



Side Event during the 2024 Summit of the Future
on the Theme

Our World, Our Future: African Youth and the Summit of the Future

"Transforming Africa with Youth-Driven solutions"

Venue and Time: SDG Media Zone, United Nations Headquarters, New York: 09:00 to 11:00
Venue and Time: Millennium Hilton New York, One UN Plaza: 13:00 to 17:00
Date: 20 September 2024



Introduction: Putting African youth at the heart of the Summit of the Future

The global demographic shift will see African youth constituting about 42 per cent of the World's youth population by 2030,¹ making up a significant portion of the labour force that is set to enter the global economy. Yet, poverty, inequality, and growing unemployment are some of the features of the daily life and existence of African youth in a grossly lopsided and unequal World. While the World will have an 'African face', global economic development seems to be to the contrary. Hence, African youth are major stakeholders in the trajectory and future of the World. This, undoubtedly, is "their World and Future", which should inform the conversation at the Summit of the Future. This once-in-a-generation moment on the global stage will also provide a critical opportunity to mobilize African youth on the importance of continuing their work in harnessing the power of the digital revolution, science, technology and innovation to take ownership of their destiny in a transformed global landscape.

Given the significance of the Summit, African youth have been engaged in the preparatory processes and making inputs to it. The African Youth Forum² was convened on 26-27 April 2024 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to articulate ideas in the Summit's five thematic areas³. One of the major outcomes was the African Youth Declaration on the Summit of the Future. The side event being proposed at the Summit of the Future in September 2024 is to further articulate the African Youth position on the Pact of the Future, engage critical stakeholders and mainstream African voices and aspirations in the outcome of the Summit. It would also seek to align the outcome of the Summit in sync with the Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan (STYIP) of Agenda 2063 and to further articulate the objectives of the 1 Million Next Level⁴. It would be a follow-up to the African Forum on the Future Summit of the Future organized in April 2024.

The African Union Commission (AUC), the Pan African Youth Union (PYU), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA), the UN Department of Global Communication (DGC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are the co-organizers of the event with some AU member-States. Malawi, the current Chair of the Bureau of the AU Specialized Technical Committee (STC) on Youth and Nigeria, a member of the AU STC on Youth.

Background on the Summit for the Future

The Summit of the Future will be convened by the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, from 22 to 23 September 2024 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. In the words of Mr. Guterres, the rationale of the Summit for the Future is because of institutions

¹ [Why Africa's youth hold the key to its development potential](#)

² The African Youth Forum was organized by the ECA, UNDP, African Union Commission and the Pan-African Youth Union (PYU) in April 2024.

³ Sustainable development and financing for development; International Peace and Security; Science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation; Youth and Future Generations; Transforming global governance

⁴ [A strategic framework for youth development and empowerment, launched by AUC Chair in 2023 aims to reach 300 million young people with opportunities in health and wellbeing, education, employment, entrepreneurship, and engagement](#)

and global governance frameworks established over 80 years ago, and *“We can't build a future for our grandchildren with a system built for our grandparents.”* This has necessitated the call for a brand-new conversation around the overlapping, persistent, traditional, new, and emerging challenges facing people and the planet. While modest progress has been made with the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, it is widely recognised that the achievement of the SDGs is significantly off track globally.

This underscores the critical need for more transformative and innovative solutions to tackle the issues that impede sustainable development in Africa, including the multiple and overlapping crises of food, fuel and finances exacerbated by Covid, the Russia- Ukraine war and Climate disasters.

The Summit of the Future will seek to safeguard the Sustainable Development Goals and chart pathways towards achieving sustainable development for people, the planet and posterity for future generations.

The Summit of the future would potentially have three outcomes:

1. **Pact for the Future:** Recognizes, amongst other matters, that children and youth are critical agents of change, intergenerational dialogue and engagement, including among children, youth and older persons in policy and decision-making processes to safeguard the needs and inheritance of future generations and address the below four pillars:
 - a. Sustainable development and financing for development
 - b. International Peace and Security
 - c. Science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation
 - d. Youth and Future Generations
 - e. Transforming global governance
2. **The Declaration on Future Generations** would be assented to by Heads of State and Government, reaffirming their adherence to existing international law, human rights, peace, security and development instruments and committing to actions to protect the planet for present and future generations who will inherit it.
3. **Global digital Compact:** Digital technologies are dramatically transforming our world, offering immense potential benefits for the well-being and advancement of people, societies, and our planet. They hold out the promise of accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and will seek to address five key objectives:
 - a. Close all digital divides and accelerate progress across the Sustainable Development Goals.
 - b. Expand inclusion in and benefits from the digital economy for all.
 - c. Foster an inclusive, open, safe and secure digital space that respects, protects and promotes human rights.

