



# ALL OVER THE WORLD TO CHANGE IT!

INTERNATIONAL UNION OF SOCIALIST YOUTH

## IUSY AFRICAN COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

“Democracy in Africa: The importance of youth participation in building Social Democracy”

from the 15th to the 19th of December (Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso)

The Africa committee meeting convened in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso from 15<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> December 2016. The AFC under the theme “**Democracy in Africa: The Importance of Youth Participation in Building Social Democracy**”, comes at an opportune time when Africa is facing a backlash on the gains of democracy. The challenges faced by our continent are enormous and we, as young activists within our individual countries, must actively take up the mantle of ensuring that through activism and political campaigns, we call on our leaders to address these challenges. The meeting focused on Students and Youth Activism as a Catalyst for Democracy, the Challenges and Prospects for Women Leadership in Pursuit of Social Democracy, and the Promotion and Protection of Minority Rights in Africa.

Social democracy is under worldwide pressure. The AFC noted the spiralling increase of right wing and populist politics across the world and the dwindling influence within the left movement on global political agendas. This trend is also manifesting itself in Africa; witnessed in the reversal of gains made in the promotion and protection of human rights, social justice, equality and democracy.

The AFC further noted the challenges with electoral processes that do not allow the deepening of democracy on the continent. There is a growing concern amongst the youth to the electoral process that is easily manipulated by political leaders to consolidate power against the will of the voting majority.

The marginalization of youth in political structures and decision making bodies continues to exist in several African countries. Students are faced with numerous challenges including the institutional barriers that hinder them from engaging in political debates on-going in the respective tertiary institutions and countries. The political attack on student activism is coupled with a lack of access to education because of increasing costs as public funding of education dwindles.

Further, youth unemployment is perpetually pushing the youth to economic and, in some cases, social apathy. As a conscience of society and a catalyst for change, the youth of Africa will not take these challenges of victimization and harassment lying down but continue to mobilize and organize for a better society.

Increasingly, African youth are being radicalized and seduced into terrorist organizations or acts of terrorism. Partly to blame for this rise is the neglect which political parties have displayed toward the youth and toward youth interests. The current state of affairs opens avenues through which many are being convinced that the State has limited interest in the youth and therefore the youth must rebel and seize control of State power.



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On the whole, African nations are still grappling with effective ways to ensure Peace and Security on the Continent. There are a number of initiatives underway which are either spearheaded by the African community or by International partners. African nations are working toward being better able to communicate and coordinate with each other as well as within their sovereign territories to ensure the peace and security of Africa.

Though strides are being made in the right direction, gender equality is still far from being a reality in Africa. The AFC noted particularly that the participation of women in political and other leadership activities is very low. Social norms and perceptions tend to keep women within certain “feminine” roles, while those who are courageous enough to step into the “men’s world” face all manner of harassment, persecution and criticism, which tends to push them out of political and leadership roles, while discouraging other women from participating.

In their rush to catch up to the Western post-industrial world, many African countries have overlooked the effects of their activities on the Environment and on natural resources. The AFC noted the massive over-exploitation which is prevalent across the African continent. Flora and fauna are not given much consideration, if at all, and the pollution which is a result of industrial activities and mass consumerism adversely affects the health and well-being of the all living inhabitants of an affected area.

Considering the issues and challenges confronting the African continent, the 2016 Africa Committee Meeting resolved on the following:

- i. To strive for political education and regional cooperation in order to advance the social democracy and socialist values among member organisations and re-invigorate youth activism and solidarity on the continent.
- ii. To promote rule of law and the development of institutions that advance the social welfare needs of our respective countries.
- iii. Freedom of speech is at the epicenter of the youth struggles in general and particularly students. We shall continue to advocate for laws that allow students and youth to organize and express their opinions freely.
- iv. We shall continue champion the right of access to education for all through advocacy for an increase in public education funding in our respective countries.
- v. To strive for gender equality and the representation of women in decision making in our respective countries.
- vi. To promote the training and development of young females in politics on the African continent to build their leadership capacities.
- vii. To strive for peace and security on the continent with particular emphasis on eliminating terrorism and improving internal state security.
- viii. To promote youth participation in politics and economic development by advocating for the mainstreaming and integration of youth in political and economic leadership.

We resolve to achieve these resolutions through our Action Plan for 2017. The mainstreaming of youth in political leadership remains essential to the achievement of our social democratic agenda and for the sustainable development of the continent and to this end, the AFC is committed to promoting the integration of youth in national leadership.