

THE 6TH SOUTHERN AFRICA YOUTH FORUM HARARE DECLARATION



HARARE, ZIMBABWE, August 10th-13th 2024

“Empowering the Future: Innovative Education for Sustainable Development in Southern Africa”

PREAMBLE

We the Young People of Southern Africa, and stakeholders; affirm our commitment to the development, empowerment, and inclusion of young people in our great region. We came together for the 6th Southern Africa Youth Forum hosted from the 10th to the 13th of August 2024 in Harare, Zimbabwe. Appreciating the 300 young people and partners who attended the forum from all the 16 SADC Member States, namely: Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Guided by the developmental spirit of Pan-Africanism, Ubuntu, Regional Integration, Respect for People's Dignity, Sustainable Youth Inclusion, and Access to Education for all Children and Young People in the region. Inspired by African sovereignty, territorial integrity, the gains of the liberation struggle, aspirations of democratic societies, respect of fundamental rights, cultural integrity, peaceful co-existence, and self-determination.

We recognize that the youth of Southern Africa represent an immense reservoir of energy, creativity, and potential that is critical to the continued progress and prosperity of our communities. As present leaders and change-makers of our region, we have a vital role to play in addressing the complex social, political, economic, and environmental challenges that we face. We have a role to complement our governments, the private sector, and all developmental actors to ensure access to quality and affordable education for the SADC child.

United in our diversity, we stand firm in our determination to create a more just, equitable, and sustainable future for the young people of Southern Africa. Through this **Harare Youth Declaration**, we outline our collective vision and call upon our governments, regional and international organizations, civil society organizations, private sector, development partners, religious and traditional actors to work together with us in realizing these shared aspirations.

We take note of the 6th Southern Africa Youth Forum theme for 2024, “*Empowering the Future: Innovative Education for Sustainable Development in Southern Africa*” which is informed by the Africa Union Year of Education theme, “Educate an African Fit for the 21st Century: Building Resilient Education Systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning in Africa.”

We Acknowledge the invaluable partnership and collaboration by our 6th Southern Africa Youth Forum Partners, namely: the African Union (AU), European Union, SADC Parliamentary Forum (SADC-PF), SADC, SAf_CNGO, Zimbabwe Youth Council (ZYC), International Organisation for Migration (UN-Migration), SAVE the Children International, Wits Business School, Afrocentric Locale, International Society for Neglected Tropical Diseases (ISNTD), Youth For Tax Justice Network (YTJN), Global Platform Zimbabwe, Action Aid International, YETT,

NAYO, Kuyenda Collective, Open Space ZW, Gender Links, ALMA, WAYDE, European Partnership for Democracy, European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA), AMREF, Y-ACT, Global Campaign for Education, Elbarlament.org, People in Need, SANN, Young Africa Zimbabwe, Stop the Bleeding Campaign, Equality Now, Parliamentary Youth Caucus (Zimbabwe), and SARDC. We further acknowledge the support by our pan-African leaders for their participation and support to the youth sector namely: The Patron of Youth in Southern Africa Her Excellency Boemo Ndu Sekgoma (SADC-PF Secretary General), Ms. Prudence Ngwenya the African Union Commission Director for Women, Gender and Youth, the Mayor of Harare His Worship Jacob Mafume, and the Chief Mentor Mr. Sheuneni Kurasha, United Republic of Tanzania Legislator and youth mentor Hon. Neema Lugangira among other.

Our deliberations at this 6th Youth Forum have been guided by the principles of building a united Africa and shared principles outlined by the **Youth Development Model (YDM)** which recognize sustainable youth participation, intergenerational collaboration, and a commitment to upholding the human rights and dignity of all. The Youth Development Model's four Lens Approach recognizes youth as Stakeholders, Innovators, Leaders for Transformation and Change Makers. The YDM encompasses the 8Ps: Participation, Primacy (of Youth), Partnerships, Priorities, Possibilities, Policy, Peace, and Pan-Africanism. We reiterate that young people are pivotal in driving inclusive and sustainable development, leading us towards a prosperous Southern Africa.

We take note that the 6th Southern Africa Youth Forum was integrated with practical learning such as Entrepreneurship Master Classes, visiting a Vocational Training center at Young Africa, Exhibitions by various organizations across SADC, Africa, and International Organisations, and above all visiting the Museum of the African Liberation to appreciate Africa's history, diverse liberation history, heritage, culture, and richness.

