



1st UNESCO African Youth Forum Burkina Faso, 24 –28 September 2007

DECLARATION OF OUAGADOUGOU

INTRODUCTION

Coming from the North, the South, the West, the East, the Center of Africa, young delegates from thirty – eight countries met within the framework of the 1st UNESCO African Forum held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso from the 24 to the 28 of September 2007, on the theme : “Young people and Dialogue among Civilizations, Cultures and Peoples”.

More than 50 delegates with 15 observers and 15 facilitators reflected on the major and urgent concerns of young people in Africa.

Being conscious that civilization is inseparable from culture, which gives it its meaning and values and that the construction of any respectful knowledge of diversity in all its forms (means, traditions, finalities, religion) in Africa is becoming a primary objective for young people;

Convinced that political stability, social consolidation and economic prosperity are linked to the acknowledgement of the capacities of young people, whose unity and solidarity will make the continent stronger, the young participants had the opportunity to exchange and share their experiences, to address issues of particular interest to them and to reflect on positive actions by and for young people.

For us, the African youth, the first UNESCO African Youth Forum represents an important step towards a better understanding and expression of our fundamental needs on the basis of a common interest.

We are conscious that this is a unique opportunity to seize, as it is the first time African Youth is consulted prior to the UNESCO Youth Forum and General Conference.

The main themes discussed during this Forum were:

- 1- Youth-led initiatives and action with and for youth as a means of regional integration in Africa
- 2- The role of education in promoting individual and social development
- 3- Employment and/or entrepreneurial initiatives and their youth-inclusive role in the rural and the urban communities of the African region
- 4- Youth participation in the identification of an agenda for youth, in decision making processes and in the elaboration of youth policies



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Following four days of discussions and exchanges of experiences and perceptions, the final conclusions and recommendations are presented as follows:

1. Youth-led initiatives and action with and for youth as a means of regional integration in Africa

Recognizing the importance of festivals, such as the Cultural Festival of UNESCO University Clubs of Western Africa (FESCUAO), that has been taking place for 20 years now in different countries of Western Africa, and of the constant advocacy efforts at the regional decision-making bodies, which reflect the dynamism and the involvement of young Africans in the development of their States;

We, African youth, recommend the following:

- Establish sub-regional youth movements between the Member –States;
- Create a permanent online network after this Forum;
- Create community multimedia centers in the Member States as a means to increase access to information;
- Create youth-led youth desks within the UNESCO National Commissions;
- Conduct an evaluation of the implementation of youth-specific programs;
- Initiate an annual Cultural Festival of the African Youth;
- Encourage youth participation in good governance through the follow-up/evaluation of projects;
- Involve young people and their respective organizations in promoting African integration through culture, sports, knowledge, health, communication, networking and positive African culture-specific values;
- Ensure that Member States encourage intellectual exchanges between young people from different cultures and favor the sharing of good-practices;
- Reinforce the action of youth clubs against HIV/AIDS;
- Ensure the support of young people's actions from the governments, the private sector and the various partners, through the National Youth Councils;
- Support the creation of youth centers and houses. These youth centers should be equipped with computer rooms and reference libraries;
- UNESCO should encourage, support , follow and develop actions by and for youth;
- Publish actions by and for youth;
- Strengthen UNESCO clubs, movements and associations and support their initiatives;
- Support and provide technical and, mainly, financial assistance to the Cultural Festival of the UNESCO university clubs of Western Africa (FESCUAO), as a better framework for regional integration and dialogue among the peoples of Western Africa;



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- Support the intellectual (conferences, seminars, meetings, exchanges...) and cultural (music festivals, theatre, dance, sports...) aspects of youth action;
- Encourage national and regional caravans that will allow for a true blending between the peoples;
- Create universities for crafts/trade in rural areas ;
- Encourage for and raise awareness among young people on peer education to fight against illegal migration and for the demystification of the West;
- Encourage international internships for the exchange of expertise;
- Encourage States to provide preferential tariffs for computers material;
- Organize contests for the best regional integration project, to be financed by UNESCO and partners;

2. The role of education in promoting individual and social development

Education is a tool that can greatly contribute to individual progress and to the development of societies.

