

AFRICAN YOUTH CHARTER

PREAMBLE

GUIDED by the Constitutive Act of the African Union, the States Parties to the present "African Youth Charter",

GUIDED by the vision, hopes and aspirations of the African Union, inclusive of Africa's integration, the inherent dignity and inalienable rights afforded to all members of the human family as set out in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (1976) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976), and articulated for the African peoples through the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (1986);

RECALLING the resolution of the Heads of State and government during the 1999 Algiers Summit for the development of the Pan-African Charter;

FULLY ATTACHED to the virtues and values of African historical tradition and civilization which form the foundation for our concept of people's rights;

RECALLING the historic injustices imposed on Africa such as slavery, colonization, depletion of natural resources and taking into account the firm will of African peoples for self-determination and the economic integration of Africa;

CONVINCED that Africa's greatest resource is its youthful population and that through their active and full participation, Africans can surmount the difficulties that lie ahead;

BEARING IN MIND the international Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979) and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights relating to the Rights of Women in Africa (2003) and the progress achieved in eliminating gender discrimination, but ever cognisant of the obstacles that still prevent girls and women from fully participating in African society;

REAFFIRMING the need to take appropriate measures to promote and protect the rights and welfare of children as outlined in the Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989) and through the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1999),

ACKNOWLEDGING the commitments already made towards the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and inviting the partners to reaffirm their support to advance the well-being of youth;

RECOGNISING the efforts made by States Parties and civil societies to address the economic, social, educational, cultural and spiritual needs of youth;

NOTING with concern the situation of African youth, many of whom are marginalized from mainstream society through inequalities in income, wealth and

power, unemployment and underemployment, infected and affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, living in situations of poverty and hunger, experiencing illiteracy and poor quality educational systems, restricted access to health services and to information, exposure to violence including gender violence, engaging in armed conflicts and experiencing various forms of discrimination;

RECALLING the United Nations World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and beyond and the ten priority areas identified for youth (education, employment, hunger and poverty, health, environment, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, leisure-time activities, girls and young women and youth participating in decision-making), and the five additional areas (HIV/AIDS, ICT, Inter-generational dialogue,..) adopted at the 2005 UN General assembly;
RECOGNISING that youth are partners, assets and a prerequisite for sustainable development and for the peace and prosperity of Africa with a unique contribution to make to the present and to future development;

CONSIDERING the role that youth have played in the process of decolonisation, the struggle against apartheid and more recently in its efforts to encourage the development and to promote the democratic processes on the African Continent;

REAFFIRMING that the continuous cultural development of Africa rests with its youth and therefore requires their active and enlightened participation as espoused in the Cultural Charter for Africa ;

GUIDED by the New Partnership for Africa's Development Strategic Framework for Youth Programme of 2004 that is working towards youth empowerment and development;

ACKNOWLEDGING the increasing calls and the enthusiasm of youth to actively participate at local, national, regional and international levels to determine their own development and the advancement of society at large;

ACKNOWLEDGING ALSO the call in Bamako (2005) by the youth organisations across Africa to empower youth by building their capacity, leadership, responsibilities and provide access to information such that they can take up their rightful place as active agents in decision-making and governance;

TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION the inter-relatedness of the challenges facing youth and the need for cross-sectoral policies and programmes that attend to the needs of youth in a holistic manner;

CONSIDERING that the promotion and protection of the rights of youth also implies the performance of duties by youth as by all other actors in society;

TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION the needs and aspirations of young displaced persons, refugees and youth with special needs;

HAVE AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

DEFINITIONS

"Chairperson"	shall mean the Chairperson of the African Union Commission;
"**Charter**"	shall mean the African Youth Charter;
"**Commission"**	shall mean the Commission of African Union
"Diaspora"	shall mean peoples of African descent and heritage living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and who remain committed to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African Union (DOC.EX.CL/164(VII))
"Member States"	shall mean Member States of the African Union
"Minors"	shall mean young people aged 15 to 17 years subject to each country's laws
"States Parties"	shall mean Member States, which have ratified or acceded to the present Charter;
"Union"	shall mean the African Union
"**Youth**"	For the purposes of this Charter, *youth* or *young people* shall refer to every person between the ages of 15 and 35 years.

