

# THE 5<sup>TH</sup> SADC YOUTH FORUM DECLARATION



**GABORONE, BOTSWANA 2023**

*“Accelerating Regional Integration and Youth Participation AfCFTA”*

## **PREAMBLE**

**We the Young People of Southern Africa**, gathering in our diversity at the **5<sup>th</sup> SADC Youth Forum** hosted from **25 to 27 July 2023, Gaborone, Botswana**, representing all the 16 SADC Member States: 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 aspirations of Pan-Africanism and the desire to** foster our unity in diversity and inspired by our 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.

**Considering** the outcomes of the previous SADC Youth Forums, the programs, projects, and policies shaped by these outcomes and the need to continue to be guided by young people's recommendations and resolutions in our interventions.

**Driven** by the zeal to contribute towards the empowerment of youth in our region and contributing to effective development and sustainable participation of youth at community, national, national, and international levels.

**Cognizant** that youth constitute a larger percentage of the population nationally, regionally, and that they are faced with many challenges that require immediate solutions.

**Mindful** that young people in Southern Africa face structural, systematic, and financial challenges that prohibit their participation in inter-Africa Trade and effective development.

**Acknowledging** the instruments that guide the empowerment of the youth of the SADC region, including but not limited to the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020-2030, SADC Vision 2050, the Africa Youth Charter, UN Agenda 2030, the Youth Development Model (SAYoF) and the Africa Union Agenda 2063.

**Celebrating** the first-ever Regional Conference of Youth (RCOY) hosted by Southern Africa Youth Forum (SAYoF) and its partners during the 5<sup>th</sup> SADC Youth Forum, to craft a youth position for COP28 and to inform the youth-led Youth Climate Actions in the region.

**Grateful** as we launch the **Southern Africa Youth Flag** with its deep meaning rooted within the values of Pan-Africanism, sustainable youth development and cultural integrity; the flag symbolises unity and signifies that youth are the leaders of today, working side by side with elders. The flag is a call for effective youth inclusion in both policy and practice, emphasising the principle of equality. This flag reminds youth of their responsibility to contribute to the develop their region and countries, building an integrated region based on democratic governance, respect for human

dignity in line with the values of Ubuntu and preserve ownership and sustainable utilisation of our natural resources.

**Inspired** by the gracious support of the SADC Parliamentary Forum (SADC-PF), notably, Her Excellency Boemo Ndu Sekgoma, Secretary General and Patron for the SADC Youth Parliament, who joined the young people in Gaborone, Botswana, throughout the entire duration of the Forum.

**Acknowledging** the invaluable partnership and collaboration of the following organisation which played an integral part in making the 5<sup>th</sup> SADC Youth Forum a phenomenal success: SADC Parliamentary Forum (SADC-PF), SADC-CNGO, African Union, Southern Africa Trust (SAT), International Organisation for Migration (UN-Migration), European Union Delegation to Botswana and SADC, SAVE the Children International, Wits Business School, CAPSI, Afrocentric Locale, International Society for Neglected Tropical Diseases (ISNTD), Youth For Tax Justice Network, WWF, International Idea, and CJ-JT Donor Collaborative.

**Further acknowledging** the commitment by the European Union, which was represented by the Deputy Head of Delegation to Botswana and SADC, Ms. Silvia Bopp-Hamrouni, not only as a partner of the 5<sup>th</sup> SADC Youth Forum but also for its efforts and actions to Regional Integration and Youth Participation in AfCFTA through its support for SADC regional economic integration programs.

**Desirous** to collaborate with the UN International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and leverage the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM) to unlock the potential of youth in Southern Africa and ensure the well-being and empowerment of young migrants through a coordinated and collaborative efforts, while addressing migration management associated challenges.

**Saluting** the work of the Africa Union Youth Ambassador for Peace for Southern Africa; Ambassador Cynthia Chigwenya, which brought the agenda on youth, peace, and security at the table, with the inclusion of youth from marginalised communities and her participation at the 5<sup>th</sup> SADC Youth Forum to share with the young people from the region the progress, and to listen to their recommendations.

**Taking Note** of the 5<sup>th</sup> SADC Youth Forum theme for 2023, “*Accelerating Regional Integration and Youth Participation in AfCFTA*,” which was influenced by the aspirations of the SADC RISDP 2020-2030, as well as the African Union theme for 2023 which is “**Acceleration of AfCFTA Implementation.**”

**Endorsing the notion that** effective participation of young people in AfCFTA implementation is crucial for its success and the recognition that the youth play an important role in regional integration and development, backed by good governance practices.

