Final Concept Note
West Africa Youth Leaders Forum on Population and Development to prepare the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25: Accelerating the promise!

23 – 24 October 2019, Banjul

1. Background and Rationale

The African Youth Commission (AYC), formerly the African Union Youth Working Group (AUYWG), was conceived in 2013 during Consultation with the Youth on the African Union Agenda 2063 held in Tunis, Tunisia. AYC has a Network (National Consortium) of Youth Organizations, Youth Groups, Youth Networks, Youth Coalitions, Youth Councils, Youth Commissions, Youth Associations, Youth Parliaments, Youth Professional and Think Tank Bodies, Youth Chambers of Commerce, Youth Clubs in High Schools and Colleges, and Associations of University Students in 46 Member States of the African Union.

The organisational structure of the AYC is composed of a General Assembly with representation from across Africa and diaspora, serving as the policy and decision making organ; the Executive Council comprises of 10 members –a chairperson, deputy chairperson and eight commissioners, serving as the governance and advocacy organ; the Advisory Board with representation from the six regions of the African Union including the diaspora and the African Union Commission tasked to provide advisory and guidance to the Commission; and the Secretariat comprises of 8 officials headed by an Executive Secretary and 7 directors, serving as the administrative and programming organ of the Commission.

As part of the Commission’s efforts to empower young people in Africa to fulfill their potential and contribute to Africa’s development, the AYC in 2018 adopted a 3-year Strategic Plan 2018-2020. The Strategy is inspired by the African Union’s roadmap on Harnessing the Demographic Dividend in Africa and it is structured around five thematic pillars: Pillar 1: AYC Strengthening, Pillar 2: Employment and Entrepreneurship, Pillar 3: Health and Well-being, Pillar 4: Governance and Human Rights, Pillar 5: Peace and Security.

This youth-owned and youth-driven Strategic Plan was developed through a series of online and physical consultations which accorded the AYC membership and young people in Africa the opportunity to have their say and decide on the strategic direction for AYC. Validated at the 2nd Annual General Assembly Meeting of AYC in Harare, Zimbabwe, the strategic visioning process was generously sponsored by German Federal Enterprise for International Cooperation (GIZ) through the African Governance Architecture programme of African Union Commission.
In the ECOWAS, African Union and the United Nations, the African Youth Commission (AYC) occupies a unique and valuable space for organising, coordinating activities of national, regional and continental youth-led, youth centered and youth serving organisations, building partnership, promoting and supporting other in-country youth initiatives and programmes at national, sub-regional, continental and global levels.

As an independent Pan-African Youth Network of youth-led and youth-serving organisations on the continent, the AYC does not only advocates for inclusion and mainstreaming of young people in policy and decision-making processes at all levels of the society but has made significant contributions on the continent with tangible projects/initiatives in the area of youth socioeconomic development, youth leadership and participation in governance, sexual and reproductive health of adolescents and young people, gender equality and empowerment of young women, ending all forms of violence including gender-based against girls and women, protection and promotion of human rights, green growth and climate action, as well as promotion and maintenance of sustainable peace and security in over 46 African countries and diaspora.

We don’t just talk about harnessing Africa’s youth bulge for attainment of the demographic dividend, we inspire grassroots change by utilising the energies, skills and talents of our dynamic youth. We are young but we are driving the change we want to see for growth and structural transformation in Africa. And for that, youth has to be empowered, skilled as appropriate.

**Bringing Voices of West Africa Youth Leaders to the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25: Accelerating the promise!**

The AYC recognises the importance of youth participation and leadership in ICPD conversations and accelerating the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. Youth populations are growing, youth are more likely to be unemployed, and if the ICPD Programme of Action is not achieved, young people will suffer the consequences most. Acknowledging the fact that young people have the ability to lead on accelerating the promise, and in fact, they already are.

Young people, youth organisations and youth movements in West Africa and other regions have taken actions on reproductive health, women’s empowerment and gender equality, and are leading the pathway to sustainable development since the ICPD in Cairo in 1994. In the Gambia for example, National Youth Council – member of AYC Gambia National Consortium is building the capacity of young people on SRH and HIV/AIDS prevention, providing them access to information, guidance and counselling services, peer health education and distribution of family planning materials such as condoms, other contraceptives through youth friendly centres spread across the country including the rural area. And in Benin Republic, Mali, Senegal, Togo, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, Mauritania, Cape Verde, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau and rest of other ECOWAS member states AYC members are working with their Government and development partners to provide universal access to SRH, realization of reproductive health rights, and reduction of
maternal mortality and improving youth health thereby accelerating progress on ICPD agenda.

