

Draft Communiqué

12th National Youth Conference and Festival (NAYCONF 2017)

15th to 22nd December 2017, Basse, Upper River Region

Theme: “New Gambia: Challenges and Opportunities for Youth”

We, the 2000 delegates of the 12th National Youth Conference and Festival (NAYCONF 2017), organised by the National Youth Council of The Gambia (NYC) under the guidance of the Ministry of Ministry of Youth and Sports The Gambia (MOYS), held in Basse, Upper River Region from the 15th to 22nd December 2017.

Recalling the resolutions of the previous editions of National Youth Conference and Festival which places emphasis on youth empowerment and development, within the framework of partnership and collaboration with state and non-state actors.

Building on the gains made by youth in the advent of New Gambia and the need to sustain the meaningful involvement of youth in civic leadership and political spaces to accelerate democratisation and decentralisation in building the Gambia We Want.

Conscious of the fact that the New Gambia brings opportunities for both the Government and young people especially with formulation of the National Development Plan (NDP) 2018-2021 and the anticipated challenges that might be experienced in the implementation of overall reform agenda.

Recognising the importance of harnessing the entrepreneurial skills of young people (including those with disabilities) to promote job creation and employability; centering around commercial agriculture and favourable policies that offer incentives to youth as a strategy to addressing youth irregular migration in the Gambia.

Bearing in mind the challenges faced in accessing information to fight against corruption, immorality, transnational organised crime amongst others; the need for inclusive and elaborate policy framework that will take keen interest in the role of young people in promoting peaceful coexistence and improve national security.

Acknowledging the limitations in the maximum utilisation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools and platforms necessary for National Development particularly in encouraging innovation, awareness creation and responsible utilisation of social media to rebrand the image of the country and market the new Gambia agenda on the global platform.

Renewing our commitments to say **NEVER AGAIN** to all forms of Gender Based Violence (GBV) including Child Marriage and FGM/C in our generation; and guarantee the Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) of adolescents and youth.

Aware of the need to create correlation and alignment of national youth priorities and programmes with the National Development Plan, ECOWAS Youth Policy and Protocol on Free Movement of People, Goods and Services, Africa Agenda 2063 and AU Road Map on harnessing the Demographic Dividend as well as the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

While unreservedly appreciating the political will and support from government, donors and development partner towards the successful hosting of this year's NAYCONF, we strongly called on government and all other stakeholders to increase commitment in supporting youth development initiatives.

Therefore, we show our total resolve to promoting our welfare in the spirit of partnership building.

A. FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF THE GAMBIA AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS, WE DEMAND AS FOLLOWS;

1. Youth Leadership and Political Participation

- a. *Formulate policies that support the mainstreaming of women and youth in political decision making and strengthen the National Council for Civic Education (NCCE) by ensuring the enforcement of all constitutional provision on civic education and related matters including the incorporation of civic education in the school curriculums*

2. Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship

- a. *Provide grants and affordable soft loans schemes to youth entrepreneurs and offer tax waivers for their ventures for a five year grace period; resource the existing technical and vocational training institutions and strengthen ongoing entrepreneurship development programmes.*

3. Youth in Agriculture

- a. *Facilitate youth access to agricultural land and provide the requisite inputs including modern machineries to maximise productivity for food security and employment creation; in consultation with young people, renegotiate the matching grants at agricultural projects to create incentives and entice into agro-business and value chain management.*

4. Curbing Youth Irregular Migration

- a. *Support the implementation of the migration policy and champion the development of a comprehensive and integrated migration management action plan focusing chiefly on addressing the root cause of irregular migration and the reintegration of returnees.*

5. Access to Information and Anti-Corruption

- a. *Government to ensure the repeal of all laws infringing on freedom of information, and enact anti-corruption and freedom of information laws.*

6. Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

- a. *Increase budget allocation to the Ministry responsible for ICTs to properly and effectively execute the programmes such as decentralization of ICT services, make internet accessible and affordable countrywide; ensure provision of quality and uninterrupted service by all service providers particularly telephone companies*

