Background Document

An On-line Platform to support the Youth Network for a Culture of Peace in Africa

Preparatory phase of the Youth Network for a Culture of Peace in Africa to be launched at the
Pan-African Forum "Youth and Culture of Peace"

on the theme:
"African youth and the challenge of promoting a culture of peace in Africa"

Organized by the Omar Bongo Ondimba Foundation for Peace, Science, Culture and Environment, in partnership with UNESCO, under the High Patronage of His Excellency Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Republic of Gabon

Libreville on 13-14 December 2014

Context

In light of the challenges and opportunities to be faced by Africa in the next decades, it is essential to draw on the energy and the enthusiasm of youth, who represent over 35% of the population the continent[1]. The contribution of youth will be indispensable to revisit the culture of peace, a concept born in Africa 25 years ago, and to explore new approaches to attain the joint objectives of lasting peace and sustainable development. To channel this potential in the spirit of the "Make Peace Happen" campaign[2] initiated at the [Pan-African Forum on "Sources and Resources for a Culture of Peace](#)" held in Luanda (Angola) in March 2013, a Youth Network for a Culture of Peace in Africa is being developed so as to engage young women and men to embrace the ideals of peace and reconciliation.

The Network will be launched on the occasion of the Pan-African Forum "Youth and Culture of Peace" on the theme: "African youth and the challenge of promoting a culture of peace in Africa" to be held in Libreville on 13-14 December 2014. This Forum is organized by the National Commission of Gabon for UNESCO and the Omar Bongo Ondimba Foundation for Peace, Science, Culture and Environment in partnership with UNESCO, under the patronage of H.E. Mr. Ali Omar Bongo Ondimba, President of the Republic of Gabon.

The Youth Network and the Pan-African Forum will both constitute key contributions to the implementation and promotion of the [African Youth Charter](#) of the African Union as well as [UNESCO's Operational Strategy on Youth (2014-2021)](#).

Paving the way to lasting peace

The main objective of the United Nations and UNESCO is to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". Since its foundation UNESCO has taken over the mission to construct "the defences of peace" in the minds of men and women, recognizing that a lasting peace, if it is not to fail, cannot be based exclusively upon political and economic agreements but it "must be founded upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind". These ecumenical aspirations have been encapsulated into the concept of a Culture of Peace first formulated on the African continent in 1989 at an international conference organized by UNESCO in Côte d'Ivoire.

What is a Culture of Peace? It is a set of values, attitudes and behaviours that people must practice in their daily lives for peace and reconciliation to happen. Behind the Culture of Peace is the idea that peace and security is not the exclusive business of governments: it requires the active involvement of all and the commitment of everyone, in society and especially of youth whose potential impact on social transformations has remained largely untapped.

The current surge of flaring conflicts and acts of violence and intolerance in Africa continue to undermine the continent's prospects for sustained human development and economic growth. In line with the Africa Union's goal of ending all wars in the continent by 2020, the Culture of Peace concept is primarily a mobilizing one, a compass towards peace. The Culture of Peace concept has hence received increased attention as a relevant approach to address the challenges and opportunities of Africa. This has been exemplified in particular at the aforementioned Luanda Pan-African Forum. A forward-looking concept, the culture of peace is at the heart of [UNESCO's Operational Strategy for Africa](#), which encompasses respect for diversity, dialogue, human rights, gender equality, citizenship and democratic participation to achieve international security.

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[1] http://africa-youth.org/
[2] The initiative is also in line with the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022), the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024) as well as with UNESCO's Programme of Action for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence and African Union Decade on Youth Empowerment and Youth Development (2009-2018).

A network to engage African Youth in consolidating a culture of peace in Africa

Given that Africa is the world's youngest continent, it is clear that lasting peace cannot be achieved without the active engagement and contribution of young African women and men. Today more than ever due to the multiple crises that the continent faces – violent intrastate conflicts, economic and social crises, climate change, environmental degradation, food crisis –, African youth should be given the opportunities to actively engage in policy making, exercise their rights, participate in social transformations, act as responsible social actors, propose and apply innovative solutions to lasting problems and contribute to building a sense of community and addressing local challenges.

For UNESCO, youth are not simply beneficiaries, but equal partners and actors for development and peace. In line with UNESCO's Operational Strategy on Youth (2014-2021) young women and men are considered key agents and stakeholders who should be enabled to drive change in their countries and communities. In line with the recommendations contained in the Action Plan for Culture of Peace "Make Peace Happen" adopted at the Luanda Forum, it is urgent to encourage youth civic , conflict prevention and social innovation on the African continent.[3] To empower African youth in such a fashion, offering them tools that will ensure ownership of the strategies they design and implement, it was decided to launch a dynamic and sustainable Youth Network for a Culture of Peace in Africa in order to engage young women and men to embrace the ideals of peace and reconciliation.

On-line preparation for the launch of the Network beginning on 18 August 2014

Harnessing the power of ICTs to contribute to the building of a culture of peace through dialogue, UNESCO will notably support the Network through the establishment of an online platform to help youth organizations share experiences and projects, ideas and visions, exchange views and collaboratively form strategies and policies to jointly promote a culture of peace.

In view of the Libreville Pan-African Forum, the first task of the online platform will consist in the preparation of the terms of reference and the concrete modalities of cooperation of the Youth Network for a Culture of Peace in Africa.

Online discussions will be open from 18 August 2014 to 13 November 2014 Contributions will be made in English or French.

The discussions will be structured by UNESCO through questions focusing on the objectives and thematic strands of the Pan-African African Forum "Youth and Culture of Peace", as described in the herewith attached concept note of the Forum and the background document on the online platform.

Expected results of the first phase of the online platform of the Youth Network for a Culture of Peace in Africa:

Establishment of the Network:
- Taking stock of existing networks and experiences to coordinate youth action in Africa and determining the added value of the specific Network on a Culture of Peace
- Identify the purpose, objectives, and modalities of establishing the African Youth Network for Peace
- Elaborate a roadmap for the development of the African Youth Network for Peace, incorporating suggestions for specific collaborative projects and initiatives
- Develop a communication strategy for the Network

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[3] In that sense the African Youth Forum on a Culture of Peace is not only in line with the third axis of UNESCO's operational strategy on Youth, but also with the United Nations' initiative "Education First".

Issues covered by the Network:
- Agree on key issues pertaining to a culture of peace that consists of "values, attitudes and behaviours that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups and nations" [4]
- Share experiences and successful practices on these issues

Preparation of the Pan-African Forum
- Elaborate policy recommendations that can be further discussed during the Forum
- Contribute to the elaboration of the agenda of the Forum

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[4] See Resolution A/REA/52/13 of the United Nations General Assembly (1998).