- d. Advance equitable and interoperable data governance.
- e. Enhance international governance of artificial intelligence and emerging technologies for the benefit of humanity.

Harnessing Africa's Demographic Dividend

It is imperative for African countries to seize the momentum of the Summit for the Future to effectively contribute to the innovative and transformative solutions that would shape the world and define the future for generations yet to come.

The African Union's Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals within Agenda 2030 underline the development imperatives for the African continent. In particular, the African Union's Second Ten Year Implementation Plan provides the framework for African countries to tap into the opportunities of its demographic dividend. By properly investing in education, capacity building, technology transfers and appropriate financing, African governments can empower their youth to be agents of the transformation required.

It is also for the above reason that AU's theme of the Year, "***Educate an African fit for the 21st Century: Building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning in Africa***", calls for a deeper discussion on Agenda 2063 and the catalytic role of education in achieving its aspirations. This theme recognizes that education remains a fundamental human right, as outlined in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and Article 11 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. All of these emphasize the *need for Member States to provide free and compulsory basic education and continuous* investment in education systems. The present time represents a unique challenge to engage African youth in the youth development process to expedite the path of African nations toward improving their futures.

In Africa, the percentage of young people on the continent is projected to experience an exponential increase relative to the rest of the world from 2023 to 2050. In the 15 to 34 age bracket, the number of young Africans is expected to increase by 73 per cent compared to 6 per cent elsewhere⁵. Meanwhile, the growth is expected to be 44 per cent in Africa compared to 2 per cent around the world for the 0 to 24 age bracket⁶. These figures demonstrate that implementing the 'Pact for the Future' has particular resonance for the African continent.

The African Youth Declaration identifies several priorities for the Summit for the future, including:

Sustainable financing

The urgent delivery of additional financing resources at scale to address the urgency of accelerating the implementation of Agenda 2063, Agenda 2030 and the goals of the Paris

⁵ Calculations from UN OSAA

⁶ Ibid

Climate Agreement. The reform of the International Financing Architecture to meet the needs of African youth.

Peace, Security and Development

Increased investment in transformative education and economic empowerment programmes tailored to young people's needs to secure the benefits of tackling the nexus between peace, security and development.

Digital Transformation

Focus on inclusivity to bridge the digital divide, strengthen digital systems for collaboration and achieve greater investment in research and development, digital infrastructure and capacity-building initiatives to harness the benefits of technological advancement for the benefit of all as part of the effort to transform Africa with Youth-Driven Innovation in the Digital Age

Young People and Future Generation

Assert the importance of empowering young people and ensuring their meaningful participation in decision-making processes at all levels. Foster intergenerational dialogue and learning and invest in transformative education and technologies that broaden opportunities for all.

Global Governance

Reform the international financing architecture, in particular, to emphasize the need for accessible funding structures to support initiatives led by or intended to benefit young people and the adoption of youth quotas in global, continental, subregional, and national political structures and processes especially in light of current geopolitical occurrences and the evolving future of multilateralism

Objectives of the side event

The main objective of the side event is to mainstream African youth voices, views and aspirations in the deliberations and outcome of the Summit and explore pathways for the implementation of the Summit outcome in a manner that empowers African youth and gives expression to a better future for them. The side event will also reflect on how Agenda 2063, especially its STYIP, aligns with key elements of the Summit of the Future and its outcome. In the same light, the event aims to explore the accelerators for young people in Africa to transform their potential into concrete solutions and results for inclusive sustainable development

The specific objectives are:

- Provide a global platform to amplify regional and global awareness of the Summit of the Future and its impact on African youth.
- Discover innovative solutions that empower young Africans to become architects of their own prosperity and leaders in inclusive sustainable development on a global, regional, and local scale.

