



**Strengthening partnership to accelerate Africa's demographic dividend**  
**Concept Note for High-level dialogue during the 71<sup>st</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly**  
19 September 2016  
*CR11 from 300 to 500 pm*  
*United Nations Headquarters, New York*

## **Background and Rationale**

Despite encouraging economic growth in Africa, there is an urgent need to push for sustainable development through inclusive social and economic transformation, and employment creation, in an effort to improve the quality of life for all Africans. Africa's youth population is increasing rapidly and is expected to double-- reaching over 830 million by 2050. Even with an accelerated decline in fertility, the population will continue to increase for the foreseeable future, thus reducing the impact of the economic growth. Therefore, unless the continent *invests in the young people including teenage girls*, ensuring that they are *empowered* and *educated*, and that *employment* creation increases faster than the rate at which the youth population enters the labor market, it will be difficult to translate the positive trend in economic growth and demographic transition into improved wellbeing and good quality of life. If the increase in the working age population was harnessed effectively, it could contribute to increased productivity and result in a stronger, more inclusive and sustainable transformation of the continent. On the other hand, if the young people are not empowered and helped to fulfill their potential, they will continue to be exposed to migration, radicalization and socio-political upheaval.

African Heads of States and Governments have shown their conviction that harnessing the demographic dividend will contribute to transforming the continent and the attainment of sustainable development. They are determined to focus their efforts and engage in partnerships which empower women, and broaden investments that leverage the potential of the continent's biggest asset - its young people. Leaders across Africa have also recognized the benefit of demographic dividend as a lever of resilience and stability addressing the root causes of inequalities, instability, vulnerability and insecurity, hopelessness, forced migration, crime, radicalization, exploitation and terrorism.

This is evident from the number of national and regional efforts underway to put Africa on the pathway of harnessing a demographic dividend. A number of countries in sub-Saharan Africa have, over the last two to three years organized national level fora --rallying a broad spectre of partners (government departments, UN Agencies, developmental partners and private sector) to work collaboratively towards a demographic dividend. They have partnered with research institutions to develop national demographic dividend profiles which now form the base for sector-wide development. Simultaneously, there has been a growing interest in regional initiatives, that support national efforts and have the added value of economies of scale, spill-

over and cross-broader learning as well as knowledge sharing. One such initiative is the Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend (SWEDD) project, initiated by UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, the World Bank (WB), and governments of six countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger) in response to a call to action in 2013 by the President of Niger in order to tackle the demographic challenges in the Sahel. Other regional initiatives include the Mano River Midwifery Response, a vehicle using the demographic dividend for recovery and resilience in the aftermath of the Ebola Outbreak, the partnership with faith-based organizations in 2015 and the regional symposium with opinion leaders and policy leaders in 2016 both of resulted in commitment to support efforts towards a demographic dividend and sustainable development.

Harnessing the demographic dividend is thus central to Africa's development agenda. This is reaffirmed in the Common African Position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, the African Union's Agenda 2063, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development-- all of which position the demographic dividend as critical to achieving a peaceful and prosperous transformation of Africa and its people. Ensuring the participation and inclusion of women and youth, particularly those most marginalized and excluded, is integral to the efforts being made towards these frameworks/commitments.

In January 2016, at their 26<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Summit in Addis Ababa, the Africa Union Heads of State and Government decided to focus the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Sessions in 2017 on "*Harnessing the demographic dividend through investments in the Youth*". The decision requested the African Union Commission (AUC) to work with UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Development Bank (AfDB), the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), UNFPA, and other development agencies to "*expedite the implementation of a continental initiative on Demographic Dividend for Africa and to develop a roadmap with key deliverables and milestones to be adopted during the 27<sup>th</sup> session of the AU Heads of State and Government Summit in June 2016, that would guide Member States and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) on concrete actions to be undertaken in 2017 and beyond.*"

## **Objectives**

The high-level meeting will provide a platform to share experiences and engage with member states and other stakeholders on partnerships to: "*expedite the implementation of a continental initiative on Demographic Dividend for Africa and to gather recommendations for the follow-up of the AU roadmap*".

*Specific objectives* are to:

- Discuss key policies, strategies and actions needed to create the conditions of a demographic dividend;
- Learn and share with other country leaders action that is taken toward triggering of a demographic dividend;
- Explore strengthened political commitment and action by member states and partners to accelerate the demographic transition and catalyze a demographic dividend in Africa.

*The expected outcome is:*

Broad-based multi-stakeholder collaboration around the demographic dividend in Africa, with a view to bring in influential stakeholders from governments together with development partners, civil society and the private sector

## **Proposed format and speakers for high-level event**

**Format:** The meeting will be organized as a three hours plenary session with statements from confirmed leaders followed by a moderated panel discussion that aims to generate support for collective action by governments and key stakeholders to accelerate the demographic dividend agenda in Africa.

### **Proposed speakers (45 minutes)**

- Chairperson of the African Union (President of Chad);
- Chairperson of ECOWAS (President of Liberia);
- Presidents of African countries (SWEDD members and others including Uganda and Malawi);
- United Nations Secretary General;
- UNFPA Executive Director;
- World Bank Vice President Africa and/or Vice President for Human Development;
- Member of the Africa Forum;
- African Union Commission Chairperson ;
- Representative of youth organization .

### **Moderator**

The conversation will be facilitated by a fully bilingual high profile communicator who has a good knowledge of the Demographic Dividend issues and Africa's development.

### **Proposed list of discussants from the floor (45 minutes)**

- UNECA Executive Secretary ;
- AU Permanent Observer to the UN ;
- Special Representative of the Secretary General for the Sahel;
- Special Adviser on 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Africa;
- Chief Executive Officer for the New Partnership for Africa's Development Planning and Coordinating Agency;
- UN Agencies (ILO, UNESCO, WHO, UNICEF);
- Ministers from SWEDD countries and others;
- Youth Leaders;
- Faith/Traditional Leaders;
- Representative of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation;
- Private sector CEOs;
- Others.

## **Invitees**

An estimated 100 guests will be invited, including African Heads of State and select countries in other Regions; Permanent Representatives (PR) of Africa Missions and select PRs from other Regions; heads of H6 partnership (formerly H4+) and UN agencies and International Financial Institutions; institutional partners from INGOs and foundations involved in Africa; and representatives from civil society, academia and private sector.

Kindly RSVP to Nina Mbandi by Friday 9 September 12:00 a.m. EDT. Tel.: +1 (212) 297-5163.

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