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ACJ
AFRICA CREATES JOBS
2021
VIRTUAL CONFERENCE
3-4 NOV
AFRICA

Skills for the Future
Collaborating
Hearing all Voices
Youth Divident
Informal Skills Acquisition
Labour Market Information
Digitalization

Skills and Jobs
for Africa's Economic Growth

Driving a Responsive and Agile Skills and Jobs Agenda
for Economic Growth for African Youth

Africa Creates Jobs 2021 COMMUNIQUE

04 November 2021

PREAMBLE

The African Union Commission (AUC), the African Union Development Agency – (AUDA-NEPAD), with technical support of German International Cooperation (GIZ), convened a continental virtual conference on TVET and Skills Development in Africa from 3rd-4th September 2021. The Conference was organized within the framework of the Skills Initiative for Africa (SIFA). SIFA, a Programme of AUC, and AUDA-NEPAD with the European Union (EU) and Government of Germany.

The objective of the Conference was to unpack the complex systemic challenges that hamper the skills and employment ecosystem on the continent, find solutions and agree on concrete actions. The challenges include but are limited to, the persistent skills mismatch, contracting economies due to the impact of COVID-10, jobless growth, quality, and relevance of TVET training, the barriers that prevent youth to transition from learning to earning and expanding informality in self-employment or temporary work placement resulting in unemployment and under-employment.

Pre-COVID19, Africa's economies faced massive transitions, a bludgeoning youth population, limited access to (international) markets, low productivity, technology gap, low investment rates, growing automation, and the emerging "Fourth Industrial Revolution," to name the most important. Mobilizing investment to develop relevant skills, create more and better jobs and improve access for disadvantaged groups has never been more critical and urgent in Africa. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic intensified these challenges. Within this context, there is an urgency to ensure that recovery strategies for the short to medium term, and critically the long term are implemented to enable dynamic and responsive skills and employment ecosystems.

The underpinning assumptions that guide the Africa Creates Jobs dialogue:

- The AfCFTA presents an opportunity to catalyse new ways of doing business, producing, working, and trading within Africa. The free trade area can create and expand economic prospects, including better integration into value chains, thereby creating an environment for the quantum of jobs, self-employment, and enterprise development opportunities for African youth.
- While African countries have different challenges for which different solutions will be defined; they however have a shared need to directly link TVET and Skills development to their national economies.
- Driving economic growth requires the appropriate skills that respond to the demands of the private sector.
- Addressing the skills mismatch is not happening at the required pace and quantity.
- The turn-around times to get youth from learning to earning a decent living wage are further widening.
- Contracting economies due to the impacts of COVID-19 means no job growth and workplace productivity is impacted, few jobs created and, in many instances, job losses and therefore no new jobs for labour market entrants.
- That the current expanding informality in self-employment or temporary work placement, resulting in unemployment and under-employment of youth and lack of funding to transform TVET national systems to be responsive to demand-side needs.
- The Member States of the African Union, individually and collectively, are grappling with how to bring about transformative results in the development and growth of their economies. With the ACJ, we can shape solutions by bringing together all stakeholders that influence the skills and employment agenda into the 'same room' through dialogue and drawing from the different perspectives and experiences.

THEREFORE, the ACJ Continental Dialogue was created as a platform for dialogue with purpose, reflecting, learning as critical drivers for innovations, and developing possible solutions and responsive actions to unlock opportunities for the millions of African Youth.

The Conference was based on the results of **5 Regional Africa Creates Jobs** conferences that took place for **East Africa** on 16th and 17th August, for **West Africa** on 26th and 27th August, for **Central Africa** on 2nd and 3rd September, for **Southern Africa** on 23rd and 24th September and for **Northern Africa** on 7th and 8th October.

It was further based on the Skills Anticipation and Matching / Africa Conference conducted under the Skills Initiative for Africa (SIFA) on 15th – 17th September 2021 by the **AU, AUDA-NEPAD, and the ILO**.

The Conference was structured around four interrelated components: (a) a virtual fair showcasing tools, knowledge products, country-level experiences, and comparable practices on skills and TVET; (b) an opening plenary and keynote address; (c) a high-level panel discussion; and (d) two thematic sessions on rebuilding a responsive skills development system and pathways to the informal sector.