**Reaffirming our commitment** to contributing to social-economic development of young people in Southern Africa, fostering regional integration, and harness opportunities presented by the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) for the benefit of the youth.

**Determined** to foster an enabling environment for youth empowerment and supporting an active role for SADC youth in monitoring the implementation of AfCFTA, including through the implementation of key frameworks for youth development and empowerment, including the SADC Declaration on Youth Development and Empowerment (2015), the SADC Youth Empowerment Policy Framework (2021-2030) and the African Youth Charter (2006).

**Inspired** by the Ignite Talk delivered during the 5<sup>th</sup> SADC Youth Forum by Mr. Sheuneni Kurasha SADC-PF Programme Manager Democracy, Governance and Human Rights and Chief Mentor for the SADC Youth Parliament, titled “**Propelling the Youth of Southern Africa to Discover their Generational Mission and Move with Decisiveness to Fulfil It**” and agreeing with the notion that, “**It is the duty of each generation to identify its purpose or mission within the context of its time.**”

**Welcoming** the steps taken by the **SADC Secretariat** on the call for the SADC Youth Protocol and acknowledging the 3<sup>rd</sup> SADC Youth Forum which Her Excellency Dr. Stergomena Lawrence Tax by then the Executive Secretary of SADC Secretariat, as our Guest of Honour received the 3<sup>rd</sup> SADC Youth Forum, Malawi Declaration and commit to take action steps to support outcomes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> SADC Youth Forum, among them the Protocol on Youth.

**Modelling our work on the Youth Development Model (YDM)**, which views young people as Stakeholders, Stockholders, Leaders for Transformation, and Change Agents (Four Lens Approach). The YDM encompasses the 8Ps: Participation, Primacy (of Youth), Partnerships, Priorities, Possibilities, Policy, Peace, and Pan-Africanism. We reiterate that young people play a pivotal role in driving inclusive and sustainable development, leading us towards a prosperous Africa.

## **CALL TO ACTION**

### **Now therefore:**

- i) We endorse the 5th SADC Youth Forum Declaration, which is intended to spearhead and promote sustainable youth development in Southern Africa. This declaration comprises various resolutions and recommendations for actions, aimed at guiding youth programs and other interventions at national, regional, and international levels.
- ii) **We call upon** SADC Member States, the SADC organs, including the Secretariat, SADC-PF, as well as Youth Organizations, Youth Councils, Young people, Private Sector, Students, Educational Institutions, Civil Society, Non-governmental Organizations, Regional and International Institutions, Religions and Traditional

institutions and individuals to support youth aspirations and actions at community, national, regional, and international levels.

**I. Business, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship Cluster:**

- a) Young people in Southern Africa must seize opportunities within the AfCFTA and advocate for the Adoption and Implementation of the Protocol for Women and Youth in Trade.
- b) Equitable Outcomes in AfCFTA must be attained through sustained Domestic Resource Mobilization and Allocation.
- c) Creating a continent-wide market will require a determined effort to reduce all trade costs.
- d) SADC Member States must harmonize their legislative and regulatory framework to enable the free flow of goods, movement of people, capital, and information across borders; and create competitive business environments that can boost productivity and investment.
- e) The SADC Member States must advance through AfCFTA, the creation of decent jobs for Youth, including support for cross-border trading.
- f) In sectors facing job losses, governments need to be ready to support workers with adequate safety nets and policies to retrain workers.
- g) There is a need to effectively support young innovators in strategies for harnessing innovation and digitalization to accelerate trade in SADC.
- h) Support and finance young entrepreneurs, businesses, and start-ups that grow local economies and provide sustainable jobs, through special training programs, networking opportunities, and equitable tax breaks.
- i) There is a need for funding for youth-led businesses, capacitation, and mentorship of young people towards reaping the full benefits of the AfCFTA.
- j) Implementation of the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement, its Protocols, and Annexes require financing and therefore the fight against illicit financial flows and bolstering efforts to promote domestic resource mobilization is key to availing resources that Partner States will contribute to the AfCFTA Adjustment Fund.
- k) Article 21 of the draft AfCFTA Protocol on women and youth in trade should be modified to include the aspect of harmonization of tax incentives given to women and youth-led or owned micro, small, and medium enterprises to avoid the race to the bottom.