PART 1: RIGHTS AND DUTIES

Article 1: Obligation of State Parties

1. States Parties of the African Union to the present Charter shall recognize the rights, freedoms and duties enshrined in this Charter.

2. State Parties shall undertake the necessary steps, in accordance with their Constitutional processes and with the provisions of the present Charter, to adopt such legislative or other measures that may be necessary to give effect to the provisions of the Charter.

Article 2: Non-discrimination

1. Every young person shall be entitled to the enjoyments of the rights and freedoms recognized and guaranteed in this Charter irrespective of their race, ethnic group, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national and social origin, fortune, birth or other status.

2. States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure that youth are protected against all forms of discrimination on the basis of status, activities, expressed opinions or beliefs.

3. State Parties shall recognize the rights of Young people from ethnic, religious and linguistic marginalized groups or youth of indigenous origin, to enjoy their own culture, freely practice their own religion or to use their own language in community with other members of their group.

Article 3: Freedom of Movement

1. Every young person has the right to leave any country, including his/her own, and to return to his/her country.

Article 4: Freedom of Expression

1. Every young person shall be assured the right to express his or her ideas and opinions freely in all matters and to disseminate his or her ideas and opinions subject to the restrictions as are prescribed by laws.

2. Every young person shall have the freedom to seek, receive and disseminate information and ideas of all kinds, either orally, in writing, in print, in the form of art or through any media of the young person's choice subject to the restrictions as are prescribed by laws.

Article 5: Freedom of Association

1. Every young person shall have the right to free association and freedom of peaceful assembly in conformity with the law.

2. Young people shall not be compelled to belong to an association.

Article 6: Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion

Every young person shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

Article 7: Protection of Private Life

No young person shall be subject to the arbitrary or unlawful interference with his/her privacy, residence or correspondence, or to attacks upon his/her honour or reputation.

Article 8: Protection of the Family

1. The family, as the most basic social institution, shall enjoy the full protection and support of States Parties for its establishment and development noting that the structure and form of families varies in different social and cultural contexts.

2. Young men and women of full age who enter into marriage shall do so based on their free consent and shall enjoy equal rights and responsibilities.

Article 9: Property

1. Every young person shall have the right to own and to inherit property.

2. States Parties shall ensure that young men and young women enjoy equal rights to own property.

3. States Parties shall ensure that youth are not arbitrarily deprived of their property including inherited property.

Article 10: Development

1. Every young person shall have the right to social, economic, political and cultural development with due regard to their freedom and identity and in equal enjoyment of the common heritage of mankind.

2. States Parties shall encourage youth organizations to lead youth programmes and to ensure the exercise of the right to development.

3. States Parties shall:

    a) Encourage the media to disseminate information that will be of economic, political, social and cultural benefit to youth;

b) Promote the development of youth media for the dissemination of information to young people;

c) Encourage international co-operation in the production, exchange and dissemination of information from both national and international sources that are of economic, social and cultural value to youth;

d) Provide access to information and education and training for young people to learn their rights and responsibilities, to be schooled in democratic processes, citizenship, decision-making, governance and leadership such that they develop the technical skills and confidence to participate in these processes;

Article 11: Youth Participation

1. Every young person shall have the right to participate in all spheres of society.

2. States Parties shall take the following measures to promote active youth participation in society:

They shall:

a) Guarantee the participation of youth in parliament and other decision-making bodies in accordance with the prescribed laws;

b) Facilitate the creation or strengthening of platforms for youth participation in decision-making at local, national, regional, and continental levels of governance;

c) Ensure equal access to young men and young women to participate in decision-making and in fulfilling civic duties;

d) Give priority to policies and programmes including youth advocacy and peer-to-peer programmes for marginalised youth, such as out-of-school and out-of-work youth, to offer them the opportunity and motivation to re-integrate into mainstream society;

e) Provide access to information such that young people become aware of their rights and of opportunities to participate in decision-making and civic life;

f) Institute measures to professionalize youth work and introduce relevant training programmes in higher education and other such training institutions;

g) Provide technical and financial support to build the institutional capacity of youth organisations;

h) Institute policy and programmes of youth voluntarism at local, national, regional and international levels as an important form of youth participation and as a means of peer-to-peer training.

i) Provide access to information and services that will empower youth to become aware of their rights and responsibilities,

j) Include youth representatives as part of delegations to ordinary sessions and other relevant meetings to broaden channels of communication and enhance the discussion of youth related issues.