Education is necessary in order to address the various challenges of the 21st century: environmental, cultural, economic, sanitary challenges.

It is for these reasons that we, young people participating in the UNESCO African Youth Forum, have addressed the issue of education in Africa and have identified the situations and conditions that generate problems:

- a. Disparity of educational systems in Africa;
- b. Insufficiency in school infrastructures;
- c. Inadequacy between training and employment;
- d. Insufficiency in qualified human resources;
- e. Non recognition of informal skills;
- f. Excessive manpower;
- g. High schooling costs;
- h. Limited budgetary allocations to education;
- i. Low schooling rates for adolescent girls and young women;
- j. School imposed, not accepted;
- k. Lack of awareness of the importance of partnerships on school;
- l. Limited focus on reproductive health and sex education, arts, sports and eco-citizenship;

In view of the above, we recommend to:



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- Introduce local languages in educational programs;
- Establish free education;
- Develop infrastructures;
- Standardize African universities' degrees;
- Demand/ Promote education for young women;
- Acknowledge the importance of orientation counselors ;
- Establish a multi-sector network for the exchange of experiences on education;
- Develop specialized education systems for marginalized populations;
- Acknowledge the value of informal skills;
- Give value to the teacher's status;
- Increase the budget allocated to education;
- Favor the participation of community leaders to the development of formal and non formal education;
- Advocate in favor of the acceptance of the school in all African societies;
- Give value to the technical and professional education;
- Reform educational systems in Africa;
- Introduce local knowledge systems in curricula;
- Promote sex education;
- Favor educational exchanges among countries;
- Encourage a continuous training for teachers;

3. Employment and/or entrepreneurial initiatives and their youth-inclusive role in the rural and the urban communities of the African region

Youth employment is an issue of national priority for each State and Government and represents a fundamental concern of young people.

The questions related to entrepreneurialism and employment are linked to the problems of unemployment or underemployment of young people in Africa.

Therefore, emphasizing on entrepreneurial initiatives means developing ideas and concrete actions that contribute to resolving the problems of unemployment and underemployment, even that of non-employment for young people, in urban and rural areas, while purifying the geographical, socio-cultural and economic contexts of the States beforehand.

Situations or circumstances at the origin of the problem:

- a. Inadequate training as regards the needs of society;
- b. Myth of the diploma and the West;
- c. Socio-political instability within the States;



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- d. Non-valorization of informal skills;
- e. Young people's lack of confidence in their capabilities ;
- f. Heavy administrative and financial procedures for the establishment of enterprises;
- g. Young people's refusal to exercise manual work;
- h. Rise of individualism among African youth;
- i. Persistence of stereotypes related to the employment of women;

The weaknesses mentioned above, force us to recommend that:

Traditional strategies for the professional integration of young people be revised. In this regard, it is necessary to:

- Promote labor-oriented fields of study in order to give additional value to the degrees obtained ;
- Create a trust fund with State and donors' support, administered by the National Youth Councils;
- Alleviate taxation for youth-led entrepreneurial initiatives;
- Introduce training modules on entrepreneurialism in the primary, secondary, higher and professional education programs;
- Raise awareness among young people on the importance of private initiatives;
- Develop the creative spirit;
- Promote the research of information, the individual training and the exchange of experience;
- Develop educational and training strategies for young women;
- Create a specialized African network of young consultants to reflect on development;
- Re - orientate the objectives of the National Youth Councils so that they become poles of opportunities and economic growth;
- Facilitate the access of young people to funding mechanisms and resources;
- Elaborate specific development projects for young people;
- Train out-of-school youth in entrepreneurialism;
- Reinforce young people's economic power;
- Establish a UNESCO Global Youth Development Fund, supported by governments and multinational companies ;
- Reinforce partnerships with the private sector ;
- Increase the media campaigns on youth projects;
- Create a national mechanism for young people to facilitate the retrieval of interests blocked at the banks;
- Create committees to undertake assessment studies, especially in countries in post-conflict situation;