- l) The draft AfCFTA Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade should provide a tailor-made dispute resolution mechanism for the women and youth in trade as opposed to the one established under the Protocol on Rules and Procedures which is mainly for resolving disputes among Partner States.
- m) Wider adoption of the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS) by SADC countries is encouraged to promote instant cross-border payments in local currency.
- n) Passport-free travel arrangements amongst SADC countries for cross-border entry are encouraged as not only will it enhance regional cooperation and integration, but also promote relations between countries and foster social cohesion among citizens.
- o) The SADC region is encouraged to lead tax policy initiatives that modernize, simplify, and harmonize import and export policies to allow for maximization of the AfCFTA benefits by women and youth.
- p) Youth organizations and young people in Southern Africa are important in the awareness of the AfCFTA.

## **II. Education, Science, and Technology Cluster:**

- a) Trade Education must be incorporated into the curriculum and must be taught at all levels of education.
- b) Affirming that Education is one of the important tenets for Trade; the SADC Member States should prioritize funding of up to 20% of the National Budget to go towards supporting Education.
- c) The curriculum must address societal needs, supported by a mechanism to fund quality, inclusive, and accessible education for all, including children with disabilities.
- d) Education institutions play an important role in complementing governments to invest in infrastructure, connectivity, technology, research, human capital development, and clean energy.
- e) There is a need to enable the effective participation of young people in sustainable Agriculture, using modern technologies and climate-smart strategies to boost nutrition, promote indigenous knowledge systems, and ensure food security in the region.
- f) The SADC region must pay attention to Human and Financial Capital as a catalyst for Industrialisation.

### **III. Disability Cluster:**

- a) To ensure access to Trade Related Information for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), all websites must adhere to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) as they provide a unified framework for web content accessibility that meets the needs of individuals, especially for PWDs.
- b) It is vital to provide training and capacity building for trade officials, policymakers, and website administration on accessibility standards.
- c) Trade-related information materials must be in large print, braille, audio, visuals, and local sign language to promote inclusion.
- d) Collaboration of Disability organizations with trade-focused organizations and companies is highly recommended as this will ensure inclusivity.
- e) It is of vital importance to incorporate awareness campaigns in AfCFTA Dialogues to promote the importance of information accessibility for PWDs.
- f) Ensuring Document accessibility is mandatory. It can be accessed through plain text, HTML, and accessible PDF.
- g) State parties are obligated to ensure research development, availability, and adaptability of universally designed goods, services, and equipment.
- h) State parties ought to ensure access to mobility aids (crutches, wheelchairs) and assistive technology to ensure inclusive banking, braille money notes, and sign language interpretation to ensure inclusive trade.
- i) To further support the recommendation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> SADC Youth Forum on Albinism; the Disability Cluster launched the Southern Africa Network of Albinism Organizations (SADC-NAO) to further strengthen advocacy and activism within the community by facilitating stronger linkages between stakeholders working towards similar objectives in the sector.

### **IV. Health Cluster:**

#### **Impact of Tobacco on SADC Youth Health Recommendations:**

- a) The impact of tobacco on youth health has become a critical concern within Southern Africa. Statistics demonstrated a significant rise in tobacco use among SADC youth, leading to an upsurge in smoking-related diseases, including respiratory problems, cardiovascular issues, and various cancers. The data emphasized the urgent need for effective tobacco control measures.
- b) SADC Youth called for Awareness of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC): and noted the importance of aligning national policies with the FCTC guidelines to protect youth health and Integration FCTC Guidelines into legislative frameworks.

- c) Participants were inspired to take active roles in promoting tobacco-free environments, raising awareness about the harmful effects of tobacco, and engaging with policymakers to shape effective tobacco control policies. Youth empowerment emerged as a crucial aspect of combating tobacco-related challenges.
- d) The forum recommended building a foundation for discussion of the SADC Model Law on Tobacco Control working with SADC-PF. The participants recognized the importance of adopting a harmonized regional approach to tobacco control to address cross-border challenges effectively. The proposed model law aims to standardize regulations and enhance regional cooperation in tobacco control efforts.
- e) Urgent Action on Tobacco Control: Young people called for immediate and comprehensive action to combat tobacco use among youth. This includes implementing evidence-based policies such as increased taxation, comprehensive bans on tobacco advertising and promotion, and support for smoking cessation programs.
- f) Youth Involvement in Policy Formulation: Youth voices and perspectives should be actively sought during the policymaking process to ensure policies are relevant and effective for the target group.