We are inspired by the progress made in previous forums, from the first (1st to the 5th Forum hosted in the following countries: Tanzania, Mozambique, Malawi, South Africa, and Botswana respectively, and we are eager to build upon these achievements to drive positive change in Southern Africa.

With unwavering resolve, we present this **6th Southern Africa Youth Forum, Harare Declaration** as a testament to our collective voice, commitment, and roadmap for the actions we will take to secure a brighter today and tomorrow for ourselves and future generations.

CALL TO ACTION!

Now therefore:

- i) We make a call to action and affirm our commitment to the implementation of the recommendations and solutions preferred by young people, and partners during the 6th Southern Africa Youth Forum.
- ii) We call for the SADC Member States, the SADC organs, the African Union, UN, as well as Youth Organizations, Youth Councils, Young people, the Private Sector, Students, Educational Institutions, Civil Society, Non-governmental Organizations, Regional and International Institutions, Religions, and Traditional institutions and individuals to support youth on these outcomes, aspirations and actions at community, national, regional, and international levels.

We Commit to:

1. Support SADC Member States and development partners in building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning in Africa.
2. Informed by our visit to the Museum of African Liberation, we commit to co-create a Pan-African Youth Leadership Fellowship Program in partnership with the Museum of African Liberation among other partners to ensure young African leaders are developed from an African perspective.
3. Complement the implementation of the SADC-RISDP, Agenda 2063, the African Youth Charter, and continued advocacy to operationalize the SADC Youth Protocol.
4. Facilitate a framework for the Southern Africa Youth Academy in partnership with SADC-PF among other partners as recommended by the 5th Southern Africa Youth Forum held in Botswana.
5. To engage the SADC Secretariat and SAf-CNGO on the Non-State Actors Mechanism, appreciating this great milestone and noting that the mechanism is silent on the role of young people (65% of the regional population) and the exclusion of youth representation in the Regional Technical Committee.
6. To support inclusive, youth-focused discussions on migration and climate change. The Forum explored the dynamics of climate migration, and how it affects education and development, distinguishing between voluntary and forced migration, and emphasizing the need for contextually relevant approaches to address these issues.
7. We commit to championing the values and aspirations of Pan-Africanism, Regional Integration, and Effective Youth Participation, Empowerment, and Inclusion.

We further commit to the following in line with the 2024 6th Youth Forum theme:

Solidarity and Education for Sustainable Progress: We emphasize the crucial role of solidarity and education in driving sustainable progress. We commit to fostering a culture of mutual support and collaborative efforts across the continent to ensure that educational advancements translate into meaningful development outcomes.

Youth Involvement in Policy Making: We advocate for the meaningful inclusion of youth in policy-making processes. This includes establishing mechanisms for regular consultations and implementing frameworks such as the SADC Youth Protocol to ensure that young people have a voice in shaping policies that affect their future.

Education and Innovation as Development Drivers: We highlight the importance of education and innovation as core drivers of sustainable development. Investment in educational systems and innovative practices will equip future leaders with the skills necessary to address contemporary challenges and drive progress.

Active Participation in Solution Crafting: We encourage young people to actively engage in developing innovative solutions and implementing innovative ideas. By fostering a participatory approach, we can harness the creativity and energy of youth to tackle pressing issues and create impactful change.

Leadership Models and Mindsets: We stress the need for effective leadership models and positive mindsets. It is essential to cultivate leaders who are inspirational, ethical, and forward-thinking, capable of guiding and motivating emerging leaders toward achieving sustainable development goals.

Youth Accountability and Policy Review: We urge young people to hold leaders accountable and actively participate in the review of policies. Ensuring that policies are responsive to current needs and gender-sensitive is crucial for creating equitable opportunities for all.

Capacity Building for Educators: We call for increased investment in the professional development of educators. Enhancing gender education and fostering inclusive learning environments will contribute to a more equitable educational landscape.

Robust Monitoring Mechanisms: We advocate for the implementation of robust monitoring systems to evaluate the effectiveness of educational policies. This will ensure that educational initiatives are achieving their intended goals and can be adjusted as needed for continuous improvement.

Equitable Education Financing: We emphasize the need for equitable education financing to ensure that all students, particularly girls, have access to quality education. Support systems should

be in place throughout their educational journey to prevent dropouts and promote retention. The financing must also cater for teachers' decent remuneration and other services.