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- Reintegrate out-of-school youth, especially young women, in social and educational life;
- Reinforce young people's dialogue and communication capacities/skills;
- Develop information and training techniques in rural areas through connections; between the administrative and institutional structures, as an effective means to counter the brain drain phenomenon;
- Encourage and support the creation of working posts for handicapped young people;
- Ensure the National Youth Councils' capacity building by UNESCO, the governments of the Member States and their main partners;

4. Youth participation in the identification of an agenda for youth, in decision making processes and in the elaboration of youth policies

Youth participation in decision making processes is a major component of the procedure aiming at involving young people and raising awareness.

On the whole, each government is preoccupied by the state of youth development even if the majority of the national policies for the development of youth are not well structured, almost even non-existing. The process of youth empowerment is linked to the young people's involvement in the mechanisms for the establishment of National Youth Councils. Unfortunately, today, only around ten countries have a national youth policy.

As regards the African Youth Charter, only two countries have ratified it (Mali and Rwanda).

So we, African youngsters, recommend to:

- Involve young people in the process of establishment of National Youth Councils and the dissemination of information on the African Youth Charter;
- To democratize procedures within the National Youth Councils by favoring information-sharing;
- Advocate in favor of educating on, adopting and/or making popular the National Youth Policies and the African Youth Charter;
- Encourage governments to adopt and ratify the African Youth Charter with a view to making it more effective and applicable;
- Encourage the establishment of National Youth Councils;
- Provide institutional, technical and financial support to the National Youth Councils;
- Elaborate National Youth Policies;
- Encourage youth participation in the elaboration, formulation, implementation, follow-up and evaluation of National Youth Policies;



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- Promote youth capacity-building through training sessions on youth programs and systems;
- Encourage governments to reinforce the operational and technical capacities within the National Youth Policy, through the creation of National Youth Councils;
- Involve National Youth Councils in the dissemination of information at country level;
- Implement partnership programs among young Africans;
- Encourage youth participation in the processes of the African union;
- Ensure the follow-up of the UNESCO African Youth Forum at sub-regional level;
- Reinforce the advocacy and fund-raising capacities of youth organizations;

Actions to be undertaken by young people:

- For the National Youth Councils:

Organize exchanges between countries that have a National Youth Council and those in which the process is underway.

- For the promotion of the African Youth Charter

Develop activities aiming at promoting the Charter in all countries, through the institutionalization of an African Youth Day for the promotion of the Charter

As a consequence, we, African youngsters, commit ourselves to:

- Working with the National Commissions for UNESCO as permanent peer trainers in youth centers and houses.
- Take on and publicize the African Youth Charter

Conclusion

It is, finally, necessary and opportune to find the traces of the African Youth. The First UNESCO African Youth Forums is to us, the African Youth, an opportunity to reaffirm our will and commitment to assume our development through actions by us and for us.

It is, nevertheless, necessary, in view of this firm commitment, to call upon our governments, UNESCO and other partners, to encourage and accompany this will that is today manifested by the African Youth.

Therefore, we, young people of Africa, gathered in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in the context of the first UNESCO African Youth Forum, express our desire to safeguard the outcome of this



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Forum and to ensure an adequate follow-up of the commitments undertaken and the recommendations issued.

We, young people of Africa, recommend that the African Youth Forum continue to be organized as a prelude to all the future UNESCO world Youth Forums.

We hereby vest the committee of 12 people elected, to act with the support of UNESCO and the other partners, for a real follow up and for the maintenance of the UNESCO African Youth Forum

Ouagadougou, September 28, 2007

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