#### **Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Recommendations:**

- a) Member States must recognize the diversity of young people and be inclusive of students, persons with disabilities, migrants' youth, and other marginalized youth in planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting, and coordination of programs on adolescent and sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- b) The plaque of stigma and discrimination (induced and internalized) among the youth with HIV/AIDS is still a persisting issue. Therefore, youth organizations, community, faith, traditional leaders, and all stakeholders should be engaged, and mainstream programs and activities purposed to eliminate stigma, discrimination, and intolerance.
- c) There is an urgent need for all stakeholders to scale up efforts to end sexual violence for girls and women.

#### **V. Environment and Climate Change Cluster**

The Regional Conference of Youth (RCOY) noted that Climate change is not a distant issue, it is heavily impacting our different communities hence there is a dire need for young people to collaborate to address the crisis. The participants at the RCOY acknowledged the work being done by the Southern Africa Climate Change Youth Envoy Ms. Laurel J. Kivuyo an office that came as a recommendation of the 4<sup>th</sup> SADC Youth Forum hosted in Johannesburg, South Africa, as proposed by the representative of the Government of South Africa and Deputy Minister of



International Relations and Cooperation Honourable Alvin Botes. The RCOY also sought to identify youth priorities when it comes to climate change, and these would inform the position paper which will ultimately feed into the Global Youth Statement to be presented to the United Nations Secretary-General at COP28 in UAE. The RCOY was attended by 92 participants from SADC countries and stakeholders. The RCOY appreciated the support of the CJ-JT Donor Collaborative, and WWF to enable the hosting of the first day of the 5<sup>th</sup> SADC Youth Forum.

**The Recommendations are as follows:**

- a) We are calling for continued commitments to support stronger climate actions toward implementing policies on environmental sustainability, climate financing, land-based investments, and governance.
- b) We call to SADC Citizens to advance the SADC Green Agenda with a focus on environmental sustainability, energy efficiency and transition, renewable energy, green minerals and manufacturing, sustainable and climate-smart agriculture, sustainable land and ocean use, sustainable urbanization, and infrastructure.
- c) Climate Financing must contribute to the investments in people and nature-based solutions that support sustainable agriculture and tourism, access to safe water, and wildlife and forest conservation.
- d) Mining companies must contribute to climate financing and adopt the use of renewable energy.
- e) To contribute to environmental sustainability, young people in Southern Africa must take a leading role in afforestation (tree planting) and re-afforestation, networking, innovation, resource mobilization, behavioural change, research, publications, drafting of position papers, call to action, policy briefs, clean up campaigns, recycling, engaging in community dialogues and use of social media and radio to broadcast messages on climate change and environmental sustainability.
- f) The Governments, Development Partners, and Private Sector must complement each other to provide technical and financial support to youth initiatives in Southern Africa to fight climate change and ensure environmental sustainability.
- g) There is a need to leverage already existing structures and create new networks to advance young people's work in the climate space.
- h) There is a need to lobby and advocate for child and youth-sensitive policies across all the thematic working areas.
- i) Young people must invest in research to ensure an informed perspective on climate change.
- j) Young people with disabilities must be continuously engaged as stakeholders in the climate agenda.
- k) The forum urges urgent operationalization of funding arrangements for loss and damage.
- l) The Forum proposed sustainable startups to address the climate plight.

- m) Climate disasters are resulting in forced migration, giving reference to global and local situations some of which include wildfires, cyclones, and droughts there is a need for a holistic approach to limit the costs.

#### **VI. Governance, Peace, and Security Cluster:**

The Forum acknowledges the partnership and participation of the UN International Organization for Migration (IOM), deliberations on the Global Compact for Migration (GCM), and discussion on what SADC Youth can do to accelerate GCM implementation.