Article 12: National Youth Policy

1. Every State Parties shall develop a comprehensive and coherent national youth policy.

a) The policy shall be cross-sectoral in nature considering the inter-relatedness of the challenges facing young people;

b) The development of a national youth policy shall be informed by extensive consultation with young people and cater for their active participation in decision-making at all levels of governance in issues concerning youth and society as a whole;

c) A youth perspective shall be integrated and mainstreamed into all planning and decision-making as well as programme development. The appointment of youth focal points in government structures shall enable this process;

d) Mechanisms to address these youth challenges shall be framed within the national development framework of the country;

e) The policy shall provide guidelines on the definition of youth adopted and specify subgroups that shall be targeted for development;

f) The policy shall advocate equal opportunities for young men and for young women;

g) A baseline evaluation or situation analysis shall inform the policy on the priority issues for youth development;

h) The policy shall be adopted by parliament and enacted into law;

i) A national youth coordinating mechanism shall be set up and shall provide a platform as well as serve as a linking agent for youth organisations to participate in youth policy development as well as the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of related programmes;

j) National programmes of action shall be developed that are time bound and that are connected to an implementation and evaluation strategy for which indicators shall be outlined;

k) Such a programme of action shall be accompanied by adequate and sustained budgetary allocation.

Article 13: Education and Skills Development

1. Every young person shall have the right to education of good quality.

2. The value of multiple forms of education, including formal, non-formal, informal, distance learning and life-long learning, to meet the diverse needs of young people shall be embraced.

3. The education of young people shall be directed to:

a) The promotion and holistic development of the young person's cognitive and creative and emotional abilities to their full potential;

b) Fostering respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as set out in the provisions of the various African human and people's rights and international human rights declarations and conventions;

c) Preparing young people for responsible lives in free societies that promote peace, understanding, tolerance, dialogue, mutual respect and friendship among all nations and across all groupings of people;

d) The preservation and strengthening of positive African morals, traditional values and cultures and the development of national and African identity and pride;

e) The development of respect for the environment and natural resources;

f) The development of life skills to function effectively in society and include issues such as HIV/AIDS, reproductive health, substance abuse prevention and cultural practices that are harmful to the health of young girls and women as part of the education curricula;

4. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures with a view to achieving full realisation of this right and shall, in particular:

a) Provide free and compulsory basic education and take steps to minimise the indirect costs of education;

b) Make all forms of secondary education more readily available and accessible by all possible means including progressively free;

c) Take steps to encourage regular school attendance and reduce drop-out rates;

d) Strengthen participation in and the quality of training in science and technology;

e) Revitalise vocational education and training relevant to current and prospective employment opportunities and expand access by developing centres in rural and remote areas;

f) Make higher education equally accessible to all including establishing distance learning centres of excellence;

g) Avail multiple access points for education and skills development including opportunities outside of mainstream educational institutions e.g., workplace skills development, distance learning, adult literacy and national youth service programmes;

h) Ensure, where applicable, that girls and young women who become pregnant or married before completing their education shall have the opportunity to continue their education;

i) Allocate resources to upgrade the quality of education delivered and ensure that it is relevant to the needs of contemporary society and engenders critical thinking rather than rote learning;

j) Adopt pedagogy that incorporates the benefits of and trains young people in the use of modern information and communication technology such that youth are better prepared for the world of work;

k) Encourage youth participation in community work as part of education to build a sense of civic duty;

l) Introduce scholarship and bursary programmes to encourage entry into post-primary school education and into higher education outstanding youth from disadvantaged communities, especially young girls;

m) Establish and encourage participation of all young men and young women in sport, cultural and recreational activities as part of holistic development;

n) Promote culturally appropriate, age specific sexuality and responsible parenthood education;

o) Promote the equivalence of degrees between African educational institutions to enable the youth to study and work in State Parties;

p) Adopt preferential recruitment policies for African youth with specialised skills amongst States Parties.

