

**PRESS RELEASE**
*(For Immediate Release)*

**Africa beyond aid: mobilising the youth around innovative ideas, to reimagine a prosperous continent**

**Accra, Ghana, 20 October 2021**: The 2021 YouthConnekt Africa Summit 2021 officially opened in Accra, Ghana. This year's summit under the theme “**Africa Beyond Aid: Positioning the Youth for the Post-COVID Economy and AfCFTA Opportunities**" aims to raise the consciousness of young people on how they can position themselves to leverage the emerging socio-economic opportunities, including the intra-African trade. The fourth summit connects African youth from across the continent and beyond with policy makers and influencers, political and industry leaders in public, private and development sector by creating a platform to engage, design, and accelerate youth-led initiatives at the continental level.

The high-level opening ceremony was attended by His Excellency Mahamudu Bawumia, Vice-President of Ghana; Oulie Keita, Executive Director, YouthConnekt Africa Hub; Ms Ahunna Eziakonwa – Assistant Secretary-General, Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa (UNDP); H.E. LIM Jung-taek, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to the Republic of Ghana; Hon. Mustapha Ussif, Minister of Youth and Sports of Ghana; Hon. Rosemary Mbabazi, Minister for Youth and Culture of Rwanda; Charles Abani, UN Resident Coordinator, Ghana; H.E. Wamkele Keabetswe Mene - Secretary-General, AfCFTA; Patrice Tlhopane Motsepe, President of the Confederation of African Football, South Africa; and other African Ministers of Youth, private-sector leaders, notable young visionary entrepreneurs, innovators and thought-leaders representing various sectors.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, H.E Mahamudu Bawumia, Vice President of the Republic of Ghana, noted that Africa is one of the most youthful continents globally, with a population that can shape the continent's development trajectory. “Ensuring that young people assume their rightful role in Africa’s growth will require investment in the digital skills so they can respond to the evolving needs of the continent. However, we must do our intervention to harness the value of the youth aligned to human rights and gender equality. That is why our education policy must be gender sensitive. When we create a future where every youth can reach their fullest potential, only then can we say we are creating a brighter future for the continent”.

The 2021 Summit is taking place under the auspices of the Government of Ghana, through the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the National Youth Authority (NYA), in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and the Government of the Republic of Rwanda. The three-day summit promises an offer of several enriching and highly interactive sessions, ranging from high-level plenary discussions, a masterclass on advocacy and active citizenship, a made-in-Africa marketplace, a youth development stakeholders roundtable, among others.

The Assistant Secretary-General, Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa (UNDP), Ms. Ahunna Eziakonwa, noted that the theme for this year’s summit is important, timely and empowering. “We truly believe in the transformative potential of the AfCFTA – and Africa's Money working for Africa's Development. UNDP will work steadfastly to translate the ambition and promise of the AfCFTA into opportunities for young people and strengthen preparedness by mobilising to produce Made in Africa," she added.

This year, the summit focuses on five key objectives: facilitate a high-level intergenerational dialogue on the role of Africa's youth in steering Africa's next level of growth; explore youth inclusive quick-win interventions that can accelerate post COVID-19 economic recovery; showcase tested cross-sector policy mechanisms that support emerging youth employment pathways; identify the structures, mechanisms and investments required to accelerate youth participation in regional trade supported by the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) framework; and, encourage multi-stakeholder collaborations to accelerate youth socio-economic transformation.

“Regional integration is stronger today more than ever, and AfCFTA is at the pinnacle of all achievements. African youth have the skills, commitment, and energy to lead the transformational journey we have started together. Therefore, we must support them to unlock this potential to propel the continent to higher heights. That's why we must prioritise youth-led products in the single Africa market to boost job creation and accelerate the economic development of the continent,” said Hon. Rosemary Mbabazi, Minister for Youth and culture of Rwanda.

Expected outcomes from the summit include: establishment of new mechanisms to boost intra-Africa trade through increased participation of youth entrepreneurs; increased synergies among multiple stakeholders around policies, programmes and investments that position African youth to lead the acceleration of the Africa Beyond Aid vision; progressive and inclusive formalisation of youth entrepreneurs operating in the emerging employment pathways and informal economy to increase the entrepreneurs' access to services and other opportunities; alignment of partners and stakeholders towards the accelerated implementation of policies and programmes that activate youth socio-economic development; and meaningful engagement of African youth on issues affecting their future through evidence-based practices.

“The positive reception and ownership of the national Governments of the Youth ConnecktAfrica model due to its innovative and inclusive approach will provide youth with the skills, network platform and information," said Oulie Keita, Executive Director, YouthConnekt Africa Hub.

Join the summit: <https://events.hubilo.com/YCA2021>

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**About UNDP**

UNDP is the leading United Nations organisation fighting to end the injustice of poverty, inequality and climate change. Working with our broad network of experts and partners in 170 countries, we help nations build integrated, lasting solutions for people and the planet.

**About YouthConnekt Africa**

The YouthConnekt Africa as a Pan-African program aims to co-design and accelerate African home-grown innovative solutions for youth to address socio-economic challenges and support intergovernmental knowledge exchange on policy, programmes and partnerships.