



# PRESS STATEMENT



Wednesday 16 June, 2021

## **Statement on the Day of the African Child**

The Day of the African Child has been celebrated on June 16 every year since 1991, when it was first initiated by the then OAU Organisation of African Unity now African Union (AU). It honours those who participated in the Soweto Uprising in 1976 in South Africa on that day.

The theme selected by the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) for the celebration of the DAC in 2021 is “30 years after the adoption of the Charter: accelerate the implementation of Agenda 2040 for an Africa fit for children”

This year, the continent celebrates this important and significant day in the history of youth activism by youth across the continent of Africa. As SAPSN we join the rest of the continent and indeed the world in remembering the courageous and collective struggles that the youth of Soweto executed against the racist apartheid.

This year as we commemorate The Day of The African child it is important that we put things into perspective. Firstly, the African child and youth, despite the defeat of colonial subjugation throughout the continent, continues to face structural, cultural, political, economic, and social challenges that hinder their material transformation.

It is sad that as we mark this important day when youth and children in Africa are failing to acquire decent state/government supported basic and tertiary education. Unlike their peers in other continents, today’s African youth face the challenge of unprecedented rates of unemployment, lack of critical skills relevant for the technological age as well as limited government support for scientific research and innovation.

In most African countries, children and youth have become tools in the hands of political elites. We sadly are witnessing young people being used by politicians to mete out violence during electoral seasons in different parts of the continent. We reiterate our call that African countries must at AU and individual country level come up with stricter laws and jail sentences for those political elites that use young people as thugs and mercenaries to settle political differences.

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- o Lack of space in government posts and leadership positions among youth.
- o The scourge of terrorism and political violence that characterises places like Mozambique, Chad, northern Nigeria, Somalia among other troubled spots of the world.
- o Neoliberal economic policies that have brought untold suffering on youth through deepening inequality, lack, misery, poverty, and unemployment.
- o That the African Union becomes more robust and serious in dealing with the democratic deficits in African countries that violate the principles of good governance, free and fair elections, democracy and the rule of law.
- o That institutions like the Pan African Parliament focus on solving the existential challenges that confront the continent. These challenges range from disease, war, terrorism, exclusion, continental disunity and the inability of AU member states to foster democratic governance on the continent. Instead of fighting for leadership posts, youth on the continent must call on the Pan African Parliament to be an exemplary institution for genuine principles of Pan Africanism and not the current obsession they have with wielding power.
- o That the extractives sector in Africa be used for the development of the continent and not serve the interests of multinational corporations and imperialist governments in both the West and the East.

In conclusion, unless and until youth in the continent who are the majority as a demography, unite, mobilise, organise and define the Africa they want to see, then it is our honest submission that their destinies and future will continue to be subverted by an old political elite that is currently ruling member States of the AU. Therefore, like the 1976 Soweto generation of young people, today’s African youth are called on to discover their mission, fulfil it or betray it.

**#OneAfricaOneContinent #TheFutureIsNow**

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