5. Youth are determined to transform the continent in the fields of science and technology. Therefore they are committed to:

   a) Promoting and using science and technology in Africa;

   b) Conducting research towards science and technology.

6. State Parties should encourage youth to conduct research. In this regard, an African discoveries day should be established along with mechanism of awarding prizes at the continental level.

7. Enterprises that are located in Africa should establish partnerships with training institutions to contribute to technology transfer for the benefit of African students and researchers.

Article 14: Poverty Eradication and Socio-economic Integration of Youth

1. States Parties shall: Recognise the right of young people to a standard of living adequate for their holistic development.

2. Recognise the right of young people to be free from hunger and shall take individual or collective measures to:

   a) Enhance the attractiveness of rural areas to young people by improving access to services and facilities such as educational and cultural services;

   b) Train young people to take up agricultural, mineral, commercial and industrial production using contemporary systems and promote the benefits of modern information and communication technology to gain access to existing and new markets;

   c) Provide grants of land to youth and youth organisations for socio-economic development purposes;

   d) Facilitate access to credit to promote youth participation in agricultural and other sustainable livelihood projects;

   e) Facilitate the participation of young people in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national development plans, policies and poverty reduction strategies.

3. Recognise the right of every young person to benefit from social security, including social insurance.

In this regard, States Parties shall take the necessary measures to achieve the full realisation of these rights in accordance with their national law especially when the security of food tenure, clothing, housing and other basic needs are compromised.

Article 15: Sustainable Livelihoods and Youth Employment

1. Every young person shall have the right to gainful employment.

2. Every young person shall have the right to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing work that is likely to be hazardous to or interfere with the young person's education, or to be harmful to the young person's health or holistic development.

3. States Parties shall address and ensure the availability of accurate data on youth employment, unemployment and underemployment so as to facilitate the prioritisation of the issue in National development programmes complemented by clear programmes to address unemployment;

4. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures with a view to achieving full realisation of this right to gainful employment and shall in particular:

    a) Ensure equal access to employment and equal pay for equal work or equal value of work and offer protection against discrimination regardless of ethnicity, race, gender, disability, religion, political, social, cultural or economic background;

    b) Develop macroeconomic policies that focus on job creation particularly for youth and for young women;

    c) Develop measures to regulate the informal economy to prevent unfair labour practices where the majority of youth work;

    d) Foster greater linkages between the labour market and the education and training system to ensure that curricula are aligned to the needs of the labour market and that youth are being trained in fields where employment opportunities are available or are growing;

    e) Implement appropriately-timed career guidance for youth as part of the schooling and post-schooling education system;

    f) Promote youth entrepreneurship by including entrepreneurship training in the school curricula, providing access to credit, business development skills training, mentorship opportunities and better information on market opportunities;

g) Institute incentive schemes for employers to invest in the skills development of employed and unemployed youth;

h) Institute national youth service programmes to engender community participation and skills development for entry into the labour market.

Article 16: Health

1. Every young person shall have the right to enjoy the best attainable state of physical, mental and spiritual health.

2. States Parties shall undertake to pursue the full implementation of this right and in particular shall take measures to:

a) Make available equitable and ready access to medical assistance and health care especially in rural and poor urban areas with an emphasis on the development of primary health care;

b) Secure the full involvement of youth in identifying their reproductive and health needs and designing programmes that respond to these needs with special attention to vulnerable and disadvantaged youth;

c) Provide access to youth friendly reproductive health services including contraceptives, antenatal and post natal services;

d) Institute programmes to address health pandemics in Africa such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria;

e) Institute comprehensive programmes to prevent the transmission of sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS by providing education, information, communication and awareness creation as well as making protective measures and reproductive health services available;

f) Expand the availability and encourage the uptake of voluntary counselling and confidential testing for HIV/AIDS;

g) Provide timely access to treatment for young people infected with HIV/AIDS including prevention of mother to child transmission, post rape prophylaxis, and anti-retroviral therapy and creation of health services specific for young people;

h) Provide food security for people living with HIV/AIDS;

