African Youth Declaration on the Summit of the Future

We, representatives of African young people, having convened in Addis Ababa on 26 and 27 April 2024, in the presence of the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa and the Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs, and under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Africa, the Pan African Youth Union, the African Union Commission and the United Nations Development Programme, in response to the call to organize the Youth Forum on the Summit of the Future,

Acknowledging the crucial role of young people in shaping the present and future of Africa, and recognizing the importance of multilateralism in accelerating the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union,

Reaffirming our commitment to the pan-African principles of unity, solidarity and cooperation in addressing the challenges that the African continent is facing and advancing sustainable development,

Recognizing the urgency of reviving and strengthening multilateralism as a means of addressing global challenges and achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063,

Recognizing the youth demographic of Africa as a significant asset and potential catalyst for transformative change, emphasizing the need for targeted policies and programmes that address the unique challenges and opportunities faced by young people and that ensure their active involvement in shaping the continent's future, and emphasizing also that, only by harnessing the energy, creativity and innovation of African young people can the continent develop sustainably and realize its full potential,

Cognizant of the various African Union frameworks, including the African Youth Charter, the Continental Framework for Youth, Peace and Security, and the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (2016–2025), which provide a strategic and cross-cutting platform for youth empowerment and development activities at the continental, subregional and national levels in Africa to address the major challenges affecting young people,

Do hereby:

1. In respect of sustainable development and financing for development:

   (a) Emphasize the need for increased financial and technical investment in efforts to adapt sustainable development and youth-led initiatives to local contexts, in particular in relation to education, agriculture, health and well-being, climate action, the creative sector, gender equity, peace and security and partnerships for the goals of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

   (b) Call for the creation of innovative financing mechanisms and partnerships to mobilize domestic resources for initiatives led by young people and to accelerate implementation and progress towards achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;
(c) **Urgently call for** the expansion and operationalization of an African Union youth fund and an increase in funding for sustainable youth programmes, projects and institutions at the national, subregional and continental levels;

(d) **Strongly advocate**, in line with the call by the Secretary-General, the immediate release and allocation of Sustainable Development Goal stimulus funds, which are critical in aiding developing countries to recover and restore the progress lost during the coronavirus disease pandemic, call for these resources to be promptly made available to provide essential support, to restore and accelerate development initiatives and to promote sustainable recovery across the affected areas, and implore every State Member of the United Nations to heed this imperative and swiftly allocate the resources required to realize the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, recognizing that the fate of millions hangs in the balance and that the time to act is now;

(e) **Urgently implore** the International Monitory Fund to swiftly transfer special drawing rights from countries that are not in immediate need of them to African countries through the African Development Bank, which would be critical to empowering African countries in their efforts to recover from the losses suffered during the coronavirus disease pandemic and to restore economic stability, recognizing that time is of the essence and that decisive action is necessary to avoid further setbacks;

(f) **Strongly condemn** the alarming loss of billions of dollars annually in African countries to illicit financial flows, and urgently call upon African Governments to implement robust measures to curb these flows and to seal the leaks in African financial systems, with a view to harnessing these substantial funds, transforming the economic landscape, channelling much-needed resources into development and fostering prosperity;

2. With regard to international peace and security:

   (a) **Affirm** the importance of promoting efforts to achieve peace, unity, cohesion, stability, and conflict prevention and resolution in Africa and beyond;

   (b) **Call for** the reform of the Security Council, in particular for Africa to have permanent seats in the Security Council, to reflect the changing priorities and dynamics of Africa and the world;

   (c) **Also call for** the reform of the United Nations, which is critical to reaffirming its responsibility to protect, ensuring stable economic and political conditions globally, guaranteeing that all vulnerable populations receive the protection that they deserve and upholding the fundamental principles of international cooperation and security;

   (d) **Urge** States Members of the United Nations to provide increased technical and financial support for local peacebuilding initiatives, conflict prevention strategies and the empowerment of young people as agents of peace and reconciliation;