In November 2019, the world will be watching Nairobi as the Government of Kenya, the Government of Denmark and UNFPA and partners convenes for the Nairobi High-Level Summit to advance the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. Everyone will be talking about youth. But will anyone listen to young people talk?

As part of our collective efforts to amplify, capture the voices and contributions of West African Youth towards the achievement of the ICPD agenda, the African Youth Commission (AYC) in partnership with The Gambia National Youth Council (NYC) and West African Health Organization (WAHO) will convene the first-ever West Africa Youth Leaders Forum on Population and Development ahead of the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25 in November 2019. This is a follow up to recommendation of joint side event hosted by the AYC, NYC and UNFPA The Gambia at 3rd Pan-African Youth Conference on African Unity and Development held in Banjul, The Gambia from 23-27 March 2019. The outcome and key recommendations from the Forum will feed into the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25. This Global high-level conference is scheduled to take place from 12-14 November 2019. It is jointly convened by the Government of Kenya, the Government of Denmark and UNFPA, and aimed to advance the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. The conference will offer an inclusive platform, bringing together government, UN agencies, civil society, private sector organizations, women’s groups and youth networks to discuss and agree on actions to accelerate the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.

2. Objectives

2.1. General objective
To get consensus on and to prepare the West African youth leaders and youth organisations’ contribution to the Nairobi Summit

The specific objectives of this Youth Leaders Forum are as follows:
1. Amplify the stories of incredible youth-led work that is already being done by West African youth leaders and youth organisations to advance the ICPD Agenda and be heard by world leaders at the Nairobi Summit.
2. Empower West Africa youth leaders and youth organisations with the skills, knowledge and support they need to magnify their efforts for accelerating the promise.
3. Highlight the contribution of ECOWAS particularly WAHO on improving access to quality sexual and reproductive health services tailored to the needs of adolescents and young people in West Africa region through the eyes of young people and world leaders at the Nairobi Summit.
4. To get better understanding of the content of the African Union Agenda 2063 "The Africa We Want" for its dissemination.
5. To identify the next steps to preparing and equipping the youth leaders and youth organisations in West Africa for their meaningful participation to the Nairobi Summit on the ICPD25: Accelerating the promise.

3. Expected Outcome
The expected outcomes of this Forum are:
1. Youth leaders shared their work, experiences, challenges and opportunities to achieve the ICPD programme of action in Africa.
2. Provided visibility to the work of West African youth and youth organisations, and contribution of ECOWAS/WAHO to the implementation of ICPD agenda at continental and global levels highlighted.
3. Young people, youth organisations and potential partners discussed areas of collaboration to act together for accelerating the promise.
4. West African youth position paper generated and presented to the world leaders at Nairobi Summit.
5. The recommendations from the meeting informed the WAHO’s SRHAY Project annual review and draw the proposal for the next phase of the SRHAY.
6. Participants got more insight on the content of the African Union Agenda 2063 "The Africa We Want" for its dissemination.
7. The next steps to preparing and equipping the youth leaders and youth organisations in West Africa for their meaningful participation to the Nairobi Summit on the ICPD25: Accelerating the promise are defined.

4. Target participants
The target participants of the Forum are 50 youth leaders from youth-led and youth-focus movements, networks and organisations across West Africa who are involved in implementing projects or initiatives at grassroots level that advances the ICPD agenda.

Prior to the event, AYC will conduct a mapping of youth-led and youth focus movements, networks and organisations to identify the relevant participants for the Forum. 34 will be selected from 17 ECOWAS and the Sahel countries including the Gambia, 2 participants each and the remaining 16 participants will be selected from AYC leadership and partner organisations. We will ensure gender balance and geographic distribution during the mapping/open call for application.

5. Format
The Forum will take the format of interactive plenary panel and roundtable discussions, and exhibition of best practices from different countries in ECOWAS region.
6. **Content of the Forum**

**Main Theme:** “Population and Development: the contributions from the West Africa Youth Leaders”.

**Sub-Themes:**

1. Population and Sustainable Development
3. Access to RH Quality Services and Information for Youth.
4. Youth Friendly Services and Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE).
5. Gender Based Violence and Empowerment of Young Women and Men.
6. Urbanization and Internal Migration.
7. Mental Health and Persons with disabilities.

7. **Dates**

The 2-day Forum will take place from October 23-24, 2019. Participants will arrival on the 22nd and depart on the 25th of October 2019.

8. **Venue:** Kairaba Beach Hotel, Banjul, The Gambia.

9. **Language**

The official working languages for the forum will be English and French.

10. **Partners**

In the spirit of collaboration, AYC will seek partnership with other development partners to co-host this Forum.

11. **Budget**

Enclosed.