i) Institute comprehensive programmes including legislative steps to prevent unsafe abortions;

j) Take legislative steps such as banning advertising and increasing price in addition to instituting comprehensive preventative and

curative programmes to control the consumption of tobacco, exposure to environmental tobacco smoke and alcohol abuse;

k) Raise awareness amongst youth on the dangers of drug abuse through partnerships with youth, youth organisations and the community;

l) Strengthen local, national, regional and international partnerships to eradicate the demand, supply and trafficking of drugs including using youth to traffic drugs;

m) Provide rehabilitation for young people abusing drugs such that they can be re-integrated into social and economic life;

n) Provide technical and financial support to build the institutional capacity of youth organisations to address public health concerns including issues concerning youth with disabilities and young people married at an early age.

Article 17: Peace and Security

In view of the important role of youth in promoting peace and non-violence and the lasting physical and psychological scars that result from involvement in violence, armed conflict and war, States Parties shall:

a) Strengthen the capacity of young people and youth organisations in peace building, conflict prevention and conflict resolution through the promotion of intercultural learning, civic education, tolerance, human rights education and democracy, mutual respect for cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, the importance of dialogue and cooperation, responsibility, solidarity and international cooperation;

b) Institute mechanisms to promote a culture of peace and tolerance amongst young people that discourages their participation in acts of violence, terrorism, xenophobia, racial discrimination, gender-based discrimination, foreign occupation and trafficking in arms and drugs;

c) Institute education to promote a culture of peace and dialogue in all schools and training centres at all levels;

d) Condemn armed conflict and prevent the participation, involvement, recruitment and sexual slavery of young people in armed conflict;

e) Take all feasible measures to protect the civilian population, including youth, who are affected and displaced by armed conflict;

f) Mobilise youth for the reconstruction of areas devastated by war, bringing help to refugees and war victims and promoting peace, reconciliation and rehabilitation activities;

g) Take appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of young victims of armed conflict and war by providing access to education and skills development such as vocational training to resume social and economic life.

Article 18: Law Enforcement

1. Every young person accused or found guilty of having infringed the penal law shall have the right to be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person.

2. States Parties shall in particular:

a) Ensure that youth who are detained or imprisoned or in rehabilitation centres are not subjected to torture, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment;

b) Ensure that accused minors shall be segregated from convicted persons and shall be subject to separate treatment appropriate to their status;

c) Build rehabilitation facilities for accused and imprisoned youth who are still minors and house them separately from adults;

d) Provide induction programmes for imprisoned youth that are based on reformation, social rehabilitation and re-integration into family life;

e) Make provisions for the continued education and skills development of imprisoned young people as part of the restorative justice process.

f) Ensure that accused and convicted young people are entitled to a lawyer.

Article 19: Sustainable Development and Protection of the Environment

1. States Parties shall ensure the use of sustainable methods to improve the lives of young people such that measures instituted do not jeopardise opportunities for future generations.

2. States Parties shall recognise the vested interest of young people in protecting the natural environment as the inheritors of the environment. In this regard, they shall:

a) Encourage the media, youth organisations, in partnership with national and international organisations, to produce, exchange and disseminate information on environmental preservation and best practices to protect the environment;

b) Train youth in the use of technologies that protect and conserve the environment;

c) Support youth organisations in instituting programmes that encourage environmental preservation such as waste reduction, recycling and tree planting programmes;

d) Facilitate youth participation in the design, implementation and evaluation of environmental policies including the conservation of African natural resources at local, national, regional and international levels;

e) Develop realistic and flexible strategies for the regeneration of forests;

f) Initiate intensive actions to prevent the expansion of deserts.

Article 20: Youth and Culture

1. States Parties shall take the following steps to promote and protect the morals and traditional values recognised by the community:

a) Eliminate all traditional practices that undermine the physical integrity and dignity of women;

b) Recognise and value beliefs and traditional practices that contribute to development;

c) Establish institutions and programmes for the development, documentation, preservation and dissemination of culture;

d) Work with educational institutions, youth organisations, the media and other partners to raise awareness of and teach and inform young people about African culture, values and indigenous knowledge;

e) Harness the creativity of youth to promote local cultural values and traditions by representing them in a format acceptable to youth and in a language and in forms to which youth are able to relate;

f) Introduce and intensify teaching in African languages in all forms of education as a means to accelerate economic, social, political and cultural development;

g) Promote inter-cultural awareness by organising exchange programmes between young people and youth organisations within and across States Parties.

