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Establishment of Africa Youth Advisory Board on Disaster Risk Reduction (AYAB - DRR)

I. Background

African continent has made significant progress on disaster risk reduction (DRR). In spite of the progress disasters continue to have impacts on African countries and communities. Common hazards such as droughts, floods, cyclones, earthquakes, epidemics, environmental degradation, and technological hazards have been exacerbated by climate change and fragility. The chances of them turning into disasters have increased and intensified as a result. Exposure to hazards and vulnerability to disasters is increasing due in part to unplanned urbanization and human inappropriate settlements, fragility, unsustainable land management and infrastructural stress. Environmental degradation, poverty, limited technical capacity to gather reliable risk assessment data and conflict further aggravate the risks and reduce the coping capacity and resilience mechanism of communities.

Over the past decades, DRR in Africa has been guided by the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (ARSDRR), which was adopted by African Union (AU) Heads of State and Government in 2004. The implementation of the Strategy has been undertaken through the Programme of Action for the Implementation of the ARSDRR developed in 2005, subsequently extended in line with the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-2015.

When the Hyogo framework came to an end in 2015, Africa joined the world to chart a way forward for renewed momentum for extended framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Subsequently, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 was formulated and adopted as the successor of Hyogo Framework. The Sendai Framework was adopted by United Nations Member States at the 3rd UN World Conference for DRR in March 2015 in Sendai, Japan and endorsed by the UN General Assembly.

The African Union Heads of State and Government expressed their strong commitment to the implementation of the Sendai Framework and adopted the Africa Programme of Action (PoA) for the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. The PoA seeks to achieve the global outcome in Africa as outlined in the Sendai Framework: “The substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries by 2030.” The main Goal is to “*prevent new and reduce existing disaster risk through the implementation of integrated and inclusive economic, structural, legal, social, health, cultural, educational, environmental, technological, political and institutional measures that prevent and reduce hazard exposure and vulnerability to disaster, increase preparedness for response and recovery, and thus strengthen resilience.*”

The PoA aims to guide multi-hazards reduction and management of disaster risk in development processes at all levels as well as within and across all sectors in Africa, in line with the Sendai Framework. It seeks to strengthen DRR in Africa and its integration into policies of the African Union, RECs and Member States in line with the Sendai Framework.

Key provisions in the PoA include the establishment of Youth Advisory Board. The foundation of the board is strongly influenced by the Youth Engagement Platform (YEP) to ensure coherence with ISDR globally and the UN department of Economic and Social Affairs (ECOSOC), to by 2020, promote collective and meaningful youth involvement in DRR policy development, implementation, follow up and review. Africa's population has risen considerably over the last decades; currently estimated at 1.2 billion inhabitants, and 60% of the population are below 35 years. By 2050, Africa's population is estimated to be 2.4 billion. This implies that more than a billion Africans would be youth by 2050. With increased disaster risks, young people would continue to be disproportionately affected by disasters. In that light, involvement of youth to play an active role in DRR is paramount. The AU Commission will work with children and youth stakeholder groups to establish Youth Advisory Board for Disaster Risk Reduction to enhance meaningful engagement and participation of young people in DRR within the Africa region. The demographic weight of young people is undoubtedly an important asset and their involvement could contribute efficiently to fight the phenomenon. This initiative, inspired by the Sendai Framework Action Plan 2015-2030 in the priority 2 'Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk', is highly relevant.

II. Definition and missions of the AYAB -DRR

The Africa Youth Advisory Board (AYAB) is envisioned to be an inclusive, open, and transparent platform for African youth to engage in regional DRR policy design, implementation, follow up and review. The AYAB would champion youth sensitive DRR policy design, implementation, monitoring and review within Africa at all levels.

It shall strive to create and nurture a network between African youth, youth-led and focused organizations with decision-makers in order to reinforce AUC's mission of meaningful engagement of young people in sensitizing communities on DRR. The four focus areas of the Youth Advisory board and its regional representation reflects the PoA vision of implementation of the four priority areas of the Sendai Framework in Africa.

The AUC Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture (DREA) through its DRR unit shall work closely with AU Youth Division to support functioning of the AYAB-DRR. DREA shall coordinate the activities of AYAB. The AU Youth Division shall play an advisory role on youth engagement.

General Roles of the Youth Advisory Board

- 1.1. Facilitate the implementation, monitoring and review of the PoA through youth engagement in DRR;
- 1.2. Work with national DRR focal points, African Union partners and other stakeholders to help in the implementation of the PoA;

- 1.3. Ensure integration and coherence of African Union youth work in DRR at the national, regional and global levels; and
- 1.4. Coordinate with the AUC, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the AUC Youth Division to ensure that the objectives of the PoA are met.

