



23rd Conference of Heads of State and Government of Africa and France.

Address of the Youth of Africa at the 23rd Africa-France Summit in Bamako on 3-4 December 2005.

If the policymakers fail to attend to young people...

We, the youth of Africa and the Diaspora, meeting in Bamako on 8-9 November 2005 at the first African Youth Forum, as a prelude to the Africa-France Summit of Heads of State and Government, aware of our place and responsibility in Africa's present and future,

Thank the leaders of Africa and France who have invited us to attend this Summit.

Going beyond concerns, with sentiment and folklore, we declare and we emphasise that Africa is suffering in its young people.

Youth is the flagship of any civilised people, and youth in Africa is generally absent from decision-making and debate on the major issues of development.

Reference is made to young people only when the question is one of riot, fire-setting, armed conflict, drug abuse, unemployment, paedophilia, AIDS, and so on and so forth.

Our political aspirations and the expression of our desires have long been muzzled.

But we have despite all this made our mark as crucial contributors to the process of social and political change on our continent.

In saying this we have in mind the African youth of past eras, those young people who fought for the liberation of Africa and also those who continue to fight for its development.

We call on the young adults you once were, you who preside today over the destinies of our countries and who forget all too often that you once dreamed when you were twenty, dreamed like Lumumba, Modibo Kōita, Nkrumah, Nasser, Bourguiba, Nōgus Hailō Sōlassiō, Amilcar Cabral, Agostinho Neto, Houphouet Boigny, Lōoplod Sōdar Senghor, Nelson Mandela, Cheick Modibo Diarra and so many others.

As we do today, you fought against injustice.



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As we do today, you dreamed of a better role for our countries on the global stage.

And today we come to you as responsible citizens to claim our place on this rostrum, to speak forthrightly to Africa and to France.

Beyond the august authorities present here we are addressing the entire world - for borders, countries and nationalities fade into insignificance at a time when the new information and communication technologies, against the backdrop of globalization, are helping to build a new global citizenship. Going beyond what has been said above, we the young people of today, are at the centre of many struggles and hold high hopes for our future.

We, the youth of Africa, have a clear vision of the model of citizenship we need in our countries to bring our continent out of its impasse.

We are innovating by creating everywhere in Africa hundreds of thousands of associations, NGOs, cooperatives and enterprises

We have invented new avenues for development, taking into account our needs and concerns and those of our populations.

Through rap and slam and every other possible mode of expression, we convey our vision of a more demanding African society, denounce pseudo-models of development and call for more ethical and innovative governance leading our States.

Time is short.

And Africa can no longer afford either political excess and error or poor governance.

The as-yet untapped creativity and energies of our generation and generations to come constitute an asset that must not be compromised.

We do not want more declarations, or yet more action plans, what we want are structured and operational policies adopted by States with a view to effective improvement of the living conditions of African youth.

What we demand is the definition of clear and operational development policies based around youth and focused on the following areas:

With regard to youth training and employment, we wish to see the following:

- the reinforcement of national programmes for the promotion of employment,
- the implementation of appropriate measures to support rural production involving young people,
- an expansion of the resources for vocational training and apprenticeships,
- the ratification and application of international conventions in the field of employment and training for young people,
- inclusion in the various training and employment promotion programmes of the



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specific needs of young people in difficulty and those of the handicapped and school enrolment of young girls.

With regard to the major environmental and public health issues, we suggest the following:

- Heads of State should give a personal commitment to the combat against HIV/AIDS,
- the application, monitoring and evaluation of the major communications programmes aimed at changes in personal behaviour,
- the development and reinforcement of local advice and assistance services for the promotion of sexual and reproductive health,
- free, universal access to antiretroviral drugs for those living with HIV/AIDS and free access to condoms for all,
- liberalisation of licences for the manufacture of essential drugs against HIV/AIDS.

With regard to socio-political and economic integration, we suggest the following:

- the implementation of legal provisions to ensure the representation of young people in all decision-making bodies at local, national and international levels,
- the reinforcement of mechanisms for the monitoring and assistance of initiatives taken by young people at local, national and sub-regional levels,
- giving young members of the rural population a start in life through access to land,
- specific measures in favour of vulnerable population groups,
- a relaxation of the conditions governing the access by young people to national and international financing,
- the creation and strengthening of National Youth Councils,
- the setting up of Youth Observatories,
- an increase in the numbers of regional and national creativity fairs both Africa-wide and within each country,
- the setting up of a Council of the Youth of Africa and the Diaspora.

With regard to migration, we wish to see the following:

- an increase in the numbers of cultural exchange and co-development programmes to ensure better understanding of migration as a factor for development,
- the promotion of locally-available training programmes and youth projects to reduce the North/South imbalance,
- the raising of the awareness of young people to the laws of host countries and the effective application of international agreements and conventions on immigration,
- the development of infrastructures, opportunities and mechanisms at rural level to attract young Africans back into the countryside,
- the adding of value to national and African human resources to halt the "brain drain" phenomenon,
- the implementation of the NEPAD peer review mechanism to facilitate good governance.



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Many processes of change are now under way: sociological, political and economic.

As Heads of State, you must note their existence, interpret them and set in train the appropriate reforms.

We, the youth of Africa, are eager to learn and impatient to act

We, the youth of Africa, are the bearers of a culture of peace, friendship and transnationality.

We shall fight with your support to put an end to child soldiers, genocide and fratricidal conflict in the day-to-day life in Africa.

And to conclude, the Forum of African Youth argues for the bringing about of good governance through existing institutional mechanisms such as the African Union and sub-regional organisations.

Good governance will make it possible, last but not least, to meet the commitments given to the achievement of the

Millennium Development Goals, without which our efforts will not lead to the desired results.

We submit the above proposals, solemnly and with respect, to the parents that you are

We speak to the conscience of the young people you once were

We say, quite simply, that we do not have an infinite amount of time left to us.

We are under an urgent, imperative obligation to move forward.

If policymakers fail to attend to young people, the winds of change in the democratic arena will lead young people to attend to policymakers in order to give meaning to their commitments.

Long live African youth,

Long live cooperation between Africa and France,

Long live the 23rd Africa-France Summit.

We look forward to the 24th Summit to review the commitments made in Bamako.

Bamako, November 9, 2005.

The Forum of African Youth and the Diaspora.

