

## Annual West African and Sahel Youth Forum

**Theme: "Empowering Young Women and Men through Quality Education, Decent Work and Innovative Solutions to make Conflict Prevention more effective for Sustaining Peace and Security in the Region"**

**Ocean Science Centre, Mindelo, São Vicente Island, Cabo Verde, 13-15 July 2023**

### MINDELO CALL TO ACTION FOR EMPOWERING YOUNG WOMEN AND MEN FOR SUSTAINING PEACE AND SECURITY IN WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL

We, more than 100 young women and men from 17 countries of West Africa and the Sahel, participants in the annual West African and Sahel Youth Forum, organized by United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) in partnership with Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Government of the Republic of Cabo Verde and in collaboration with all United Nations entities in the region,

Gathered in Mindelo (Sao Vicente Island in Cabo Verde), from 13 to 15 July 2023 around the theme: **"Empowering Young Women and Men through Quality Education, Decent Work and Innovative Solutions to make Conflict Prevention more effective for Sustaining Peace and Security in the Region"**,

**AGREEING** with the noble objectives of the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda, fundamentally supported by the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020), inviting Member States to take necessary and appropriate measures to protect young women and men, and to promote and increase their participation in all mechanisms and processes of conflict prevention, peacebuilding and decision making,

**CONSIDERING** the regional and national legal and normative achievements in favor of youth, including the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007), the African Youth Charter (2006), the Protocol of the AU Peace and Security Council (2002), the Protocol relating to the ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (1999), and the various national legislations guaranteeing the security and representativeness of young women and men,

**RECOGNIZING** the efforts to translate into action the various international, regional and national commitments through, among others, the United Nations Youth Strategy 2030 (2018), the Continental Framework for Youth, Peace and Security (2020-2029), the ECOWAS Youth Policy and Strategic Action Plan (2021-2030) and the various national youth policies and programs, and that there are still many challenges to be addressed,

**EXPRESSING** our satisfaction with the development, adoption and implementation of Nigerian Youth, Peace and Security Action Plan which aim to facilitate the implementation of Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015) and subsequent resolutions,

**AWARE** of the fact that Education in West Africa and the Sahel is marked by high rates of exclusion, persistence of gender inequality, with girls more likely to be out of school and boys facing lower completion rates in a few countries, lagging behind the quality of education, affecting literacy, numeracy, and skills necessary for employment and sustainable development,

**AWARE** that in several States in the Sahel and West Africa young women face unique challenges and vulnerabilities and violation of their human right, while they also possess immense potential to contribute to peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts,

**FIRMLY** recognizing the importance of preventing youth in conflict with the law while linking education and labour market and strengthening equal access to educational, vocational and training opportunities for young women and men so they can access to decent work, we:

1. **REAFFIRM** our commitment to the content of the December 2021 Abuja Call To Action at the annual Youth Forum for Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel,
2. **URGENTLY REQUEST** all West African and the Sahelian governments to collaboratively engage young people and civil society for the prevention of alcohol, drug abuse, gang violence, and access to small arms and light weapons, in order to ensure a better future and sustainable development profitable to all without exclusion,
3. **LAUNCH** an urgent advocacy to the governments of each country of the sub-region to follow the example of Nigeria in the appropriation and domestication of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 2250 (2015) and following by adopting and financing the implementation of the action plans on the said resolutions,
4. **ENCOURAGE** all governments to ensure the development of functional and sustainable quota systems for young women and men representation in decision making at all levels, and to strengthen the application of measures that considers their interests and active engagement in inter-governmental bodies,

And we request the following:

### **Young Women and Men and Quality Education:**

5. Enhance the status of the teaching profession: review teacher training, scale up capacity building and focus on more qualitative training, as well as ensuring better living conditions for teachers (in terms of pay, social security, rotation policies in the region, etc.),
6. Facilitate access to school by exempting all school fees, helping families to pay the other costs associated with schooling by subsidizing school supplies (particularly learning materials, which are often quite expensive), and bringing schools closer to learners, which will also help to guarantee their safety,
7. Train teachers and learners in the use of digital tools (knowledge and mastery) and thus deconstruct preconceived ideas about digital technology, but also about artificial intelligence; promote their use as a learning aid and knowledge transfer rather than a means of cheating,
8. Expand literacy and access to free technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programmes with a focus on skills for work and employability, including as second chance opportunities for young people who have never accessed or dropped out of formal education or youth in conflict with the law who have been imprisoned and deserve a second change in society,
9. Increase the resilience of school systems through digital and other information and communication technologies in the face of conflict, increased drug trafficking and transnational organized crime in West Africa and the Sahel and epidemics and other disasters,
10. Include social-emotional learning and life skills as part of foundational learning, along with literacy and numeracy, to prepare young people to respond to their own social, vocational and personal needs and to face challenges such as conflict, violence, including gender-based violence, gender inequalities, and sexual and reproductive health issues,
11. Adopt affordable e-health systems -including e-socio and psychological support for young adults who are drug consumers in West Africa and the Sahel,

### **Young Women and Men and access to Decent Work**

12. Youth employment policies and programmes must, first and foremost, assess the potential for productive youth employment. This requires a process of dialogue with young people to identify critical areas of opportunity and potential for youth employment,