Community-Engaged Policy Development: We encourage policymakers to engage directly with communities to gain a deeper understanding of their needs. Effective policy development should be informed by local insights rather than relying solely on external expertise.

Curriculum Modernization: We advocate for the regular updating of educational curricula to include 21st-century skills, AI, and address contemporary issues effectively. Modernizing curricula will better prepare students for the evolving demands of the global economy.

Menstrual Hygiene Management: We call for addressing menstrual hygiene needs to prevent school absenteeism among girls. Ensuring access to sanitary products and related support is vital for maintaining consistent school attendance.

Role of TVET: We recognize the value of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions in expanding educational opportunities. TVET programs should be utilized to provide additional student support and bridge gaps in the education system.

We affirm our commitment to these priorities and call upon all stakeholders to collaborate in implementing these solutions, thereby advancing youth development and sustainable progress across Africa.

Declarations on thematic discussions: 6th Southern Africa Youth Forum:

1. Declaration on Solidarity, Education, and Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development:

- Key remarks emphasized that while education is fundamental to progress, innovation drives it. Young people require specialized tools to tackle challenges such as climate change and gender inequality and are seen as pivotal in achieving sustainable development.

2. Declaration on Education Financing:

- We call for Member states to take action to increase the share of budgets spent on education to meet the higher end of recommended international benchmarks of 20% of national budgets, and 6% of GDP, and for these resources to be raised and utilized in ways that address educational inequalities.
- Non-state actors (NSAs) should monitor the utilization of these resources at all levels and throughout the budget cycle.

- Member States should take immediate policy, legislative, and financing measures to end the teacher shortage and ensure that every child in the region is taught by a qualified, supported, and motivated teacher with decent salaries and working conditions.
- Member states should adapt the curriculum to the needs of the 21st century and provide relevant education to its citizens, taking into consideration issues of education technology, AI, the capabilities and interests of learners (not focusing on academic excellence only), and lifelong learning.
- Members should ensure that they have a strong Education Management Information System (EMIS) following the regional norms and standards for education management information systems developed and make these accessible to all. (The production of data is crucial for fostering better policy prescriptions and decision-making).
- NSAs should also collect alternative data to complement what is being collected by the member states.
- Member states should operationalize provision 7.5 of the SADC Protocol on Education and Training, to treat students from SADC countries pursuing Higher Education in their respective countries as home students in terms of fees and accommodation. Non-state Actors (NSAs) should raise awareness of this provision and hold the Member States accountable for its implementation.
- Equal Resource Allocation: Ensure equal distribution of educational resources between rural and urban areas and address connectivity issues in marginalized communities.
- Curriculum Standardization: Develop and implement a standardized curriculum across all 16 SADC countries to ensure consistency in education quality.
- Practical Education Emphasis: Increase the focus on practical and solution-oriented education.
- Infrastructure and Health Facilities: Invest in school infrastructure, including health facilities, and promote vocational training and centers of excellence.
- Inclusive Education: Implement inclusive education that accommodates all genders, and persons with disabilities (PWDs), and addresses the specific needs of various student groups, including mental health and career guidance.
- Accountability and Financial Management: Improve accountability in the education sector, including tracking and auditing of budget allocations and expenditures.
- Bursaries and Scholarships: Provide more resources for bursaries and scholarships to support tertiary education and ensure free primary education for all students.
- Sustainable Practices: Integrate climate change considerations into education infrastructure and invest in renewable energy and adaptive technologies to support green initiatives.

3. Declaration on Youth, Digital Skills, and Digital Rights.

- We encourage Member States to increase digital facilities and digital access for young people, and particularly ensure that young women, those living within rural communities, and those living with disability, are not left behind, in the fulfillment of the development pillars of the SADC Vision 2050.
- We call on Member States to institute and ensure Education Curricular Reforms to equip young people with digital skills and literacy from early education and ensure their meaningful participation at all levels of digital growth.
- We call on Member States to enact effective laws and policies, in consultation with youth in their diversity, to prevent, respond to, protect, and support victims/survivors of digital harms including gender-based violence, mis- and dis-information, and cyberbullying, and ensure that oversight mechanisms are effective and accountable in line with the African Union Child Online Safety and Empowerment Policy, 2024.
- We call upon Member States to promote and ensure gender equality in decision-making at all levels of digital governance and cooperation.
- We call on Member States to ensure that the human rights of young people, including freedom of expression and assembly are respected in the digital realm in line with regional instruments such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Charter of Foundational Social Rights in SADC.
- Investment in digital infrastructure: there must be a deliberate effort through a public-private partnership to invest in expanding internet infrastructure hard to reach areas, ensuring that every region has access to affordable, high-speed internet
- There must be a conscious effort to capacity young people of the most effective way to use digital services. Further deepen the inclusion of digital literacy programs in member states' education curriculum from an early age, ensuring that all students are equipped with basic digital skills.