   (e) **Call for** the reinforcement of multilateralism within the global community, rooted in the values of solidarity and collective responsibility and action and guided by trust, integrity and a belief in the inherent goodness of humanity, recognizing that it is imperative to strengthen multilateralism as a sustainable approach to mitigating and preventing conflict, facilitating rapid response mechanisms to conflict, disasters and insecurity, addressing the impact of climate change and dealing with related issues that profoundly affect Africa;
(f) **Emphasize** the critical role of marginalized young people, in particular those affected by conflict, as essential agents of change and integral participants in peacebuilding, post-conflict reconstruction and transitional justice efforts, recognizing that their involvement is vital to countering the narrative of tokenism and ensuring their genuine inclusion and empowerment in shaping a peaceful and equitable future;

(g) **Strongly call for** increased investment in transformative education and economic empowerment programmes tailored to the needs of young people, which should be aimed at enhancing their access to financial resources, supporting dignified livelihoods, expanding opportunity and promoting positive sociocultural and political engagement, all of which are crucial to fostering enhanced pan-African social cohesion and contributing to the overall well-being and prosperity of the African youth population;

(h) **Underscore** the critical importance of prioritizing essential sexual and reproductive health services and robust mental health support services, including psychosocial support and trauma counselling, and of establishing facilities that offer tailored, gender-responsive and youth-sensitive services to mitigate and prevent radicalization;

3. With reference to science, technology, innovation and digital cooperation:

   (a) **Recognize** the transformative potential of science, technology, innovation and digital cooperation in driving sustainable development and addressing global challenges;

   (b) **Advocate** inclusivity to bridge the digital divide, to strengthen digital systems for collaboration and to achieve greater investment in research and development, digital infrastructure and capacity-building initiatives, with a view to harnessing the benefits of technological advancement for the benefit of all;

   (c) **Urge** States Members of the African Union to ambitiously increase their investment in research, innovation and development to at least 5 per cent of gross domestic product, which is critical to accelerating sustainable development, enhancing technological advancement and fostering economic growth across the continent, thereby demonstrating their commitment to making a pivotal shift towards prioritizing home-grown solutions and strengthening their position in the global innovation landscape;

   (d) **Advocate** a holistic multi-stakeholder approach in formulating science, technology and innovation policies and regulations, which will actively engage young people in collaboration with Governments, academia, industry, civil society and the scientific community, including in the form of consultations that make use of diverse expertise, feature transparent decision-making, foster research and development partnerships, improve access to science, technology and innovation resources and facilitate technology transfer;

   (e) **Urge** States Members of the United Nations to implement robust regulations relating to artificial intelligence that safeguard the fragile economies and vulnerable populations of developing countries and that promote the responsible development and deployment of related technologies that are aimed at fostering economic opportunity and innovation, guided by protective measures and ethical principles, to ensure that artificial intelligence is used as a tool for sustainable growth and social advancement and that it benefits all sectors of society, in particular young people;

   (f) **Recommend** the urgent ratification and implementation of continental frameworks that are aimed at promoting digital transformation, such as the African Union Convention on

(g) Call for increased regulation and standardization to ensure the interoperability of technology and the portability of services across the continent to give African young people greater access to a variety of suitable and competitive service providers;

(h) Urge Governments to review fiscal and policy impediments that are slowing and hindering the development of the information and communications technology sector and to revise tax regimes to enhance broadband penetration, reduce access costs and foster digitalization, innovation, e-commerce and growth in the creative sector, using a balanced approach that will unlock the potential of the information and communications technology sector and promote equitable development and sustainable growth;

(i) Call for the prioritization and promotion of funding for young researchers, innovators and developers, greater support for national and international publications and the protection of intellectual property rights in Africa;

(j) Strongly advocate government interventions, in the form of financial mechanisms through which Governments can allocate funds, subsidies and incentives, to ensure affordable access to the Internet and high-technology devices for all Africans, which is vital to bridging the digital divide and promoting inclusive participation in the digital economy;

(k) Urge States Members of the African Union and all other stakeholders to enact a robust strategy aimed at facilitating the adoption of innovations originating in Africa, with a specific emphasis on those developed and manufactured by young people, with a view to promoting home-grown solutions, harnessing the creative potential of African young people, fostering an environment conducive to the adoption of indigenous innovations and bolstering sustainable development and economic empowerment across the continent;