The two-day virtual convening brought together over 700 registered participants from the AUC member states, including high-level government representatives, Regional Economic Communities, apex employer organizations, business, TVET, and skills development practitioners, academia, and policy research institutions, development partners and young people.

THE AFRICA CREATES JOBS CONFERENCE IS

Guided by the **African Youth Charter**, which underscores the centrality of youth to the socio-economic development of the African Continent and the importance of education and skills development as well as their inclusion, participation, and engagement in matters that affect and impact their lives.

Recalling the **Africa Agenda 2063** Aspiration for an Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth.

Further recalling the Africa Agenda 2063 Aspiration for a prosperous Africa, based on inclusive growth and sustainable development characterised by jobs, decent work, education, science and technology, and catalysing skills revolution.

Reaffirming the global commitment to the **UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** to substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship by 2030.

Further reaffirming the commitment under **SDG 8** to substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education, or training and achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of value by 2030.

Appreciating that the **African Continental Free Trade Area** offers a platform to create opportunities for decent jobs and increased entrepreneurial activity for the African people.

Acknowledging the need to develop skills that meet market demands and requirements to enhance African peoples' capacities to engage meaningfully in the African Continental Free Trade Area.

Reaffirming the commitment to the implementation of **Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025** (CESA 16-25), which aims to reorient Africa's education and training systems to meet the knowledge, competencies, skills, innovation, and creativity required to nurture African core values and promote sustainable development at the national, sub-regional and continental levels.

Further Committing to the implementation of **Science, Technology, and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024** (STISA-2024), which aims to accelerate Africa's transition to an innovative-led, knowledge-based economy, the **Continental Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to Foster Youth Employment and the TVET Decade Plan of Action (2019 - 2018)**.

Noting that Africa's population of young people was rapidly growing and predicted to double to over 830 million by 2050. If properly harnessed, this growth in the working-age population promises to support increased productivity and robust and more inclusive economic growth across Africa.

Considering that despite the fast economic growth experienced in several countries in Africa, the demand for new jobs has not yet been met because while about ten to twelve million young people enter the workforce every year, the current rate of employment creation across the continent does not adequately cater for the new job seekers.

Acknowledging that one of the main challenges Member States face today is jobs, skills, and aspirations mismatch, which manifests in lack of adequate, decent employment and a mismatch between skills and qualifications. The reality further exacerbates the situation that the labour market and employers are short of people with the right skills. Job seekers find it difficult to make an easy transition to a job with the acquired qualifications or face challenges concerning work readiness

Noting that the skills development landscape in most AU Member States is fragmented, inadequately coordinated, and often lacking demand-orientation and quality, thus failing to meet market demands for skills.

Appreciating that many **drivers of change**, including demographic changes, globalisation, and trade, digitalisation, technological changes, climate change, offer prospects to accelerate economic development, thus offering opportunities for growth of productive and higher value-added employment and entrepreneurship.

Considering that these drivers of change affect economies, shape labour markets, alter skills needs, and present human capital challenges because workers and enterprises must constantly adjust, adapt, and remain competitive in global markets.

Taking note of the severe impact of the **Covid-19 pandemic** in the world of work, including the sharp decline in economic activity in sectors such as manufacturing, education, tourism, and hospitality, reduction in consumer spending, disruption of supply chains, job destructions, or alterations in the ways that people work.

Further noting that massive labour market disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic affect vulnerable groups particularly hard: on the one hand, women have suffered disproportionate job and income losses because of their over-representation in the most-affected sectors, and on the other hand, young people are now facing multiple shocks, as they see education opportunities, for training, and jobs disappear. In addition, disruptions to work and training are further amplified by huge digital divides.