2. States Parties recognise that the shift towards a knowledge-based economy is dependent on information and communication technology which in turn has contributed towards a dynamic youth culture and global consciousness. In this regard, they shall:

a) Promote widespread access to information and communication technology as a means for education, employment creation, interacting effectively with the world and building understanding, tolerance and appreciation of other youth cultures;

b) Encourage the local production of and access to information and communication technology content;

c) Engage young people and youth organisations to understand the nexus between contemporary youth culture and traditional African culture, and enable them to express this fusion through drama, art, writing, music and other cultural and artistic forms;

d) Help young people to use positive elements of globalisation such as science and technology and information and communication technology to promote new cultural forms that link the past to the future;

Article 21: Youth in the Diaspora

States Parties shall recognise the right of young people to live anywhere in the world. In this regard, they shall**:**

a) Promote the equivalence of degrees between African educational institutions to enable the youth to study and work in State Parties;

b) Promote the recruitment of African youth with specialized skills, in the spirit of African solutions for African problems, according to national policies and priorities;

c) Facilitate youth organisations to liaise and collaborate with the African youth Diaspora;

d) Establish structures that encourage and assist the youth in the diaspora to return to and fully re-integrate into the social and economic life in Africa;

e) Promote and protect the rights of young people living in the diaspora;

f) Encourage young people in the diaspora to engage themselves in development activities in their country of origin.

Article 22: Leisure, Recreation, Sportive and Cultural Activities

1. Young people shall have the right to rest and leisure and to engage in play and recreational activities that are part of a health lifestyle as well as to participate freely in sport, physical education drama, the arts, music and other forms of cultural life. In this regard, States Parties shall:

a) Make provision for equal access for young men and young women to sport, physical education, cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activities;

b) Put in place adequate infrastructure and services in rural and urban areas for youth to participate in sport, physical education, cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activities.

Article 23: Girls and Young Women

1. States Parties acknowledge the need to eliminate discrimination against girls and young women according to obligations stipulated in various international, regional and national human rights conventions and instruments designed to protect and promote women's rights. In this regard, they shall:

a) Introduce legislative measures that eliminate all forms of discrimination against girls and young women and ensure their human rights and fundamental freedoms;

b) Ensure that girls and young women are able to participate actively, equally and effectively with boys at all levels of social, educational, economic, political, cultural, civic life and leadership as well as scientific endeavours;

c) Institute programmes to make girls and young women aware of their rights and of opportunities to participate as equal members of society;

d) Guarantee universal and equal access to and completion of a minimum of nine years of formal education;

e) Guarantee equal access to and completion of vocational, secondary and higher education in order to effectively address the existing imbalance between young men and women in certain professions;

f) Ensure that education material and teaching practices are gender sensitive and encourage girls and young women to undertake studies in the sciences;

g) Provide educational systems that do not impede girls and young women, including married and/or pregnant young women, from attending;

h) Take steps to provide equal access to health care services and nutrition for girls and young women;

i) Protect girls and young women from economic exploitation and from performing work that is hazardous, takes them away from education or that is harmful to their mental or physical health;

j) Offer equal access to young women to employment and promote their participation in all sectors of employment;

k) Introduce special legislation and programmes of action that make available opportunities to girls and young women including access to education as a prerequisite and a priority for rapid social and economic development;

l) Enact and enforce legislation that protect girls and young women from all forms of violence, genital mutilation, incest, rape, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, trafficking, prostitution and pornography;

m) Develop programmes of action that provide legal, physical and psychological support to girls and young women who have been subjected to violence and abuse such that they can fully re-integrate into social and economic life;

n) Secure the right for young women to maternity leave.

Article 24: Mentally and Physically Challenged Youth

1. States Parties recognise the right of mentally and physically challenged youth to special care and shall ensure that they have equal and effective access to education, training, health care services, employment, sport, physical education and cultural and recreational activities.

