



PRESS RELEASE

The African Union and partners commemorate the International Day of Peace 2017 “Harnessing the Demographic Dividend: Meaningful Youth Inclusion in Peace-Building”

Addis Ababa, 22 September 2017: The African Union (AU) in partnership with the United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU), Oxfam International, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) organized a panel discussion on the theme, “Harnessing the Demographic Dividend: Meaningful Youth Inclusion in Peace-Building”, on the occasion of the International Day of Peace (Peace Day) 21 September 2017. The event, which took place at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, was organized to mobilize further for the rapid implementation by Member States of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 and related AU instruments on youth, peace and security, especially on the role of youth in preventing and combatting violent extremism.

H.E. Ambassador Smail Chergui, AU Commissioner for Peace and Security in his Peace Day message, told young people, “the present belongs to you and Africa will be what you choose to make of it. Take action today for peace and for prosperity in your spaces. You hold the keys to a better Africa, the Africa we want”. He also urged Member States to ensure meaningful youth participation in peace-building initiatives and activities in preventing and combatting violent extremism and terrorism, conflict prevention, conflict management and post-conflict reconstruction.

The panel discussions focused on four thematic areas namely; the protection of civilians from all forms of sexual and gender based violence, giving spaces and recognition to youth to prevent all forms of violence and in conflict transformation, meaningful participation of youths in decision-making at all levels, partnership to fully support youth initiatives and ensure quality education, youth employment and empowerment.

During the discussions, it was suggested that, for African youth to meaningfully participate in peace and security, beyond an occasion or ad hoc initiative, a systemic approach should prevail, whereby a youth focal point- serving as a contact and resource person, is permanently at the Commission (in the PSD). The discussants also called on the Peace and Security Council to hold yearly open sessions on youth, peace and security. These would highlight national initiatives, which could be replicated to scale, as well as serving as an advocacy opportunity for youth-centered peace and security approaches to reach the continent’s decision-making body. In addition, capacity-building, mentoring and learning through continuous

intergenerational dialogues were recognized as key to meaningful youth participation: fusing youthful dynamism with the experience and knowledge of older generations.

It must be recalled that the panel discussions with an attendance of over one hundred and fifty participants from Member-States, international and civil society organizations, academia, the media and youth organizations, was inspired by the decision of AU Heads of State and Government dedicating 2017 to youth. They recognized the paramount importance of youth and the need for their meaningful participation in governance, peace and development in keeping with Aspiration 6 of Agenda 2063 on, “An Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children”.

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