RECOMMENDS TO:

a) African Union, AUDA-NEPAD, and Regional Economic Communities

- ❖ **HARMONIZE SKILLS POLICIES:** Facilitate and support the Member States to **develop, strengthen and harmonize** policies, strategies, **capacities, institutional arrangements in cooperation with the private sector** to promote mobility on labour markets and between education systems and for identification and anticipation of current and future skill needs.
- ❖ **SKILLS DATA:** Invest in **data, evidence, knowledge, and dissemination of policy** informed outcomes on skills anticipation and labour market information systems in collaboration and partnerships with national bureaus of statistics, sector skills councils, business associations, employers, and labour market formations and institutions of higher learning, including TVETs.
- ❖ **SKILLS FOR ACFTA: the** Support Member States to put in place systems for proactively **developing the skills and competencies** required to enhance productive capacities needed to exploit the opportunities offered by the **Africa Continental Free Trade Area**.
- ❖ **APPRENTICESHIPS:** Facilitate policy frameworks that support Member States to put in place quality apprenticeships and work-based learning opportunities embedded in a real-life work environment to improve employability. VET at the workplace equips the national labour forces with knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competencies relevant to the ever-changing labour market and offers upskilling and re-skilling for inclusion and excellence.
- ❖ **DIALOGUE AND EXCHANGE OF GOOD PRACTISE:** Leverage **political and convening power, to institutionalise and strengthen platforms for dialogue and for sharing good practices** in skills development TVET and entrepreneurial skills and foster replication of identified good practice across Africa, and for enhancing collaborations and partnerships that promote more responsive skills development on the Continent.
- ❖ **IDENTIFY SKILLS NEEDS:** Support Member States to put in place systems for **identifying skill needs arising from the impact of Covid-19 on the labour market** and to subsequently identify reskilling and upskilling requirements in sectors of their economies impacted by the COVID 19 pandemic (positively and negatively); such as manufacturing, agriculture, tourism and hospitality, mining, energy, education and training and small and medium enterprises (SMEs), health and IT.
- ❖ **MUTUAL RECOGNITION AGREEMENTS:** Assist member states to negotiate and agree on mutual recognition of skills to facilitate the free flow of labour in critical professions. Transnational mobility of apprentices, either at the workplace or education and training institutions, should be progressively promoted.
- ❖ **ACFQ DEVELOPMENT AND NQF ALIGNMENT:** Support the ongoing process to develop an **African Continental Qualification Framework (ACQF)** by the AUC, establish National Qualification Frameworks, and align them to the ACQF where necessary.

b) African Union Member States

- ❖ **IMPACT OF COVID-19 AND THE CHANGING WORLD OF WORK:** Considering the effect of Covid-19 on the labour market, invest in data collection, analytics, and assessment of skills needs arising out of the impact of the pandemic and subsequently identify the **skilling, reskilling, and upskilling needs of vital economic sectors** including but not limited to manufacturing, agriculture, mining, energy, tourism and hospitality, SMEs, and education and training, digital and health sectors.
- ❖ **FRAMEWORK FOR APPRENTICESHIPS:** Ensure a **clear and consistent regulatory framework for apprenticeship based on a fair and equitable partnership approach**, including a transparent dialogue among all relevant stakeholders. This may include accreditation procedures for companies and workplaces that offer apprenticeships or other quality assurance matters.
- ❖ **ACCESSIBLE PATHWAYS FOR INFORMAL SECTORS:** Establish mechanisms that enable youth in the informal sector to have **access to formal skills systems**. These include frameworks and implementation related to the **Recognition of Prior Learning**.
- ❖ **ACFQ DEVELOPMENT AND NQF ALIGNMENT:** Support the ongoing process to develop an **African Continental Qualification Framework (ACQF)** by the AUC, establish National Qualification Frameworks, and align them to the ACQF where necessary.
- ❖ **DIGITAL TVET:** Work with respective stakeholders to develop **digital learning solutions** supporting access to TVET, thereby opening the possibility to obtain full qualifications for learners in remote areas
- ❖ **WOMEN AND YOUTH:** Have a special emphasis on **TVET and Skills development for women and youth** and give male and female **young Africans a voice** in programme development and execution
- ❖ **LIFE AND ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS:** Efforts in this regard should **go beyond a focus on technical skills to life skills and business skills** and incentivize youth to take on relevant practical skills, reskilling and upskilling for opportunities that promote entrepreneurship.
- ❖ **MAKE TVET ATTRACTIVE:** Enhance **visibility, attractiveness, and recognition of TVET** as critical and essential for demand-driven skills development and skills anticipation for jobs and entrepreneurship. Efforts in this regard may include international benchmarking and partnerships and twinning programmes with other globally recognised TVET institutes and partnerships with industry, labour, and employers and support local, national, and continental skills competitions to improve the image.