4. Declaration on Gender-Responsive Education:

- Development of practical policy recommendations for governments to prioritize gender-responsive education financing by investing in the right people, for example, teachers, and to Strengthen Gender Mainstreaming in Education Policies and Programs by conducting comprehensive gender analyses to identify and address disparities in access, participation, and learning outcomes between girls and boys.
- Strengthen awareness among stakeholders about the importance of gender-responsive financing and the need for targeted advocacy efforts.
- Commitments from key stakeholders, especially MS to implement gender-responsive education financing initiatives
- Establishment of clear metrics and frameworks to monitor and evaluate the impact of gender-responsive education financing in all Member States in contributing to achieving Agenda 2063 and the SDGs.
- Integrate gender-responsive approaches and strategies across all levels of education, from early childhood to higher education.
- Ensure gender-responsive budgeting and resource allocation to support initiatives that promote gender equality in education.

- Enhance Girls' and Women's Access and Retention in Education: Eliminate barriers to girls' enrollment and completion of schooling, such as school fees, distance to school, and household chores.
- Provide gender-sensitive water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities in schools to address the specific needs of girls.
- Offer comprehensive sexuality education and adolescent-friendly sexual and reproductive health services to support girls' well-being.
- Promote Gender-Responsive Teaching and Learning Environments: Develop and implement gender-responsive curricula, textbooks, and learning materials that challenge gender stereotypes and promote positive role models.
- Train teachers and educational personnel on gender-responsive pedagogy and classroom management to create inclusive and supportive learning environments and strengthen mechanisms to prevent and respond to gender-based violence and harassment in educational institutions.
- Enhance Women's Participation and Leadership in Education: Increase the recruitment, retention, and professional development of female teachers and administrators. Provide mentorship and leadership opportunities for girls and women in the education sector.
- Engage with communities, families, and traditional leaders to promote positive perceptions of girls' and women's education and leadership.
- Strengthen Partnerships and Coordination: Establish multi-stakeholder partnerships and collaboration among government, civil society, private sector, and development partners to support gender-responsive education.
- Enhance data collection, monitoring, and evaluation systems to track progress and inform evidence-based policymaking and program design.
- Facilitate the exchange of best practices and experiences in gender-responsive education across the SADC region.

5. Declaration on Young Women and Youth Participation:

- We need to adopt an improved gender-responsive macro-level economic policy that supports all young women's opportunities and well-being: We call for the implementation of enhanced gender-responsive economic policies at the macro level to bolster the opportunities and well-being of all women.
- To advocate for Strong Labour Protection: we strongly recommend that SADC member states enforce labor standards that protect women as member states industrialize. This includes establishing safe working conditions, fair compensation, and job security. It is crucial to address gender-based violence in the workplace by implementing strict policies and providing support services. Additionally, women must be given a greater voice in labor unions and decision-making processes to combat their marginalization and ensure their concerns and needs are represented and addressed.

- We recommend SADC member states enforce labor standards protecting women for safe working conditions, fair compensation, job security, and strict policies and support services to address gender-based violence.
- There is a need for agroecology and sustainable farming as alternatives that advocate for state-funded support for women farmers in agroecological practices.
- Youth recognize and acknowledge their role not as passive recipients but rather as agents of change hence are committed to driving sustainable development and collectively agree on the need to be part of decision-making processes.
- Youth want the SADC that recognize their pivotal role in society and allow them to meaningfully engage and effectively participate in issues that concern them.
- The main challenges faced by young people include but are not limited to high unemployment rates, access to quality education, the digital divide continuing to widen, climate crisis, period poverty, drug and substance abuse, and lack of representation of young people in vital spaces where critical decisions concerning them are made.
- Improved access to data will help enhance youth involvement in key policy decision-making, thus allowing them to represent the voices of other fellow young people.
- There is a dire need to shun corruption and nepotism as this is resulting in some youth accruing opportunities or navigating certain spaces based on connections and not merit.
- Youth require a supportive structure in terms of finances, technical support, and mentorship to bring about transformative change.

