

CONCEPT NOTE

**UNODC Education for Justice (E4J) Youth Side Event
3rd African Youth Conference on African Unity and Development
Theme: ‘The Future Is Now: Youth are Not Too Young to Lead’
Banjul, The Gambia
23-26 March 2019**

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime within the framework of its Education for Justice (E4J) initiative plans to host a side event at the 3rd African Youth Conference on African Unity and Development in collaboration with the, UN Women, The Gambia National Youth Council and the Global Youth Leadership Forum. The side event will emphasize the main conference theme, “The Future Is Now: Youth are Not Too Young to Lead” focused specifically on *Governance and Empowerment: Youth Participation and Leadership*.

The side event will bring together youth representatives from across Africa to engage in a dialogue with young African leaders, who are involved in government, policymaking and youth empowerment initiatives. The event will serve to advocate for youth leadership, demonstrating tangible routes for youth to become involved in governance and policymaking at the community, county, national, and global levels. In addition, it will emphasize the importance of education in promoting good governance and a culture of lawfulness as well as in empowering the next generation to better understand and address problems that can undermine the rule of law. Emphasis will be placed on youth leadership as a necessary step towards combating corruption and creating a peaceful and just society, with strong institutions, as emphasized by Sustainable Development Goal 16.

OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

Today the world boasts the largest youth population in history. It is estimated that 1.8 billion people worldwide are youth and among those, 90% live in developing nations, where they constitute a significant portion of the population. Africa will remain the youngest continent in the world, as it is estimated that the population will double by 2050. At that point, it is estimated that youth between 15 to 24 years of age will account for 29% of the world’s total youth population.

Despite Africa’s youthful population, there remains a massive age gap between the youth and their leaders. While the median age of Africa’s population is 19.5, the average age of an African president is 62 (UNDP, 2017). Additionally, among the world’s top ten developed countries is a defining government characteristic: their policymakers are, on average, much younger, especially in comparison with many African nations (CNN, 2015).

Thus, looking towards a sustainable global future, we must ensure the capacity of African youth is not diminished, especially through inspiring and guiding them to become key leaders in their communities and countries. As corruption continues to plague many African nations, integrating a culture of integrity and the rule of law in governance and education systems will also be key to empowering youth. This awareness will help to counter-balance corruption in all sectors of society, which diverts capital from development programmes benefiting youth, and instead heightens crime and fills the pockets of the corrupt. Young people can lead and create innovative solutions to global problems related to corruption, driving and inspiring progress economically, socially and politically. Youth are a demographic necessary to invest in, and in crafting solutions to global issues, their inclusion must be given top priority.

PURPOSE/OBJECTIVES

The side event will serve to galvanize participation of African youth in continental leadership to:

- Advocate for the voice of the youth in crafting solutions to challenges, particularly through leadership positions in governance and policymaking with the aim of promoting sustainable, peaceful, inclusive and just societies.
- Promote good governance, integrity and anti-corruption by building strong institutions, accountable leaders and enhancing the role of the African youth to define their values, shape their identities and design their own future for a prosperous Africa.
- Highlight the importance of education to empower youth to become agents and champions for change.

- Examine educational adjustments where the value of integrity and rule of law are integrated into curricula in primary, secondary and tertiary levels, an effective medium of preventing crime and promoting a culture of lawfulness among today's youth, as demonstrated by the UNODC's Education for Justice (E4J) initiative under the Doha Declaration Global Programme.
- Highlight the role of youth leadership in enforcing the rule of law and improving human security, in addition to an enhanced capacity to meet their security, justice and health priorities under the Sustainable Development Goals of which youth feature particularly in SDGs 3, 8, 11 and 16 as well as goals 5, 6, 10, 14, 15, and 17.
- Discuss innovative solutions for youth to access leadership positions and participate in policymaking and implementation in Africa focusing on crime prevention, anti-corruption, health, education, employment, and entrepreneurship.

POLICY ALIGNMENT

The United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 which was adopted in 2015, is an important framework as it urges member states to give the youth greater voice in decision making at the local, national, regional and international levels. The Resolution gives five pillars for action; participation, protection, prevention, partnerships, disengagement and reintegration. Through this side event, UNODC intends to build upon the crucial role and contribution of the youth in promoting peace and security through deterring them from violence, the response to violence, as well as their role in advocating for peace. The event will contribute to the resolutions purpose of promoting the positive contribution of the youth to peace processes.

The United Nations Youth Strategy 2030 aims to scale up global and national actions to meet youth's needs and realize their potential as agents of change. The youth strategy aims at guiding the UN system in stepping up support for the empowerment of young people, while ensuring investments in youth areas, as the population of young people is the largest ever in history. The strategy is of utmost importance to the objectives of the side event as it informs the need for inclusion of youth in decision making processes and in all levels of development.