c.) Private Sector

- ❖ **WORKPLACE TRAINING; LABOR STANDARDS AND APPRENTICESHIPS:** Support Member States orient towards more **practical and demand-driven training at the workplace** and work towards developing and strengthening industry and labour requirements for occupations to ensure a broad

understanding of the industry and those being trained. Such support and collaboration should include developing predictable guidelines and mutual recognition for apprenticeships and internships/ externships and training.

- ❖ **STRONGER INVOLVEMENT OF PRIVATE SECTOR INTO TVET:** Strengthen **public-private partnerships** and partnerships between the private sector with training Institutions to support TVET and skills development needed for business operations and have a stronger involvement in the development of all aspects of TVET.
- ❖ **DEVELOP REGIONAL AND CONTINENTAL VALUE CHAINS:** Use the opportunities of the AFCFTA to develop regional and continental value chains, integrate small and medium companies into value chains wherever possible, and use opportunities to build the African consumer base.

d.) Development Partners

- ❖ **DEVELOPMENT PARTNER ASSISTANCE:** Support **capacity development** of AU, AUDA-NEPAD, RECs, and the Member States to design policies, systems, institutional arrangements, governance, and social dialogue mechanisms that enhance skills development and TVET
- ❖ **PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS:** Facilitate public-private partnerships that yield opportunities for apprenticeships, responsive curricula development, improve quality experiential training and enhanced reskilling.
- ❖ **DEMAND-ORIENTATED PRACTICAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND APPRENTICESHIPS:** Support AU Member States to design **approaches** to enhance employability
- ❖ **RESPONSIVE SKILLS SYSTEMS:** Advance the continental skills agenda by supporting the development of replicable models and approaches that establish key elements of agile and responsive skills systems.
- ❖ **KNOWLEDGE CREATION AND SHARING:** Enhance available face-to-face and online platforms for peer knowledge exchange and co-creation.

e.) Youth

- ❖ **AMPLIFY THE YOUTH VOICE:** Create and leverage opportunities to be part of interventions to drive solutions that reflect the needs of youth.

NEXT STEPS AND WAY FORWARD

- ❖ **AWARENESS RAISING:** In close cooperation with the Member States the AU, AUDA-NEPAD, and RECs should enhance visibility, attractiveness, and recognition of TVET as critical and essential for demand-driven skills development. Develop a brand for good African TVET practices that companies could use in their corporate social responsibility campaigns.
- ❖ **BENCHMARKING OF TVET:** In close cooperation with member states and other partners AUC, AUDA-NEPAD develop benchmarking of TVET and Skills development systems in Africa

- ❖ **SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND TVET:** In close collaboration and partnership with development partners, the AU and RECs should support Member States to strengthen capacity for practical and demand orientated TVET, integrate recognition of prior learning and support skills competitions in Africa.
- ❖ **KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND SHARING:** Strengthen mechanisms for expanding information access and outreach through supporting collection, documentation, sharing, and replication of good practices and innovative ideas on skills development and TVET, using existing knowledge sharing platforms <https://www.nepad.org/skillsportalfor youth> and <https://acqf.africa/> and built capacities on these good practises to encourage replication
- ❖ **INCENTIVISE SKILLING, RESKILLING, AND UPSKILLING:** Members States, the AU, RECs, private sector, and development partners should collaborate to cultivate and encourage skilling, reskilling, and upskilling based on the results and outcomes of skills anticipation and matching initiatives. This should include (a) providing flexible and innovative financing mechanisms, (b) promoting awareness and disseminating information on skills development and TVET, (c) and providing creative opportunities for learning such as virtual and technology-based skills development platforms and (d) finding ways to incentivise companies to provide apprenticeships or other in-company trainings.
- ❖ **ASSESS PROGRESS:** Meet again in 2023 to assess the progress of the African skills revolution according to the progress reported by the AUC and the TVET cluster at the AUC STC meetings.