6. Declaration on Pan-African Youth Perspectives on the Right to Education and Illicit Financial Flows:

- Non-state actors need to take the lead in deconstructing and demystifying how illicit financial flows are causing inadequate education financing in Southern Africa.
- The Pan-African Youth Perspectives on the Right to Education emphasize the need for civil society organizations to address the issue of illicit financial flows causing inadequate education financing in Southern Africa.
- There is a need to enhance domestic resource mobilization through fair taxation and supporting the UN Tax Convention to allocate at least 20% of national budgets to education financing.
- Civil society organizations and young people should closely monitor the budget cycle to ensure transparency and accountability in public expenditure.
- SADC Member States should work with the European Union to fulfill commitments made at the 6th EU-AU Summit, including economic recovery, combating illicit financial flows, and tax transparency.

7. Declaration on Youth Empowerment, Migration, Health, and Development:

- **Empowerment through Education and Support:** We recognize the transformative impact of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) education and livelihood support programs. These initiatives, as shared by the diverse group of Southern African youths, have significantly improved lives and driven positive change within communities. We endorse strategies such as health talks, outreach, community dialogues, and comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), and advocate for training health workers and sensitizing religious leaders to support these efforts.
- **Innovative Financing and Disease Management:** We emphasize the need for innovative financing models to combat malaria and neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) in Africa. Addressing these health threats requires country-specific solutions, expanded education, technological integration, and community involvement. A holistic approach involving strengthened health systems and sustainable financing is essential to protecting vulnerable populations.
- **Youth Engagement in Migration and Climate Change:** We support inclusive, youth-focused discussions on migration and climate change. Participants have explored the dynamics of climate migration, distinguishing between voluntary and forced migration, and emphasizing the need for contextually relevant approaches to address these issues.
- **Combating Child Trafficking and Abuse:** We commit to addressing child trafficking and abuse through educational integration, raising awareness, and combating corruption. Our recommendations include incorporating relevant topics into school curricula, training educators, leveraging social media and games, educating parents, ensuring inclusivity, and addressing child labor through developmental strategies.
- **We declare** these areas as critical priorities for both regional and national focus and call upon all stakeholders to implement these recommendations to advance youth empowerment, health, and sustainable development across Africa.

8. Declarations on Inclusive and Innovative Education for Persons with Disabilities:

- **Inclusive Education System:** Inclusive education means having a unified system that is responsive to the needs of all learners at every level of early childhood, primary, secondary, and post-secondary. This system provides the necessary support to meet the needs of learners with disabilities. There is a need for access to schools through the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) which ensures that resources for specific needs are available to both teachers and learners.
- **Safe and Supportive Environment:** There is a need for Inclusive education to support the participation of all learners in a safe and friendly environment. The use of the mother tongue or sign language for primary learning incorporates technology to further support communication.
- **Qualified and Trained Teachers:** The success of inclusive education relies on qualified teachers who are trained in Universal Design for Learning. An adaptable curriculum and

resources must be available to meet the needs of each child. This approach differs from segregated education, where learners with disabilities are placed in special schools.

- **Mandatory Special Education Training:** It should be mandatory for all teachers to receive some aspect of special education training. All teacher training colleges should offer Special Needs Education Training to ensure that educators are equipped to support diverse learners
- **Distinction from Integrated Schooling:** Inclusive education is distinct from integrated schooling, where learners with disabilities are on the same campus as those without disabilities but lack the necessary support or considerations for their needs. Without support or inclusive pedagogy, it does not equate to true inclusion.
- **Alternative Educational Approaches:** Other approaches to education for learners with disabilities include pilot programs, in-hospital schools or classrooms, and in-home education. These alternatives aim to provide flexible and accessible learning environments.
- **Free Education Policy:** Implementing a free education policy, can significantly enhance access to education for all learners, including those with disabilities. Revised policies should incorporate aspects of affirmative action to lower barriers to education.
- **Adoption of Disability-Inclusive Budgeting:** We live in a nation rich in potential, yet we face significant challenges, especially regarding the rights and needs of people with disabilities. We must advocate for an increase in the disability budget. While resources may be limited, we must prioritize the allocation of funds to address the pressing issues affecting individuals with disabilities. This includes access to education, healthcare, employment opportunities, and social services.
- **Empowering Individuals with Disabilities:** By ensuring that the disability budget is adequately funded, there is a need to create programs and initiatives that empower individuals with disabilities, enabling them to lead fulfilling lives and contribute to society. It is not just about meeting basic needs; it is about fostering an inclusive environment where everyone can thrive.
- **Addressing Educational Disparities in Southern Africa:** less than 10% of children with disabilities attend school, and in Sub-Saharan Africa, only 1 in 4 students with disabilities complete secondary school. Addressing this issue requires increased awareness, improved teacher training, equitable resource distribution, and robust anti-discrimination measures.
- **From Political Will to Political Action:** There is an urgent need for our leaders to move beyond mere promises and commitments. The principles enshrined in our national constitutions must be not just words on paper but are translated into tangible actions that improve the lives of all citizens, particularly those with disabilities.

