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**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:
priority theme: strategies for the eradication of poverty to
achieve sustainable development for all**

Statement submitted by Africa Unite, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Ending poverty in the next 15 years: A youth perspective

Introduction:

There have been ongoing efforts to reduce and end poverty. It was the Central theme of the Millennium Development Goals. There has been a significant reduction in poverty levels over the last 15 years. Amid this clear progress, there is still reason for real concern about whether the opportunities that Africa has at its disposal will lead to significant development and progress in African nations and real changes in the lives of the poor, including youth. There is strong evidence suggesting that Africa is at risk of missing current opportunities to end poverty due to a number of factors; one of these factors is the failure to convert Africa's demographic advantage, namely young people, into a dynamic economic force. The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development is committed to end poverty in the coming 15 years.

In South Africa, children and youth (below the age of 35) constitute 65% of the population and it is this population group that is severely affected by poverty. Often access to quality education, health care, decent work and economic opportunities are limited and community safety is not guaranteed. All these factors contribute to youth poverty with child and youth headed households being the most affected.

It is important to recognize that there have been a various programmes and interventions which have aimed to reduce poverty through various micro-finance, micro-credit and micro-loan programmes, increases in HIV/AIDS education and health care as well as increases in accessibility to education.

With regards to education, South Africa has a large disparity between the education received by those residing in informal settlements and those residing in more privileged communities. In addition to inequality in education, there are billions of people worldwide living without access to clean water and enough food, adequate health care, proper sanitation and housing.. These are issues Africa Unite confronts every day when working in the Western Cape and other provinces in South Africa. We are confronted daily with the structural inequalities that are playing out at a local, as well as globalized and international level.

Purpose:

The purpose of this submission is to bring youth voices into the formulation of programmes and interventions which are being designed to end poverty by 2030.

Objective

The objective of this submission is to inform strategies and programmes which are focused on ending poverty through the prioritising of youth focused development goals with a thrust on creating capacity and providing opportunity.

Overview

In South Africa, there have been longstanding structural issues with regards to socio-economic inequality. This can be seen in the townships we work closely with, such as Marikana and Du Noon. Africa Unite has created Singamakalipha, a tutorial programme that operates in the township of Gugulethu. The programme allows students in grades one to three to improve their Maths and English. The programme supports children in the area to achieve higher levels of educational success to compete alongside their peers from more socially economically equipped areas. Access to education remains a salient issue in South Africa, as access to adequate primary and secondary education for much of South Africa's population is difficult to access because of issues of violence, structural inequalities, lack of qualified teaching professionals, among other barriers. Africa Unite will continue to be committed to grass-roots level initiatives with regards to enhancing the experience of primary and secondary school learners and assisting them with community-empowering initiatives that will largely impact their educational environment, while allowing them to create community support.

The eradication of poverty begins with taking steps to ensure that the youth from disempowered and disenfranchised communities have the ability to engage in higher learning, critical thinking, and achieve the national education standards set forth so that they may continue through to tertiary education. These processes lead to confident, self-empowered, well-educated, and critically engaged youth allowing them access to job markets previously only enjoyed by those who come from more privileged backgrounds. It also paves the way for entrepreneurship to expand and therefore create job markets for a largely underemployed nation.

It is important to note, it has been 12 Months since the United Nations adopted Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (SDGs) that replaced the Millennium Development Goals. It is an expression and firm commitment by the world leaders and UN member states to address the most challenging issues facing the world: poverty, inequality and climate change. The SDGs have been developed around the framework of "leave no one behind". And South Africa is in process of mainstreaming the SDGs in its national development plan, with a national youth policy.

Agenda 2030 commits to youth empowerment (para. 23) notes youth unemployment as a key challenge (para. 14) and commits for inclusive and equitable education, access to quality health care, access to inclusive economics and youth employment, including a global strategy for youth employment by 2020. Other aspects of the agenda on peaceful societies and good governance as well as access to technology are relevant to youth empowerment.

The salient features of the youth relevant goals and targets need to take root at a country level in national development plans, policies, programmes and public spending.

A way forward:

Data generated from 8000 South African youths has shown the top priorities for this population are access to better health services, access quality and inclusive education, access employment and economic opportunities, as well as peaceful

societies and good governance. These priorities have been echoed in the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

We submit the following three priority actions for focus on empowering youth and ending poverty.

1. Ensure youth empowerment

By 2030, all development stakeholders (African governments, development partners, African and global business, civil society and academia) recognize youth as agents and catalysts for development, enterprise, and progress in the social, economic and political sectors. Stakeholders actively create opportunities for youth to participate in all spheres. To ensure that youth development is main-streamed in all aspects of the development agenda. Such mainstreamed goals should aim to increase capacity, create opportunity and increase likelihood of youth to attain a decent life.

The following youth-focussed targets in the SDGs will be able to create capacity among youth and provide opportunity and safe environments:

- Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
- Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
- Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

The effective delivery on these goals needs to be anchored on the principle “leave no one behind”. Youth who are poor and marginalized should be given priority in implementation of the Agenda 2030.

2. Investment in youth:

The budgetary allocation towards youth relevant goals needs to be sufficient to deliver commitments. As both domestic and international public finance are being aligned with SDG priorities, it is important to ring fence spending on education and health care; skills development and youth employment. Ensure youth employment and entrepreneurship schemes are well resourced and are properly targeted on marginalized youth, majority of which are engaged in small holder agriculture and informal sector. The principle of leave no one behind should be applied to budget appropriation processes.

3. Track Progress: Ensure youth participate in the follow up and review systems:

The national follow-up and review mechanism needs to be participatory and inclusive. A youth representative should be placed at national follow-up and review platforms. Youth CSOs should be involved in the follow-up mechanism at local and national government levels. The key focus should be on:

- Youth driven data generation and use in the accountability process for youth relevant goals and targets.

- National indicators should be disaggregated in terms of gender and age.
- Incentives initiated that ensure the accountability system prioritizes results and learning.

To end poverty by 2030, the main strategy focus should be creating and enhancing youth capability to function, access economic opportunities and opening space in social and political spheres for youth participation and agency. Nonetheless, we recognize the importance of social safety nets in reducing poverty.