7. Peace and Security

- a. *Government to create safeguards to guarantee youth access to justice by extending legal aid service to youth and child offenders charged for drugs and non-capital offences; improve the condition of pre-trial detention facilities at the level of police and other law enforcement agencies to conform to human right standards.*

8. Gender Based Violence and Sexual Reproductive Health Rights

- a. *Government to formulation and enforcement of anti-gender based violence policies and laws geared towards the unhindered protection of the Sexual and reproductive health right of youth; increase funding for the establishment centers to provide youth friendly services.*

B. AS YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE GAMBIA, WE TASKED OURSELVES AS FOLLOWS;

1. Youth Leadership and Political Participation

- a. *Work with government and partners to strengthen the “Not Too Young to Run” campaign to promote youth political participation, overcome cultural barriers which restrict the youth to take up leadership responsibilities and conduct advocacy activities to promote good governance, active and responsible citizenship.*

2. Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship

- a. *Advocate for youth to take up technical and vocational education for self employment and job creation; ensure accountability and regular monitoring and evaluation on the grants and loans offered to youth.*

3. Youth in Agriculture

- a. *Intensify peer led advocacy to rebrand agriculture with a view to mitigate the misconception surrounding the trade; change the perceptions of society around farming to appreciate it as a mean to wealth creation and contribution to GDP.*

4. Curbing Youth Irregular Migration

- a. *Work with relevant stakeholders in popularising the migration policy and take center stage in the development of a migration management action plan; advocate for attitudinal change towards irregular migration among youth and parents.*

5. Access to Information and Anti-Corruption

- a. *Mobilise and form a youth led Non-state actors coalition to campaign for Access to Information and promote the freedom of information; initiate measure to hold public officers accountable as an anti-corruption strategy.*

6. Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

- a. *Create awareness among young people on the opportunities available in the ICT world and the advantages of technological innovation; advocate for the responsible and positive utilisation of ICT platforms to facilitate research and effective communication in national development.*

7. Peace and Security

- a. *Organize advocacy and sensitization programmes for youth to take a leading and active role in peacebuilding and national security; promote and strengthen “I stand for peace” campaign and in collaboration with relevant stakeholders conduct sensitization activities on the dangers of drugs and impact of crime on national development.*

8. Gender Based Violence and Sexual Reproductive Health Rights

- a. *Amplify the “Never again” in my generation campaign on ending FGM/C, child marriage and all forms of gender based violence. Lobby for formulation and enforcement of anti-gender based violence regulations and policies; Initiate and implement gender friendly advocacy programmes to fight against vulnerabilities such inequality and poverty among the youth particular young women and girls.*

C. DALEGATES REQUEST THE NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL TO MEET THE FOLLOWING

- a. National Youth Council to convene a National Stakeholder Consultative Forum before end of March 2018 to draft an action plan based on the above recommendation to inform the development of The Gambia Programme of Action on Youth (GPAY) 2018 – 2019 in line with National, regional and international Youth and development instruments.
- b. The Secretariat of the National Youth Council to form as soon as possible a multistakeholder taskforce on GPAY 2018 – 2019 comprising of;
 - Ministry of Youth and Sports (MOYS) and its satellite agencies
 - Government Ministries
 - UN Systems in The Gambia
 - Non Governmental Organisations/Civil Society Organisations
 - Youth Organisations
 - Private Sector
 - Media institutions
 - Academia
 - International Development Partners
 - Diplomatic Missions
 - National Security Apparatus

THANK The host region (Basse), the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MOYS), UN System in the Gambia, Chinese Embassy, The Gambia Youth Empowerment Project (YEP), Ministry of Agriculture (NEMA/FASDEP), Child Fund International The Gambia and all other partners for the generous support and collaboration in making NAYCONF 2017 a success. And all delegates for attendance and active participation.

DATED, FRIDAY THE 22ND DAY OF DECEMBER 2018