- **Call to Action:** We urge all stakeholders, government officials, community leaders, and citizens, to join hands in advocating for these changes. Together, we can transform political will into meaningful action, ensuring that the rights of people with disabilities are upheld and that our nation becomes a beacon of inclusivity and equality.

9. Declaration on Tobacco Control and Youth Engagement

➤ Establishment of a SADC Model Law on Tobacco Control:

We advocate for the creation of a comprehensive SADC Model Law on tobacco control to address the urgent need for effective regulation in the region. This initiative is crucial due to the rising tobacco use among youth and the absence of a regional framework dedicated specifically to tobacco control.

➤ Policy Advocacy and Enforcement:

To effectively address the tobacco crisis, it is crucial to enforce existing tobacco control policies rigorously and develop stronger regulations for managing tobacco production, consumption, and advertising. Countries must collaborate to enhance these measures, ensuring strict regulation of tobacco importation and robust enforcement to prevent tobacco products from reaching vulnerable communities and youth.

➤ Youth Engagement and Awareness:

We call for increased youth involvement in tobacco control efforts. This includes integrating adolescents into discussions and campaigns, such as World No Tobacco Day events, and ensuring that youth voices are heard in policy-making processes.

➤ Addressing Tobacco-Related Health Challenges:

Recognizing tobacco as a significant health hazard, we support research and initiatives to address tobacco-related Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) such as cancers, respiratory infections, and mental health issues. We stress the need for a balanced approach that considers both socio-economic and health impacts.

➤ Legislative Measures and Policy Review:

We support the review and strengthening of legislative frameworks, including the Public Health Act and the Tobacco Industry and Marketing Act in Zimbabwe. This review should aim to enhance regulations on tobacco use, marketing, and importation, with a focus on protecting youth and promoting responsible tobacco use.

➤ Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement:

We advocate for increased collaboration between youth organizations, government bodies, tobacco producers, and other stakeholders to develop and implement effective tobacco control measures. Engaging with companies and policymakers to review and improve current policies is essential for achieving responsible tobacco regulation.

➤ Education and Empowerment:

We urge for enhanced educational initiatives and resources to equip young people with knowledge about tobacco-related policies and health risks. This includes promoting awareness and

understanding of tobacco control among youth and encouraging active participation in policy advocacy.

We commit to advancing these priorities and call upon all stakeholders, including governments, youth organizations, and the public, to collaborate in implementing these measures to combat tobacco use and safeguard the health and well-being of future generations. The declaration calls for integrated efforts to address the intersection of mental health and tobacco use, enforce stronger tobacco control policies, and involve youth actively in advocacy and policy-making processes.

10. Declaration Tackling Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) and Malaria in Africa:

- We acknowledge the severe impact of Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) and malaria on Africa, particularly affecting impoverished communities with limited access to healthcare. To address these challenges, we declare the following priorities:
- **Enhanced Surveillance and Health Systems:** Strengthen disease surveillance and health systems to better manage and respond to NTDs and malaria.
- **Increased Funding and Research:** Advocate for increased funding and research to tackle these diseases and improve treatment and prevention strategies.
- **Equitable Access to Interventions:** Ensure equitable access to effective interventions, particularly for vulnerable populations including children and pregnant women.
- **Awareness and Advocacy:** Raise awareness about the impact of NTDs and malaria and amplify the voices of affected communities to drive progress and support.
- **Innovative Approaches and Sustainable Financing:** We recognize the need for innovative approaches and sustainable financing models to combat NTDs and malaria effectively:
- **Innovation and Technology:** Utilize digital platforms, artificial intelligence (AI), and other innovative approaches to enhance resource mobilization and intervention delivery.
- **Diversified Funding:** Develop sustainable financing models that include domestic resource mobilization, public-private partnerships, and other innovative mechanisms.
- **Tailored Solutions:** Implement country-specific solutions that address unique challenges faced in different regions of Africa.
- **Youth Engagement and Advocacy:** We emphasize the critical role of youth in driving change and improving health outcomes:
- **Active Youth Participation:** Encourage and support meaningful youth engagement in health and education sectors through advocacy, innovation, and grassroots involvement.
- **Youth-Driven Education Campaigns:** Leverage the energy and creativity of young people to promote malaria education and other health initiatives, ensuring outreach to the most vulnerable communities.

