and the integration of African economies in the global economy constitute both an opportunity and a threat for the socio-economic development of the continent. African governments need to take measures that will harness the potential and competitiveness of their young people in the global economy, while at the same time minimizing and mitigating the negative effects of globalization on young people.

African countries must endeavour to do business globally through:

- Effective trade agreements that can have an overall positive impact, beyond the sectors traditionally associated with the region.
- An enabling environment to promote opportunities for global business partnerships.
- Structured policies that encourage and assist young people in the diaspora to return to and fully reintegrate into social and economic life in Africa, and promote and protect the rights of young people living in the diaspora.

## **7. Equity must be ensured in education and employment between men and women, and between rural and urban areas**

In almost all African countries, equitable access to higher education and improved standards of living is inadequate. In order to ensure that education benefits everyone, the following must be addressed:

- Problems that reduce the participation and success rates of females and children from poor families, such as financial constraints, low enrolment rates at higher levels of education, high drop-out rates, high failure and repetition.
- Gender-sensitive challenges that discourage young girls from excelling at all levels of education, including training and recruitment of more female teachers and lecturers.
- Teacher-pupil ratios should be increased, especially in rural areas, by offering adequate incentives.

## **B. Conclusion**

Although the population of most African countries will continue to be youthful for the next four decades, it will eventually peak, thereby realizing the demographic dividend. Therefore, investing in education and skills development for young people in Africa through the provision of basic education, higher levels of education and technical and vocational training is of paramount importance since education and training are prerequisites for the development of today's knowledge society and economy. Therefore, with increased investment in education and skill development, Africa will have built a competitive workforce to ensure increased productivity and overall economic and socio-economic development.

Countries should also share best practices within the region and foster South-South cooperation because in knowledge-sharing lies the ability to explore options, plan better and implement the priorities relevant to youth development issues on the continent.