Specific Roles of the Youth Advisory Board

1. Contribute in DRR policy design, implementation and review

- 1.5. Engage with the AUC, Regional Economic Communities, National and Local governments in creating DRR strategies that are youth inclusive;
- 1.6. Build linkages between youth activities at community with those at national and African Union and regional level;
- 1.7. Facilitate youth involvement in development of DRR strategies in the region;
- 1.8. Coordinate with the AUC, and relevant institutions in contributions to international policies, programs and strategies through existing platforms for youth engagement;
- 1.9. Facilitate African youth engagement in continental, regional and national stakeholder fora and coordination with national and local governments, in line with and through existing platforms for youth engagement.

2. Empowerment and Capacity Building of African Youth in DRR

- 2.1. Organize capacity building workshops in collaboration with the AUC, RECs and other relevant institutions centered on the four priorities of action of the Sendai Framework for African Union Youth and Young Politicians;
- 2.2. Leverage electronic and non/electronic platforms to share capacity building information on DRR;
- 2.3. Facilitate intergenerational capacity building in DRR between youth practitioners and experienced DRR practitioners at different levels of engagement; and
- 2.4. Create avenues for the interaction of youth and youth organizations in DRR with related disciplines such as Climate Change, Urbanization and Sustainable Development for cross discipline building of capacities.

3. Knowledge generation in DRR

- 3.1. Facilitate interdisciplinary and intergenerational collaboration (defined as collaboration between different age groups) of young African scientists in applying their existing and ongoing scientific research for evidence-based implementation, monitoring and follow up and review of the Sendai Framework.
- 3.2. Leverage on Peri-Peri Universities network of young scientists to build their capacities and connect them to national, regional and global entities in DRR;

- 3.3. Facilitate collaboration between young scientists and other groups, such as community actors and policy makers to identify gaps in knowledge in DRR, recommendations on good practices and emerging trends to be reviewed in the implementation of the Sendai Framework;
 - 3.4. Provide an electronic and non-electronic repository to showcase young scientists' research on DRR;
 - 3.5. Support young scientists in the development of new research agendas tailored to complement the implementation, monitoring and review of the Sendai Framework for postgraduate research, and where possible, in collaboration with universities, research organizations, NGOs and the private sector; and
4. **Active participation in the DRR field**
- 4.1. Develop social media campaigns and strategies for DRR outreach in cooperation with different public and private institutions;
 - 4.2. Contribute to the implementation of local, national and regional DRR strategies through youth action or initiatives;
 - 4.3. Facilitate participation in DRR dialogue and provide inputs in key DRR programmatic fora and strategic fora; and
 - 4.4. Ensure youth participation in all phases of DRR to ensure building back better.

III. Membership

The board shall consist of young experts and youth-led or youth focused organizations who are committed, passionate and actively involved in Disaster Risk Reduction activities. Any formal or informal youth-led and youth-serving entities, as well as their members and individuals, may join as members. Members will be mandated to serve in a supportive role and facilitate meaningful youth engagement and contribution to the implementation of the African Programme of Action and the SFDRR in Africa. They shall further be the bridge between African youth and decision makers at the various level of engagement within African Union. The AUC will make a public call through issuing an Expression of Interest (EoI) to solicit applications from eligible African youth. The Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture, the AU Youth Division and the United Nations International Strategy of Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) Region of Africa office shall short list submitted application and in a transparent manner, interview and select the final members of the board.

The following shall further guide the selection of the members of the AYAB:

1. The members of the board shall not be more than 35 years of age
2. Membership in the Youth Advisory Board is of two years duration

3. Members are to be elected every two years at the margins of the African Regional Platform for DRR by the attending African youth

4. The board shall consist of 15 slots that can be filled by an African youth experts with extensive DRR experience or a youth led or focused organization in DRR. The spread out shall be as follows:

- 1) 2 representative from each of East, West, South, Central and North Africa,
- 2) 1 thematic focal points for each of the four priorities of action in the SFDRR.
- 3) 1 representative of Community Based DRR

IV. Meetings

- The AYAB shall meet biannually alternating between physical and online meetings
- The AYAB shall issue biannual reports to AUC earmarking progress on work done
- Chairing the meeting will be assigned on a rotational basis to one of the members of AYAB???
- The chair will be supported by one other member who will serve as a secretary during meetings. The secretary will record proceedings of the meeting in a report. The report should highlight, progress on work done, information on current activities, agenda points and decisions. The secretary will further be responsible for, sending follow up emails to the members of the AYAB after each meeting on action points and decisions.

V. Coordination Mechanisms

- The AYAB will initiate and maintain contact with relevant local, national, regional, NGOs and CSOs to enhance coherence at the different levels of engagement.
- The AYAB will coordinate efforts with the other youth bodies of the different AU agencies and other regional organizations.
- The AYAB shall maintain contact with the AU Youth Division and liaise with them on regional efforts