- **Capacity Building:** Invest in youth education, training, and capacity-building to empower young advocates and leaders in health and education.
- **Policy Integration and Accountability:** We call for the integration of meaningful youth engagement (MYE) into policymaking processes:
- **Inclusive Frameworks:** Develop policies that explicitly recognize and prioritize youth participation in decision-making processes at national and international levels.
- **Youth Advisory Boards:** Establish youth advisory boards to provide direct input and recommendations to policymakers.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Implement regular assessments of youth engagement initiatives to ensure effectiveness and accountability.
- **Collaborative Platforms:** Utilize digital and social media platforms to facilitate global youth engagement and dialogue.
- **Promoting Sustainable Youth Participation:** To foster sustainable youth involvement in the health and education sectors, we recommend:
- **Collaboration and Empowerment:** Foster collaboration between governments, NGOs, and youth-led organizations to support and amplify youth-led initiatives.
- **Seizing Opportunities:** Encourage youth to actively participate in programs, scholarships, and skill-building opportunities for personal and community growth.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Leverage public and private sector partnerships to support youth-led projects and initiatives.

These declarations aim to address the pressing health challenges in Africa, promote sustainable youth engagement, and foster collaborative efforts to create a healthier and more prosperous future for the continent.

11. Declaration for Business, Innovation, Entrepreneurship and the Establishment of Southern African Youth Commission on AfCFTA (SAYOCA)

We, the youth of Southern Africa, gathered at the 6th Southern African Youth Forum, to recognize our pivotal role in shaping the future of our economies and societies. We acknowledge our challenges as young entrepreneurs and innovators in a rapidly changing global landscape. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) presents a unique opportunity for us to harness our potential and drive sustainable development across our region.

Our vision is to create a vibrant ecosystem that empowers young people through entrepreneurship, innovation, and collaboration. We envision a Southern Africa where youth are at the forefront of economic transformation, leveraging technology and creativity to solve pressing challenges.

- **Promote Entrepreneurship:** We commit to fostering an entrepreneurial spirit among young people by providing access to resources, mentorship, and training programs that enhance business skills.
- **Encourage Innovation:** We will support initiatives that encourage innovative thinking and problem-solving among youth, particularly in sectors critical to our economies such as agriculture, technology, and renewable energy.
- **Facilitate Collaboration:** We aim to create platforms for networking and collaboration among young entrepreneurs across Southern Africa to share best practices and experiences.
- **Advocate for Policy Change:** We will engage with policymakers to advocate for supportive policies that enable youth participation in economic activities under AfCFTA.
- **Establish the Southern African Youth Commission on AfCFTA:** This commission will serve as a dedicated body representing youth interests in discussions related to AfCFTA implementation. It will ensure that young entrepreneurs have a voice in shaping trade policies that affect their businesses in the region, promote regional trade, and feed into the AfCFTA processes.
- **Call to Action:** We call upon all stakeholders, governments, private sector entities, educational institutions, and civil society to join us in this endeavour. Together we can create an enabling environment for youth entrepreneurship that contributes significantly to regional integration under the AfCFTA

We commit ourselves to:

- Engage actively with stakeholders including governments, private sector actors, civil society organizations, and international partners.
- Promote inclusivity by ensuring that marginalized groups within youth populations are represented and supported.
- Monitor progress towards achieving our objectives through regular assessments and feedback mechanisms.
- Share knowledge and resources across borders to maximize impact.

We affirm our commitment to driving change through entrepreneurship and innovation in Southern Africa. Establishing the Southern African Youth Commission on AfCFTA is crucial to ensuring that youth voices are heard in shaping our economic future. Let us work together toward a prosperous future where every young person could thrive.

