



## The African Youth Charter and its relevance for the ILO

### African Youth Charter



#### *Why the African Youth Charter?*

The Charter responds to a call made by youth organizations to recognize youth's potential as partners, assets and as essential players in sustainable development, peace and prosperity in Africa. For too long, youth's role as agents of constructive change has been hindered by lack of human and material resources. It is now time to take decisive steps to empower them. This requires building their professional capacity, promoting their leadership, increasing their responsibilities, providing them the information to make informed decision and enabling their participation in governance. These are the goals of the **African Youth Charter**.

#### *What is the African youth charter?*

The African Youth Charter is the first international legal framework of action for the African Youth. It was unanimously adopted by African Heads of State during the 7th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union held in Banjul, the Gambia on 2nd July 2006. The document articulates issues of importance to youth (persons between the ages of 15 and 35 years) including; participation in national development and governance, improved access to education and skills development, poverty eradication, targeted efforts to integrate youth socially and economically, peace and security, sustainable livelihoods, youth employment and health. These issues are captured in 31 Articles of the Youth Charter.

## *How will the African Youth Charter be popularized?*

The onus is on Member States to ensure that the rights and freedoms in the Charter are upheld and that the obligations, responsibilities and duties are understood by all. At present the Charter publicized in media, school and publications. Youth are also expected to play an important role in promoting the ratification and implementation of the Charter. The 2007-2015 Plan of Action was discussed during the Second Ordinary Session of the Conference of the African Union Ministers in Charge of Youth (COMY II) held from 12 to 15 February 2008 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The ministers discussed how to accelerate the dissemination, signature, ratification and implementation of the Youth Charter in Member States. By the end of the meeting, three countries (Gabon, Mali and Rwanda) ratified the Charter. Mauritius has submitted its documents to the AU for ratification and seventeen countries have signed the Charter<sup>1</sup>.

## *What is the relevance of the African Youth Charter for the UN agencies and other partners?*

The African Youth Charter provides a coherent continental framework under which the UN agencies, led by the Economic Commission for Africa and other partners, may support the African Union's youth development programmes. The Charter's Articles encompass the mandates and comparative advantages of relevant UN agencies and partners. Hence it provides a platform for UN agencies and partners to harmonize their activities with the African Union's (AU)'s programme for youth development. The ADFV Steering Committee convenes UN agencies and partners with the AU to harmonize their youth focused programmes with the AU's Plan of Action and Programme of Activities for the Celebration of the Year of African Youth 2008.

At the national level, UN Agencies and partners are supporting ongoing efforts to accelerate the signature, ratification and implementation of the AYC.

## *What is the relevance of the African Youth Charter for the ILO?*

Two areas in the Charter that are of crucial importance to ILO's mandate and expertise are Articles 13 and 15 on Education and Skills Development and Sustainable Livelihoods and Youth Employment, respectively. ILO contributes, at the regional level, by collaborating with the AU and aligning its youth employment programme with the AU Plans for youth employment and skills and development. (This is currently being done under the auspices of the ADFV Steering Committee). At the national level, youth policies have been identified in several countries. Their importance cannot be overemphasized. This was underscored in one of the recommendations of the Meeting of Experts held at the Second Ordinary Session of the Conference of the African Union Ministers in Charge of Youth (COMY II). It was recommended that Member states develop and review national youth policies consistent with the Charter; and formulate actions plans. Furthermore, states must build national and international networks to improve the efficiency of their youth development programmes. For the ILO, the formulation of national action plans and programmes on youth employment must be based on clearly formulated national youth policies. Where specific programmes on youth employment have been developed by the AU, modalities of collaboration can be worked out with the ILO.

More details on the Charter can be found at:

<http://www.africa-union.org/root/UA/Conferences/Mai/HRST/Charter%20english.pdf>

<sup>1</sup> Benin, Benin, Chad, Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Libya, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Togo





## WHAT'S HAPPENING?

The 3rd Forum on the "Partnership with Africa", initiated by His Excellency Horst Kohler, the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, in cooperation with the ZEIT Foundation, took place in Berlin, Germany from 24 to 25 January 2008. Young leaders, representing Germany and 20 African countries, participated in the Forum. The 3rd Forum followed two previous forums held in Wittenberg, Germany (November 2006) and in Accra, Ghana (January 2007). The objective of this initiative was to activate a process of dialogue, leading to common solutions to the problems targeted by the Declaration of Accra. The Declaration of Accra was formulated by young African leaders, in partnership with Germany, in 2007; and identifies major challenges of the current cooperation, as well as possible solutions. The four themes in the Declaration include environment and the natural habitat; violence and armed conflicts; education and employment opportunities; as well as national political participation. Also discussed at the Forum was how to strengthen the network and its influence on German development policy. One of its main recommendations was the need to sensitize decision-makers, youth and other relevant stakeholders about the objectives and methods of Germany's Partnership with Africa and the recommendations in the Declaration of Accra.

The National Symposium on Youth Employment, held in Windhoek, Namibia on 6 February 2008, attracted a wide range of stakeholders. Government Ministries, NGOs and civil society organizations, youth from the 13 regions of Namibia and the UN agencies and other donors attended. ILO was represented by Joseph Ajakaye, Therese Abrahamsen and Hopolang Phororo. The Youth Employment Network (YEN) was represented by Justin Sykes (a consultant). The Honourable Mr. Peter Lilonga, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Welfare (MoLSW), Mr. Simon Nhongo, UN Resident Coordinator, Mr. Ajakaye, Acting ILO Deputy Director made opening addresses. The key note address was delivered by Honourable Mr. John Mutorwa, Minister of Youth, National Service, Sports and Culture (MYNSSC). Lively discussion ensued on how to insure youth participation in the elaboration of the National Action Plan on youth employment. After the Symposium, on the 7th February, the MYNSSC and the ILO/YEN team facilitated an initial meeting. Technical presentations were delivered on the NAP process to ensure that participants shared a common understanding of the issues. The meeting submitted proposals on a number of organisational issues including: the lead convener; the lead institution; the lead coordinating institutions; and the lead ministries for the Working Groups. The development and finalization of a practical and implementable National Action Plan, based on wide ownership across government sectors and Ministries/Departments spearheaded by the Ministry of Youth, National Services, Sports and Culture will be a welcome achievement.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### Training Course on "Tackling youth employment problems", Turin, Italy, 7-16 July 2008

The International Training Centre of the ILO will be conducting a one and half week training course on "Tackling youth employment problems". The course follows the policy cycle and, in the framework of the ILO's Global Employment Agenda, participants will examine cutting edge ideas and methods to promote more and better jobs for young people. The training course is targeted to staff from ministries of youth, labour, education or vocational training; workers' and employers' representatives as well as NGOs. The cost for the training is Euro 3000. For more information, contact [emp@itcilo.org](mailto:emp@itcilo.org)

Links to other sites on youth employment:

[www.ilo.org/youth](http://www.ilo.org/youth)

[www.ilo.org/yen](http://www.ilo.org/yen)

[www.yesweb.org](http://www.yesweb.org)

[yen-wa@un.org](mailto:yen-wa@un.org)

<http://go.worldbank.org/48Z06GMD70>

*DID YOU KNOW?*

- 1st November is African Youth Day;  
&  
- 2008 is the Year of the African Youth?