13. Develop pro-youth-employment policy frameworks that mainstream youth employment goals across various sectors. By integrating youth employment objectives across all Ministries, Agencies, and sectoral initiatives, this framework encourages the institutionalization of pro-employment measures in economic policies and budgeting processes towards the common goal of more and better employment opportunities for youth,
14. Countries are invited to identify and enhance sectors with high employment multiplier effects, such as both traditional sectors like agriculture as well as emerging sectors like the green, blue, orange, and digital economies. Through a process of youth-inclusive social dialogue, that enables policymakers to understand, consider and utilize the specific requirements for sectors and enterprises to achieve comparative advantages,
15. A concerted effort from governments, private sector entities and social partners, as well as development partners to cultivate an environment conducive for private investment in businesses that predominantly employ young people or are led by young entrepreneurs. This can be achieved through a combination of incentives such as tax breaks, subsidies, or preferential loan terms, alongside initiatives that provide direct support to young entrepreneurs,
16. Governments, in collaboration with international development actors, to place youth employment at the centre of their public investment strategies and policies. This includes using public procurement policies to favour businesses that promote youth employment and implementing Public Employment Programs (PEPs) that directly create job opportunities for young people,
17. Promoting the emergence of young farmers and their involvement in agri-business and the processing of agricultural products (including the processing of agricultural products) as well as in the young entrepreneurs who boost the blue economy (including the local processing of fish waste to produce cosmetic products and/or fertilizers) while a strategic value chain is created in West Africa and the Sahel that can cover the employment needs of a growing youth population in need of finding sustainable livelihoods in 2023-2030,
18. Promoting local consumption through targeted messages on social networks to encourage local production and the processing of local products,
19. Development of the digital and transport infrastructure for young people to ensure their connectivity and access to AfCFTA opportunities,

20. Access to labour market information, especially in rural areas, by decentralising employment services,
21. Promoting dialogue on employment and setting up mentoring and coaching programmes for young entrepreneurs,

### **Young women urgency: leadership in youth, peace, and security in West and Sahel**

22. Strengthen rehabilitation, reintegration and long-term support and investment programs,
23. Sensitize stakeholders on the importance of partnership and working with young women to promote peace and security, with paying special attention to gender-based violence and reproductive health and rights in the peace and security context,
24. Support programmes already co-implemented by the United Nations Development System and regional Member States aimed at increasing the role of women in the justice, law enforcement or military sectors,
25. Support programmes already co-implemented by the United Nations Development System, regional Member States and civil society organizations aimed at increasing the role of women religious leaders as key advocates for peaceful resolution of conflict in the community -such as the “mourchidates” programme in the Islamic Republic of Mauritania,

### **Youth and Innovation, climate issues and Adaptive Solutions**

26. Strengthening of climate change adaptation and resilience through bold measures for environmental conservation and preservation to tackle disastrous consequences in the light of the spiral of inter-community conflicts over access to scarce natural resources which undermine peaceful community co-existence; displace populations; aggravate human insecurity especially in the most vulnerable ranks including young women and men and increase uncertainty about future prospects to unprecedented levels;
27. Support the development of the digital economy and youth entrepreneurship promotion as well as to establish or strengthen mechanisms for access to investment and financing for youth start-ups in order to combat forced migration and brain drain,

### **Conflict prevention, management and participation in peace processes**

28. Build the capacities of young women and men in mediation and negotiation techniques,

29. Support and promote Advocacy with national, regional and international institutions for the inclusion of young female and men mediators, including community mediators in official mediation missions,
30. Support and promote youth engagement and representation of young women and men in negotiations and peace talks,
31. Enroll empowering programs for young women and men to develop their skills and build self-reliance to contribute to nation building and development,
32. Strengthen youth-led responses in preventing and countering terrorism,

### **Youth, peace and security agenda implementation**

33. UNOWAS and its partners to develop an online/e-portal platform that will provide hands-on knowledge and lessons to young women and men, enable youth to attend forums and intergenerational dialogues learn more about the implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda and how to localize it in local communities,
34. States and their partners to effectively and systematically address violent extremism leading to terrorism in the region by engaging young women and men while ensuring their protection and resilience to the extremist groups' offerings and the disastrous consequences of this phenomenon on human security,

### **General recommendations**

35. **SOLICIT** on the part of technical and financial partners and philanthropists an increased attention to youth issues linked to their support and accompaniment of States and youth organizations serving development and employability as well as the security and peace preservation in the West African and Sahel sub-region,
36. **EXHORT** all young women and men throughout West Africa and the Sahel to pool their strengths, efforts, skills and know-how so that in a concerted and synergistic manner we can significantly contribute to establishing a climate of peace and serenity and building economically and socially strong communities,

### **Accountability**

37. UNOWAS should develop and implement a workplan that is time bound to ensure the dissemination of the Mindelo Call to Action to reach national governments and stakeholders, promote advocacy and sensitization activities with national governments, youth and stakeholders to promote

- the Call to Action, as well as include components to collect data, monitor and report progress,
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  40. The Government of the Republic of Cabo Verde through the Minister of Youth and Sports will be in charge of bringing this Call To Action to the attention of all West Africa and the Sahel countries for engaging them all for effective implementation of recommendations formulated by participants of the 3rd annual youth forum.

**Done at Mindelo on Sao Vicente Island, Cabo Verde this 14 July 2023**