

# Declaration

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

Youth Entrepreneurship and Self Employment (YES) Forum  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 20 November 2019

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

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 role that young entrepreneurs play in implementing and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals;

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 the relevance of a “human-centred approach” in accordance with the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work adopted in 2019 and promoting youth entrepreneurship within a multi-pronged approach to foster pro-employment growth and decent job creation in compliance with the Resolution “The youth employment crisis: a call for action” adopted by the International Labour Conference in 2012 and the youth perspectives for the future charted by the “Abuja Youth Statement” in 2019;

Recognizing the important role that youth entrepreneurship and self-employment policies and programmes play in advancing the 10 year implementation plan of the Agenda 2063: the Africa we want; and the ongoing regional efforts supporting decent jobs and the empowerment of youth through the 1 million by 2021 Initiative and the African Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (APAYE), adopted by the African Union;

Recognizing the African Union Commission’s efforts for greater youth participation and advocacy for youth employment through the African Union Youth Envoy Action Plan 2019/2020;

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

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 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 such as the African Union Commission and the Regional Economic Communities in Africa, the UN system and the media;

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

Acknowledging that young people in Africa are the youngest population in the world with more than 60 percent of the continent under the age of 30;

Acknowledging that 70 percent of Africa's population is offline and Africa is still on average a 60 percent rural population;

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 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 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, to develop inclusive business models that provide solutions for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the Agenda 2063, catering specifically for the needs of young women, rural

populations, internally displaced young migrants and refugees, and other vulnerable groups of young people;

- g) Ensuring and contributing towards an enabling policy and regulatory framework, including for small and microenterprises, cooperatives and social enterprises, that supports the start, growth and sustainability of youth-led businesses, and that recognizes the specific challenges of young entrepreneurs including but not limited to their likelihood to fail;
  - 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) Increasing youth's access to available and affordable broadband internet, with a focus on investing in closing the digital divide and boosting information and communications technology;
  - k) Ensuring the ratification and implementation of the African Youth Charter, particularly accountability on Article 15 calling for sustainable livelihoods and youth employment;
  - l) Fostering youth-led inclusive and sustainable rural development through market-driven entrepreneurship initiatives, including in agriculture and related agro-industries, supported by dedicated policies that address, among others, the challenge of access to land and finance;
  - m) Enhancing the scale and quality of entrepreneurship education, skills development – both technical and soft skills –, incubation, coaching and mentoring programmes for youth, including through peer-to-peer learning, and the use of technology to allow for scaling and replicability;
  - n) Increasing the availability of and access to financial services and investment that cater to the needs of young people, particularly young women, including appropriately adapted savings and loans products and access to bank accounts, 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;
  - o) Increasing youth's access to finance through innovative financial mechanisms, including digital platforms such as crowd funding, peer-to-peer mechanisms, blockchain powered lending platforms, as well as through impact investments;
  - p) Boosting the financial capabilities of young entrepreneurs through customized training and capacity development programmes;
  - q) 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
  - r) 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 African Union, 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.