- To mobilize critical stakeholders, global and regional, in engaging the aspirations of African youth and mainstreaming their needs and concerns in global discourse, policy initiatives and frameworks, including on the Summit of the Future.
- To raise regional and global awareness of the Summit of the Future and its implications for African Youth.
- Identify game-changing solutions that empower young Africans to drive their own prosperity and lead inclusive, sustainable development globally.
- Address the urgent need to harness the transformative potential of new technologies, including digital technologies and Artificial Intelligence, in a people-centred, rights and gender-based manner. In addition, create awareness for the need to regulate new and emerging technologies globally and in Africa and ensure the ownership of these processes by young Africans.
- To facilitate policy discussions on the Summit of the Future, its outcomes and modalities for its implementation for African Youth.

The think pieces prepared for the African Forum on the Summit of the Future in April 2024 will serve as background documents for the side event.

Proposed guiding questions

1. What critical interventions do African youth desire in the five areas of the Summit of the Future, and what are their outcomes?
2. How can key global, regional, and national stakeholders be mobilised to support youth perspectives and aspirations on the Summit of the Future, its outcome, and its implementation?
3. How can global, regional, and national accountability be enhanced to accelerate the implementation of Agenda 2030, Agenda 2063, and the outcome of the Summit of the Future?
4. How can Africa's youth capitalize on the Summit of the Future outcomes to realize their innovative and transformative potential?
5. How can the outcome of the Summit be a catalyst for Africa's development, including expanding trade through AfCFTA, increasing development financing, addressing climate challenges and the energy crisis, increasing agricultural productivity, access to universal and affordable healthcare, and closing the digital divide, which will benefit African youth?
6. What concrete actions can African policymakers formulate to ensure that the outcomes of the Summit of the Future are integrated into national development plans and implemented effectively in a timely fashion?
7. What measures should African countries need to take to ensure that African priorities are adequately reflected in the plans of action for the Summit of the Future?
8. How can the Summit of the Future be leveraged to reinforce the agency of African decision-makers?
9. In the context of evolving geopolitical occurrences and the future of multilateralism, how can African youth influence the reform of the international financing architecture and advocate

for their priorities on the global stage?

These questions are not exhaustive and can be revised or expanded as necessary during the side event's planning process.

Expected Outcomes

1. A substantive contribution by African youth and, by extension, African countries to the Summit of the Future and its outcomes, including the Global digital compact, a declaration on the future generations and the pact for the future in a way that prioritizes the needs and aspirations of African youth, and youth globally in general.
2. Enhanced dialogue and partnerships of African youth with key stakeholders, including policymakers, the private sector, and other development stakeholders, on the objectives and role of the Summit of the Future to address the challenges to youth empowerment, mainstream youth voices in global, regional, and national development processes, and promote the structural transformation of the continent for inclusive, sustainable development.
3. Practical, innovative, impactful, actionable, solution-oriented and informed recommendations on youth action for sustainable development to policymakers and the public.
4. Policy Recommendations on modalities to integrate the Summit of the Future outcomes (Global Digital Compact, Declaration on Future Generations, and Pact for the Future) into national development agendas and to effectively implement it with strong youth agencies.

Key Output

A report on the event, including key actionable policy recommendations and follow up action plan, will be produced and disseminated among participants, the United Nations System, the African Union, Government representatives, RECs (African Union Regional Economic Commissions), Think Tanks, Women and Youth groups, Civil Society, Academia, the Private sector, policymakers, Parliamentarians, and other stakeholders.

Format and participation

This event will be open to all participants: youth organizations both from Africa and the diaspora, government officials from all UN Member States, the Africa Group in New York, representatives from the African Union Commission, RECs (African Union Regional Economic Commissions), African regional institutions, the UN system, bilateral and multilateral partners, Think Tanks, women and youth associations, members of the civil society, the private sector, academia, and the media. There will be simultaneous interpretations in English and French. Registration will be required.

Co-organizers

The event is co-organized by some AU member states⁷, led by Malawi, the current Chair of the Bureau of the AU Specialized Technical Committee (STC) on Youth, supported by Nigeria, a member of the AU STC on Youth, The Pan African Youth Union, the African Union Commission, the Economic Commission for Africa, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, the Department of Global Communication and the United Nations Development Programme.

⁷ Those members will be named in the final version of the concept note.