12. Declaration on Nationality for All: A SADC Without Statelessness

We urge SADC Heads of State to adopt or Amend Legal and Policy Frameworks in alignment with International and Regional Standards by:

- Ensuring all stateless children, including those who are abandoned or unaccompanied are guaranteed nationality.
- Establishing statelessness determination mechanisms to identify stateless people and ensure their protection
- Introducing facilitated nationality recognition and naturalization procedures to resolve all identified statelessness cases
- Repealing discriminatory laws, policies, and practices, particularly those based on gender, race, socioeconomic status, geographic location, or disability discrimination
- Decriminalizing the lack of documentation and promoting alternatives to immigration detention
- Ensuring access to justice and providing legal aid for affected people who are stateless or at risk of statelessness

Ensure universal birth registration for all through strengthened inter-state collaboration and decentralization, and by:

- simplifying birth registration procedures and registering all children born in the region regardless of their parent's legal status.
- removing all direct or indirect financial barriers to registration, such as administrative fees, DNA testing fees, and travel costs
- c. implementing policies and practices that ensure access to registration for children persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable persons
- allocate sufficient budget and resources to improve civil registration systems across the region
- implementing the African Committee of Experts General Comment on Article 6 of the ACRWC

Center the voices of those with lived experience of statelessness, especially children, women, stateless refugees or asylum seekers, persons with disabilities, as well as ethnic, racial, and Indigenous minorities by:

- consulting with affected individuals and communities in all law and policy-making initiatives
- enhancing public awareness and advocacy efforts to combat low awareness levels and stigma surrounding statelessness
- implementing capacity-building initiatives for civil registration officials to adopt a dignity and human rights-based approach in their service delivery.
- develop robust qualitative and quantitative data collection mechanisms, to identify and protect stateless populations, and track the progress of the SADC roadmap on the eradication of statelessness.
- ratify the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights protocol on the right to nationality and the eradication of statelessness and the un conventions on statelessness promptly.
- We call upon SADC Heads of State to take urgent action to address the challenges of statelessness within the region. Statelessness must be recognized as an intersectional issue

that cuts across the human rights and development agenda and should be integrated as a priority within the SADC 2050 vision.

13. Declarations on Addressing Child Trafficking and Protection

- **Integration of Child Trafficking Awareness in Education:** We declare the necessity of incorporating child trafficking awareness into school curricula to educate young people about the risks and their rights. This should include:
- **Curriculum Development:** Integrate relevant topics on child trafficking and protection into educational programs.
- **Educator Training:** Train teachers and educators on recognizing and addressing child trafficking and abuse, drawing from best practices and strategies from organizations such as Save The Children.
- **Utilization of Technology for Awareness:** We emphasize the effective use of technology to reach and educate young people:
- **Social media and Games:** Leverage social media platforms and interactive games to disseminate information about child trafficking and protection.
- **Youth Engagement:** Develop digital campaigns and educational tools designed specifically for young audiences.
- **Parental and Guardian Education:** We call for increased efforts to educate parents and guardians on child protection and trafficking:
- **Parent Education:** Provide clear and actionable information to parents and guardians to enhance their awareness and ability to protect their children.
- **Community Outreach:** Implement community programs that involve parents in child protection initiatives.
- **Inclusivity and Accountability:** We stress the importance of inclusivity and accountability in addressing child trafficking:
- **Follow-through on Commitments:** Ensure that commitments to child protection are implemented from the ground up, involving all stakeholders in the process.
- **Addressing Corruption:** Develop measures to address corruption by ensuring that officials act with integrity and are held accountable for their actions.
- **Promotion of Child Development and Rights:** We advocate for strategies to promote child development and awareness of rights:

- **Learning Opportunities:** Increase educational and awareness opportunities for children to understand their rights and how to protect themselves.
- **Child Development:** Create and support programs that focus on the holistic development of children, including education and protection from trafficking and abuse.
- **Addressing Child Abuse and Labour:** We highlight the need for specific strategies to combat child abuse, including child labour:
- **Development Strategies:** Implement strategies to prevent and address child labour and abuse, ensuring that children have access to education and protective measures.

These declarations aim to strengthen efforts to combat child trafficking, enhance education and awareness, and foster a protective environment for all children.

We declare these areas as critical priorities for both national, regional and international focus and call upon all stakeholders to implement these recommendations to advance youth empowerment, development, policy, health, and sustainable development across Southern Africa.

6th Southern Africa Youth Forum Partners



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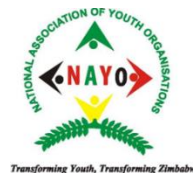


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