The African Youth Charter is of utmost importance as it gives priority to youth development and empowerment in the African Union. The charter states the importance of youth participation and the commitment of the African Union, giving responsibility to member states for the development of the youth. Through outlining the rights, duties and freedoms of the youth and giving a continental framework to governments, CSOs and international organizations, it has paved the way for the involvement of the youth in the developmental strategies of the continent. Building on this, the side event intends to foster discussions on how youth participation at the local and regional levels can be utilized to promote peaceful and secure communities as well as the promotion of opportunities for the youth.

The African Union Agenda 2063 emphasizes youth as drivers of continental change, noting that youth must be thoroughly empowered and engaged in African leadership opportunities. The agenda additionally focuses on mainstreaming youth issues in all development agendas, focusing on improving economic opportunities, youth entrepreneurship, eliminating youth unemployment, and guaranteeing full access to education, improved economic opportunities. The Agenda furthers that "the creativity, energy and innovation of Africa's youth shall be the driving force behind the continent's political, social, cultural and economic transformation." The side event will build off of these values, aiming to include youth in more leadership opportunities, particularly in governance and policymaking at all levels.

The Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG Goal 16 on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions is of utmost importance to the side event, being that 16.6 and 16.7 tackle inclusive and representative decision-making at all levels, strengthening the participation of developing nations in institutions of global governance. The side event, specifically focusing on the youth role in building strong and just institutions, is part of a continental focus on reducing rampant youth unemployment, raising the opportunities for African youth to work together towards a sustainable global future for further generations to thrive.

The **Education for Justice (E4J) initiative** was developed as part of UNODC's Global Programme for the Implementation of the Doha Declaration. The Doha Declaration was adopted by the Thirteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in 2015 and endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 70/174. The Declaration recognizes the fundamental importance of universal education for children and youth as key to the prevention of crime, terrorism and corruption, as well as to promote sustainable development. Accordingly, the E4J initiative aims to build a culture of lawfulness among children and youth through the provision of age-appropriate educational materials to strengthen crime prevention and promoting a culture of lawfulness through education activities. These activities help educators to teach and empower the next generation to better understand and address problems that can undermine the rule of law and encourage students to actively engage in their communities and future professions in this regard, thereby becoming strong young leaders and agents of change.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Promote the importance of youth involvement in governance, policymaking and community leadership in the implementation of SDG 16, promoting strong, peaceful and just institutions across Africa.
- Engage in positive dialogue on the practical implementation of the provisions of the UNSCR2250, UN Youth Strategy 2030, the African Youth Charter, and the Agenda 2063 in terms of youth engagement and leadership.
- Develop practical proposals on integrating integrity and the rule of law into education systems in order to reduce crime and corruption, as guided by the Education for Justice initiative.
- Allow youth to uncover their potential and discover practical outlets to become the leaders of Africa, working towards a sustainable future where a culture of integrity, good governance and zero tolerance to corruption will be promoted in all sectors of society, in addition to building strong institutions, preventing crime, eliminating youth unemployment, increasing good health, and empowering future generations.

FORMAT OF THE EVENT

“Living Library”

This innovative 2.5-hour side event will provide youth from all over Africa to engage in a dialogue and to meet with young leaders, listen to their stories, share experiences and discuss with each other about how Africa’s next generation of leaders can make a difference, inter alia, by strengthening good governance and the rule of law in their countries.

The side event will follow the “Living Library concept”: the librarian – Ms. Wambui Kahara, the Youth Focal Point of UNODC’s Regional Office in East Africa, will give a keynote speech focusing on the importance of youth empowerment, participation and leadership in all sectors of society, including governance and policymaking. Drawing on the Education for Justice initiative, she will showcase innovative approaches and tools developed by UNODC to empower the next generation to promote a culture of lawfulness in order to reduce crime and corruption. The keynote speech by the librarian will prepare the audience for the “reading process” to empower the “readers” to ask questions to the “living books”. The “Living Books” - the four young African leaders - will share their experiences working in their respective countries as agents of change. They will discuss how they see their role in achieving the SDGs, particularly SDG 16, what they expect from UNODC and how they think they can support their governments, regional and international organizations and their communities to strengthen the rule of law in their countries.

The side event will conclude by a group discussion to come up with ideas on how to strengthen youth engagement in Africa and what international organizations, including the United Nations, can do to empower youth in this endeavor.

Living library set-up

Librarian:

Ms. Wambui Kahara, UNODC ROEA Youth Advisor

Living Books:

- Representative from UNODC ROEA (Kenya)
- Mr. Kudzai Mukaratirwa, Director, OMUN (Zimbabwe)
- Ms. Priscilla Wepia Ametame, Youth Observer to the United Nations (Ghana)
- Youth Representative from Ethiopia
- Youth Representative from South Africa
- Representative from UN WOMEN
- Representative from the Global Youth Leadership Forum

Readers:

Participants attending this side event