(l) Call upon States Members of the United Nations to be proactive in promoting initiatives that address gender disparities in connection with digital technology, foster equitable access and opportunity for all and champion the empowerment of women and girls, with a view to ensuring their full participation in the digital sphere and driving inclusive socioeconomic development;

(m) Call upon the participants in the Summit of the Future to adopt a global digital compact and to ensure the active involvement of young people in digital policymaking at the national and international levels;

(n) Urge African countries to align their national policies with the compact once adopted;

(o) Urge the Secretary-General of the United Nations to provide access for young people to the global digital compact portal once it is established, so that they may report annually on implementation activities within their respective countries and throughout the African continent, thereby ensuring that their perspectives are incorporated into progress reports;
4. In relation to young people and future generations:
   
   (a) **Assert** the importance of empowering young people and ensuring their meaningful participation in decision-making processes at all levels;

   (b) **Call upon** States Members of the African Union to enhance the capacity of the Pan African Youth Union as a continental coordinating body for young people and to support its affiliates in amplifying the voices of all young Africans, with a view to leaving no one behind and ensuring the meaningful participation and representation of young people in political, economic, social and environmental processes and decision-making platforms;

   (c) **Request** the African Union, the Economic Commission for Africa and the United Nations Development Programme to establish a statutory pan-African youth forum, in partnership with the Pan African Youth Union. This Forum would serve as a platform for fostering intergenerational dialogue and cooperation, provide opportunities for young people to engage with diverse stakeholders, including the African Union and its organs, entities of the United Nations system and other multilateral institutions, and integrate youth voices into policy formulation and implementation processes;

   (d) **Call for** the comprehensive transformation of education systems in Africa so that they reflect the objectives of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, which would involve reimagining school curricula to reflect the commitments made at the Transforming Education Summit, thereby aligning African education systems with global governance frameworks and ensuring that they are forward-looking and inclusive;

5. In the area of transforming global governance:
   
   (a) **Call for** the reform of global governance structures to ensure broader representation and greater transparency and accountability;

   (b) **Underscore** the imperative to overhaul global governance structures, including the Bretton Woods institutions established in the middle of the twentieth century, to ensure that they are fit for purpose in the twenty-first century, with a strong emphasis on the need to revamp the financial architecture and global systems to enhance representation, transparency and accountability, which is crucial to fostering a more inclusive and effective global governance framework that can better address the needs of all countries and peoples while ensuring equitable responsiveness to global challenges;

   (c) **Urge** States Members of the African Union to proactively engage in the exploration of multipolarity and advocate a dialogue that prioritizes African interests and values and ensures justice and fairness in global discourse and decision-making processes;

   (d) **Call for** the strengthening of multilateral and regional institutions and mechanisms in order to address global inequality, promote sustainable development and uphold the principles of justice and equity;

   (e) **Also call for** the development of digital infrastructure, including digital tax collection mechanisms, to be included in the reform of governance processes, with a view to curbing illicit financial flows and recovering lost funds;

   (f) **Emphasize** the need for accessible funding structures to be used to support initiatives that are led by or intended to benefit young people and the adoption of youth quotas in global, continental, subregional and national political structures and processes;
(g) *Reiterate* that global governance starts from the grass roots and call for the robust integration of young people from the grass roots into policymaking processes to ensure that every voice is heard and valued in decision-making;

(h) *Advocate* the enhanced representation of young people in political, democratic and peace processes, centred on ensuring inclusivity in appointments at all levels of government;

(i) *Call upon* the United Nations to ensure the appropriate and adequate representation of African young people at the Summit of the Future so as to ensure that their voices shape global agendas effectively;

(j) *Extend our gratitude* to the Economic Commission for Africa, the United Nations Development Programme and the African Union for collaborating with the Pan African Youth Union to organize the Youth Forum on the Summit of the Future, acknowledge in particular and note the value of the participation and interaction of the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa with the young people of Africa during the Youth Forum;

(k) *Stand united* in our commitment to working towards a brighter and more sustainable future for the African continent and the world, and call upon Governments, regional and global organizations, civil society, the private sector, international financial institutions and all other stakeholders to join hands with us in advancing the agenda of the Summit of the Future and in realizing the goals of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

Signed,

Wiischong Bering Ahmed
Secretary-General
Pan African Youth Union