#### **The following are the recommendations.**

- a) The Forum took note that poverty remains a key driver of human mobility, including irregular migration, and young people anticipate better lives when they choose to migrate. To mitigate this challenge the Forum recommends SADC Member states to review policies to ensure decent work and initiate support initiatives for returning migrants.
- b) We call upon SADC countries to harmonize their national development plans with migration.
- c) Young people in Southern Africa are committed to complementing member states in raising awareness on safe and orderly migration and targeting fellow youth who are prospective migrants.
- d) Young people may use peer-to-peer influence, community strategies, digital technology, and social media to ensure the objectives of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) are achieved.
- e) To ensure the rights of youth migrants are guaranteed, the Forum encourages member states to ensure that all migrants have proof of legal identity, adequate documentation, information about the referral mechanisms that are in place, have access to basic services such as education, healthcare, shelter, food provision and access to clean water regardless of their migration status and allowed to voluntarily return to their countries of origin.
- f) As a pillar to promote AfCFTA member states must guarantee access to information on regular migration and enable regional integration by strategies such as simplified travel documentation application procedures and removal of visas among SADC member states.
- g) To protect the rights of migrant workers, the migrants must be made aware of their rights, and member states must harmonize their policies and develop a regional policy that regulates the management and protection of migrant workers.
- h) Taking note of increased human trafficking, young people, governments, and stakeholders must increase awareness and ensure flexibility in policies for regular migration.

- i) Improved cross-border as well as multi-country collaboration along migration routes for better continuity of care and promotion and protection of health at both an individual and public health level.
- j) The forum also noted the need to integrate the Youth for Peace Agenda in all regional processes, ensure good governance for economic growth, and enact favourable regional and national youth policies, among them the SADC Youth Protocol.

## **VII. Pan-Africanism, Arts, Culture, and Heritage Cluster**

- a) The Forum noted the importance of taking **Lessons from People of African Ancestry and Liberation Struggles**.
- b) Young people are committed to taking forward Pan-Africanism, which is rooted in unity, solidarity, self-determination, territorial integrity, good governance, ownership of resources, respect for diversity, peaceful co-existence, ubuntu, and intergenerational learning.
- c) The need to have more online conversations about Pan-Africanism and the future our continent.
- d) The forum noted the need steer the production of more documentaries, animation or cartoon about the liberation struggle and the history of war veterans in SADC and Africa
- e) To revive struggle songs that have meaningful history for our current generation.
- f) Establish Pan African fellowship for young leaders to understand African political and social construct.
- g) To establish more public lectures of Liberation Struggle in SADC Region.
- h) The forum noted the urgent need to celebrate, honour, and document women in Southern Africa who fought in the liberation struggles for the region.
- i) The Forum noted the need to document Indigenous customs to preserve our heritage.
- j) Youth as tech-savvy have a role in digitalizing these customs, publishing books and articles for future generations, and avoiding the extinction of our culture and heritage.
- k) Young people were interested to see the economic perspective towards creating a community that was an outcome of struggle.
- l) Young people call on Governments in Southern Africa to audit our heritage sites and places that are named after the colonizers (with colonial names); with public consultation urgently re-name all the places in line with original names or African values to honour our history and those who perished in the liberation struggle.

## **VIII. The 5<sup>th</sup> SADC Youth Forum Young People's Commitments:**

**We the Southern African Youth;** commit to the following important issues from the **5<sup>th</sup> SADC Youth Forum**. We, therefore, re-affirm our commitment to act as young people on recommendations proffered above and those actions summarised below:

- a) We commit to championing the values and aspirations of Pan-Africanism.
- b) Support and complement our governments on regional integration and implementation of AfCFTA.
- c) Commit to raising awareness, ensuring adoption and implementation of the Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade
- d) We commit to support the implementation of the SADC Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP), the Africa Youth Charter, the Africa Youth, Peace, and Security Strategy and the Global Compact for Migration (GCM).
- e) Through a Common Youth Position towards the Conference of Parties (COP-28), we will advocate for sustainable inclusion of youth in climate actions backed by resource support to youth-led initiatives.
- f) We commit as SADC Citizens to advance the SADC Green Agenda with a focus on environmental sustainability, energy efficiency and transition, renewable energy, green minerals, and manufacturing, sustainable and climate-smart agriculture, sustainable land and ocean use, sustainable urbanization, and infrastructure.
- g) We commit to advocating for technical and financial support for youth in business, support for youth climate actions, and youth participation in general.
- h) We commit to taking steps and support SADC Secretariat on the formulation and adoption of the SADC Youth Protocol.
- i) We commit to ensuring the sustainable inclusion of young persons with disabilities in programs and strategies, including in trade.
- j) We commit to ensuring young people are taking leadership roles at community, national, and international levels, by ensuring good governance and accountable leadership.
- k) We commit to the responsible use of digital technology and social media for development.

## 5<sup>th</sup> SADC Youth Forum Partners



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