



Summary

DAS Talk – One on One with AU Youth Envoy Chido Cleopatra Mpemba

26 January 2023, 10:00hrs

Online via Zoom

Background

The Youth Envoy's office is mandated to engage African Youth on the continent and in the diaspora in order to draw them towards supporting and promoting positive social change, encourages intergenerational dialogue and concrete action for Africa's development as underscored and guided by Agenda 2063. Despite the very progressive efforts of the AU commission, the challenges and barriers that hinder youth development continue to exist and in many cases have continued to worsen with high unemployment rates, increasing political apathy and poverty, to name a few.

Against this background, the German Africa Foundation invited Chido Mpemba to a new session of DAS Talk where she unpacked and clarified her role and objectives of her office, the challenges African youth face and how her office prioritizes them as well as the long term vision for the office as a whole. These and other questions were at the center of a fruitful discussion with many promising outcomes and take-aways.

Highlights

- Clear objectives and priority areas were highlighted that extend beyond 'paper' and policy.
- Promising approach that encourages collaboration and existing efforts on the ground rather than a duplication of efforts.
- A clear and intentional effort to consult young people on the group (visibility and capacity building).
- A commitment and invitation to include the youth from the diaspora more intentionally in discussions and 'solutions'.
- Capacity challenges limit the work of the office, however, there is a strategy in place to ensure continuity and institutionalization of the office within the AU.
- Encouragement and invitation for more inclusive approaches which also include non African voices and structures. (AU EU Collaborations etc.)

Welcome Remarks and
Moderation

Sabine Odhiambo

Secretary General, German
Africa Foundation

In Conversation

Chido C. Mpemba

African Union Special Envoy
on Youth



Conversation

Institutionalization of the AU Envoy office

Sustainability and the challenges in the process were centered in the discussion with the envoy where she highlighted her office's efforts to ensure that there is not only continuation in the role but also in the interventions and partnerships grounded within the envoy's term of office. Without this the work done within the office within each term of office would bear little to any 'sustainable' fruit beyond the term.. The envoy prioritized this within 2022 to ensure a firm foundation and sustainable efforts that extend at least until 2024. Without this the office runs the risk of being considered a symbolic role with little outcomes which would not be aligned with the sentiments of African youth who are vibrant, engaged and yearning for change beyond talk shops and policy. Chido further emphasized the challenge of existing capacities against the backdrop of many compounding priority areas and challenges for African youth remains difficult for the office.

Youth visibility in peace, security and democratic governance

The envoy worked very closely with 5 regional AU Youth Ambassadors for Peace and Security (AYAPS) as established advisory 'arms' to guide on suitable interventions for young people in conflict affected areas. This also allowed the envoy's office to build on existing efforts on the ground without reinventing the wheel. One such example are National Plans of Action on Peace and Security which have started being implemented through the guidance of the AYAPS through Youth Peace and Security Programme. This is a great example of meaningful youth driven collaboration that actively works on finding solutions for an urgent 'challenge' such as ensuring peace and security. These efforts were also complimented by an academic webinar series supported by the African Union Youth 4 Peace and the African Center for Strategic studies which aimed to assess the magnitude of risks and opportunities associated with the youth bulge in Africa and discuss the role of young people in promoting peace and security on the continent. Additionally to this Chido highlighted the launch of the Wise Youth African Network (under the Panel of the Wise) launched in 2022 which was established to ensure intergenerational discussions and leadership to enhance participation of young people in conflict prevention efforts. It is clear from these efforts that the office of the envoy prioritizes working jointly with others to continuously build on existing efforts across various platforms, thematic areas and formats to ensure meaningful change that extends beyond engagements.

Concrete action beyond policy - 2023/2024 Action plan

Anchored in the African Youth Charter (Aspiration 6) the envoy's office aims to launch a concrete action plan that will follow consultations and an extensive 60 day 'listening' tour with youth conducted in 2022 with the aim of ensuring an inclusive approach - one that centers the opinions and solutions of young people. These efforts were also made in order to raise awareness about the mandate of the envoy's office as well as highlight the need for a multistakeholder youth centered and solution oriented initiative. Finally Chido emphasized that success for her would look like young people in political spaces and this bi- annual initiative is one such effort to ensure that this is realized. This effort from the envoy extends far beyond what may be considered 'symbolic' as it promises results and impact beyond the consultative stage - something that the African youth (and their challenges) urgently need.