1. Introduction
The roundtable was organized by the African Youth Commission (AYC) in partnership with National Youth Parliament of The Gambia and Your Change for a Change Organization, on the sidelines of the Banjul +10 on African Youth Charter Celebration. The objectives were to explore the different roles and responsibilities of youth, government, intergovernmental organizations, civil society and communities towards the implementation of the Charter at national, sub-regional, and regional levels; review the challenges faced during the course of the 10 years since the adoption of the Charter in implementation; identify and evaluate policy, legislative, and institutional adjustments necessary to be made by all stakeholders, to capitalize gains made in the implementation of the Charter, and fast track the mainstreaming of the same in national developmental goals; evaluate the existing accountability mechanisms for the implementation of the Charter; and identify existing good practices in different nations pertaining to the respect of human rights, youth empowerment and participation in national developmental goals, and the implementation of the Charter in general.

The side event attracted more than 100 youth delegates from various African countries and partner youth organizations in The Gambia.

2. Opening Ceremony
The event was moderated by Mr. Saiba T. Susso of Activista The Gambia while Mr. Boubakar Yougbare, the Interim Executive chairperson of the African Youth Commission chaired it.

The chairperson welcomed all delegates and thanked them for attending. In his introductory statement, the chair gave an in-depth insights of what the African Youth Commission is all about and why it is staging a side event dubbed “Banjul +10 and Beyond: Youth Roundtable on The Implementation of The African Youth Charter” on the sidelines of the Banjul +10 on African Youth Charter Celebration.
He reminded delegates that the African Union Heads of States and Governments on 2 July 2006 at their meeting in this particular city (Banjul) and country (The Gambia) endorses a political and legal document called The African Youth Charter (AYC) to serve as strategic framework for African Union Member States in giving direction for youth empowerment and development at national, regional and continental levels. The chairperson informed delegates that, the charter aims to strengthen, reinforce and consolidate efforts to empower young people through meaningful youth participation and equal partnership in driving Africa's development agenda.

“I am happy that we are gathered here today as young people or their representative to honestly ask ourselves on what is it that we have done best in holding our leaders accountable on their commitments to support policies, programmes and actions for youth development in Africa from 2006 to 2016 and most importantly also to highlights our collectively roles and responsibilities for the effective popularization, ratification and implementation of the youth charter using the Youth Decade Plan of Action 2009-2018 as roadmap beyond Banjul +10”, Mr. Yougbare said.

The chair acknowledged that the youth charter has given a maximum attention to young people’s fundamental rights and freedoms such as rights to participate in society and politics, commitments towards their education, health, employment, eradication of poverty, the environment, peace and security, law, and culture but and also clearly spelt out their roles in development and responsibilities towards their family, society, the State and the international community.

What we are therefore witnessing in this room today as brothers and sisters drawn from the various African countries is to collectively reflect and frankly discuss on the challenges we faced and the success we registered from down the line using the youth charter as our statuary reference on what we the young people of Africa think about the current status of youth empowerment and development is in Africa since the adoption of the charter in 2006. By the end of our session, we should be able to have a common view and come up with outcome document, stating our position and concerns that we can share with our leaders, relevant stakeholders and concerned authorities for consideration and follow up.

The chair encouraged an open mind and active participation of all delegates in the discussion. He concludes by offering his best wishes for the successful proceedings and outcome of event.

The second speaker of the opening ceremony was Mr. Fabakary Kalleh, the former Chairperson of National Youth Council of the Gambia. Mr. Kalleh underscored that one of his expectations from this side event is the issue of youth participation and leadership in political and economic governance in Africa to be addressed very well with concrete
proposals, outlining practical actions for implementation after the meeting. “It is high time we take what rightfully belongs to us as young people. If our leaders do not create space for our involvement in policy and decision making processes, let us not wait. We have all that it takes to create it for ourselves. Let’s unite as one and speak with one voice”, Mr. Kalleh said. He welcomed and commended the chairperson of the African Youth Commission and entire team for taking the lead to show the African youth that they are not too young to lead.

For his part, Mr. Simbarashe Mhungu, a member of the African Youth Commission from republic of Zimbabwe, noted in his remarks that, the idea of the African Youth Commission was conceived in a high level youth consultation on the Africa Agenda 2063 organized by the African Union Commission and partners in Hammamet, Tunisia in November 2013 which he was fortunate enough to be part of. He said, the Youth Commission commits itself to interventions aimed at providing youth own space for young people in Africa from all works of life to organize themselves, to meet, discuss, share ideas and solutions to amplify youth voices and increase youth participation in policy and decision make processes at all levels.

According to Mr. Mhungu, African’s greatest challenge today remains the inadequate capacity to put its youth to work. He quoted the former U.S President Mr. Bill Clinton saying “I do not believe we can repair the basic fabric of society until people who are willing to work have work”. Like other parts of the world, youth unemployment has been, and remains a major challenge for many African countries and their youth. This global phenomenon is increasing on an alarming rate as every day, millions of youth in Africa struggle to secure decent employment, he said.

“Despite the positive economic news and encouraging trends that have emerged from Africa over the past decade, the troubling reality remains that the everyday livelihoods of Africans have not kept pace with macroeconomic growth, and per capita GDP levels on the continent persistently lag behind the rest of the world.

Yes, I do acknowledged existing efforts such as the African Youth Charter (2006) Article 15, the plan of actions for 10 years, African Union – Youth Volunteer Corps (AU YVC) and the AU Summit in Malabo related to the African Youth (2011) by the Heads of State and Government of the Member States of the African Union are steps in the right direction to addressing the challenge. But the reality is that it will be an immense challenge on to government itself to create employment to Africa’s growing youthful population. The practical solutions to solving it would be seeing it as our individual
responsibilities to be self-innovators – entrepreneurs and not relied solely on governments. As young people we should create our own jobs, make best use of our resources and take chance of the opportunities available for us. The challenge that supersite everything is African youth not believing in themselves and others around them and the ability that they can do amazing like other young people around the world. The fear of trying new things kills us and the heart to support one another initiative should be instituted within and not outside”, Mr. Mhungu said. Concluding his speech, Mr. Mhungu as a successful young entrepreneur himself, submits that entrepreneurship can address this stubborn income gap in Africa if—and only if—it is able to evolve beyond its current state of necessity-based informality into one that is vibrant and robust enough to promote sustained economic growth and general.

The final speaker of the opening ceremony was Mr. Samba Bah, the Speaker of National Youth Parliament the Gambia – co-organizer of the meeting. Mr. Bah thanked all participants and partners for attending and supporting the side event. He expressed delight for his organization to be collaborating with the African Youth Commission and YCFAC to host this unique youth gathering in the Gambia on the sidelines of Banjul+10 on African Youth Charter. Mr. Bah informed the participants that this is the second time for National Youth Parliament to jointly organize a youth meeting with African Youth Commission.

He said it was only a year ago when the NYP and AYC organized ahead of the 2015 4th Annual High Level Dialogue on DGtrends, the National Youth Conversation on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance in the Gambia under the theme: “Youth participation and leadership in political parties in Africa” as part of the African Governance Architecture Secretariat of African Union Commission’s efforts to provide a collaborative, open and inclusive space for young people involved in different spheres of political life across their respective regions to discuss the current state of youth political participation particularly young women and the prospects that they envision for strengthening the ways in which young people and young women particularly can lead and serve in political parties and governments. He said the outcome of that meeting inspired this gathering today and are happy to be presenting and discuss the recommendations from the 2015 Gambia National Youth Conversation on DGtrends here today. He thanked everyone for their kind attention and finally declared the side event officially opened.