2. State Parties shall work towards eliminating any obstacles that may have negative implications for the full integration of mentally and physically challenged youth into society including the provision of appropriate infrastructure and services to facilitate easy mobility.

Article 25: Elimination of Harmful Social and Cultural Practices

State Parties shall take all appropriate steps to eliminate harmful social and cultural practices that affect the welfare and dignity of youth, in particular;

a) Customs and practices that harm the health, life or dignity of the youth;

b) Customs and practices discriminatory to youth on the basis of gender, age or other status.

Article 26: Responsibilities of Youth

Every young person shall have responsibilities towards his family and society, the State, and the international community. Youth shall have the duty to:

a) Become the custodians of their own development;

b) Protect and work for family life and cohesion;

c) Have full respect for parents and elders and assist them anytime in cases of need in the context of positive African values;

d) Partake fully in citizenship duties including voting, decision making and governance;

e) Engage in peer-to-peer education to promote youth development in areas such as literacy, use of information and communication technology, HIV/AIDS prevention, violence prevention and peace building;

f) Contribute to the promotion of the economic development of States Parties and Africa by placing their physical and intellectual abilities at its service;

g) Espouse an honest work ethic and reject and expose corruption;

h) Work towards a society free from substance abuse, violence, coercion, crime, degradation, exploitation and intimidation;

i) Promote tolerance, understanding, dialogue, consultation and respect for others regardless of age, race, ethnicity, colour, gender, ability, religion, status or political affiliation;

j) Defend democracy, the rule of law and all human rights and fundamental freedoms;

k) Encourage a culture of voluntarism and human rights protection as well as participation in civil society activities;

l) Promote patriotism towards and unity and cohesion of Africa;

m) Promote, preserve and respect African traditions and cultural heritage and pass on this legacy to future generations;

n) Become the vanguard of re-presenting cultural heritage in languages and in forms to which youth are able to relate;

o) Protect the environment and conserve nature.

Article 27: Popularization of the Charter

States Parties shall have the duty to promote and ensure through teaching, education and publication, the respect of rights, responsibilities and freedoms contained in the present Charter and to see to it that these freedoms, rights and responsibilities as well as corresponding obligations and duties are understood.

Article 28: Duties of the African Union Commission

The African Union Commission shall ensure that States Parties respect the commitments made and fulfil the duties outlined in the present Charter by;

a) Collaborating with governmental, non-governmental institutions and developmental partners to identify best practices on youth policy formulation and implementation and encouraging the adaptation of principles and experiences among States Parties;

b) Inviting States Parties to include youth representatives as part of their delegations to the ordinary sessions of the African Union and other relevant meetings of the policy organs to broaden the channels of communication and enhance the discussion of youth-related issues;

c) Instituting measures to create awareness of its activities and make information on its activities more readily available and accessible to youth;

d) Facilitating exchange and co-operation between youth organisations across national borders in order to develop regional youth solidarity, political consciousness and democratic participation in collaboration with development partners.

PART 2: Final Provisions

Article 29: Savings clause

Nothing in this Charter shall be taken as minimising higher standards and values contained in other relevant human rights instruments ratified by States concerned or rational law or policies.

Article 30: Signature, Ratification or Adherence

1. The present Charter shall be open to signature by all the Member States. The present Charter shall be subject to ratification or accession by Member States. The instrument of ratification or accession to the present Charter shall be deposited with the Chairperson of the Commission.

2. The present Charter shall come into force thirty (30) days after the deposit with the Chairperson of the Commission of the instruments of ratification of fifteen (15) Member States.

Article 31: Amendment and Revision of the Charter

1. The present Charter may be amended or revised if any Member State makes a written request to that effect to the Chairperson of the Commission, provided that the proposed amendment is not submitted to the Assembly of the Union for consideration until all Member States have been duly notified of it.

2. An amendment shall be approved by a simple majority of the Member States. Such amendment shall come into force for each Member States that has ratified or acceded to it on the date of the deposit of its instrument of ratification.

ADOPTED BY THE SEVENTH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY, HELD IN BANJUL, THE GAMBIA ON 2ND JULY 2006

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