

Declaration

Scaling up action and impact on youth entrepreneurship and self-employment in West Africa

Youth Entrepreneurship and Self Employment (YES) Forum
Dakar, Senegal 13-14 November 2018

The multi-stakeholder participants of the first Youth Entrepreneurship and Self-employment Forum organized under the aegis of the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth, meeting in Dakar;

Recognizing the importance and urgency of achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all - rooted in gender equality and rights at work – placed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

Reaffirming our commitment to advancing the Sustainable Development Goals and mobilizing efforts to ensure no one is left behind;

Recognizing the importance of promoting youth entrepreneurship within a multi-pronged approach to foster pro-employment growth and decent job creation in accordance with the Resolution “The youth employment crisis: a call for action” adopted by the International Labour Conference in 2012;

Recognizing that young people are active agents of change and their voices must be heard, their creativity engaged, their representation promoted, and their rights respected in fostering decent jobs for youth;

Recognizing that international trade and investment are engines of economic growth, and that removing barriers to young entrepreneurs’ participation in national, regional and international markets is vital, in line with the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement;

Recognizing the important role that youth entrepreneurship and self-employment policies and programmes play in advancing the 10 year implementation plan of the African Union’s Agenda 2063: the Africa we want;

Recognizing the role of young people in realizing the Third Industrial Development Decade for Africa (IDDA III) 2016-2025 established under the United Nations General Assembly resolution (70/293);

Recognizing the important role of governments in ensuring that there is an enabling policy and legislative environment for the promotion of youth entrepreneurship and self-employment;

Recognizing the opportunities to learn, link and leverage regional and sub-regional efforts for the promotion of decent jobs for youth, including the Youth Employment Action Plan of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel;

Recognizing the United Nations' efforts to ensure young people, everywhere, have greater access to decent jobs, through the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth and its direct contribution towards the UN Youth Strategy: Youth 2030;

Recognizing the guiding principles of the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth, its objective of scaling up action and impact at country and regional level, and its multi-stakeholder alliance of governments, social partners, youth and civil society organization, private sector, foundations, academia, parliamentarians, regional institutions, the UN system and the media;

Affirming that generating sufficient decent jobs for youth is of highest priority in West Africa;

Acknowledging the thematic plan on youth entrepreneurship and self-employment developed by partners of the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth and its invitation to catalyze innovation and intensify evidence-based joint action.

- I. Resolve to take targeted and immediate action to scale up action and impact on youth entrepreneurship and self-employment in West Africa, by:
 - a) Working together as a regional alliance of the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth, sharing experiences, improving coordination, and advancing the promotion of youth employment in West Africa;
 - b) Strengthening youth participation and representation to ensure their voices are heard, their aspirations are met and their contributions are recognized, in the promotion of decent jobs for youth, including by improving cooperation with youth-led organizations;
 - c) Developing and operationalizing national strategies for youth employment, as a distinct strategy or as part of a national employment strategy, with the requisite resource allocation;
 - d) Ensuring that youth entrepreneurship and self-employment efforts are evidence-based, effective, and feed into national strategies and development plans, particularly in relation to the industrial sector;
 - e) Ensuring that youth entrepreneurship and self-employment efforts protect and respect the rights of young people, both young employers and young workers employed by youth-led businesses, take into account fundamental principles and rights at work, and promote social dialogue;
 - f) Promoting youth entrepreneurship and self-employment, especially for young women, rural populations, young migrants and refugees, and other vulnerable groups of young people;
 - g) Ensuring and contributing towards an enabling policy and regulatory environment, including for small and microenterprises, cooperatives and the social economy, that supports the start, growth and sustainability of youth-led businesses;
 - h) Taking action to facilitate the transition of young entrepreneurs into the formal economy, including by promoting and supporting compliance with national labour legislation and facilitating access to social protection measures;

- i) Promoting greater access to markets, information and technology for young entrepreneurs as well as greater integration into (industrial) value chains and improved coordination between youth-led enterprises and lead firms;
 - j) Enhancing the scale and quality of entrepreneurship education, skills development – both technical and soft skills –, incubation, coaching and mentoring programmes for youth;
 - k) Increasing the availability of financial services targeted at young people, particularly young women, including appropriately adapted savings and loans products non-financial services such as financial education, special credit lines and Corporate Social Responsibility policies in financial institutions lending and providing other services to youth;
 - l) Increasing youth's access to finance through innovative financial mechanisms, including digital platforms, such as crowd funding and peer-to-peer mechanisms as well as through impact investments;
 - m) Boosting the financial capabilities of young entrepreneurs through customized training and capacity building programmes;
 - n) Enabling young entrepreneurs to enter green and greening markets as well as the blue economy, and equipping them with the tools to succeed serving as catalysts of social and environmental change; and
 - o) Establishing and strengthening information systems and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to measure impact and to improve policy and programme instruments for youth entrepreneurship.
- II. Agree to take stock of progress on the above on an annual basis and convene biennially to share experiences in advancing this Declaration.
- III. Request the Forum's co-organizers, in partnership with the Government of Senegal and regional institutions such as the ECOWAS, to take leadership in the promotion of this declaration and ensuring its recommendations are translated into action and tangible results by developing an action plan and monitoring mechanism.
- IV. Request the Forum's co-organizers to disseminate this Declaration and engage with national stakeholders to ensure local action and contribution.