



Civil Society and Youth Forum: Recommendations

This declaration was drafted following inputs from the EU-AU Civil Society and Youth Forum which took place online on 23 October and 13 November and on 20 and 21 November 2025. This Forum brought together a diverse representation of CSO-Youth organisations from Africa and Europe, from various sectors and geographies, to discuss and make recommendations on the AU-EU Summit, taking place on 24 and 25 May 2025.

Introduction

On 20 and 21 November 2025, a cohort of 100 youth and civil society organisation representatives from Africa and Europe participated in the EU-AU Civil Society and Youth Forum. Organised jointly by the European Union and African Union, the event provided a structured platform for engagement, enabling youth and CSOs to contribute their perspectives on key themes underpinning the Africa-Europe partnership, including:

- Peace, Security and Governance
- Prosperity
- People,
- Multilateralism.

1. Preamble

We recognise the important role of civil society and youth, adopting a human-rights based approach to policymaking. We re-affirm the universality and indivisibility of human rights on both continents.

We recognise the urgent need for action at the local level to promote prosperous social and economic development, foster inclusive and multistakeholder solutions within a reinforced multilateralism framework that benefit all, ensure peaceful environments for civilians, protect the environment and the people by institutionalising AU–EU civil society collaboration.

Peace, security and governance

Recommendation 1: *Strengthen Institutional Commitment and Policy Coherence*

We call on the EU and AU institutions to invest in the development and implementation of National Action Plans for peace and security, and to ensure compliance with international and continental standards that promote good governance, democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and political stability. We urge the fostering of UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace, and



Security, and Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, ensuring that youth and women are included at all levels of peace processes and decision-making. To contextualize such plans, we call on EU and AU institutions to link policies to resources, encourage civic engagement, and establish joint AU-EU mechanism

Recommendation 2: *Strengthen Democratic Institutions and Political Parties to Promote Inclusive Governance*

Support and train political parties to strengthen democratic governance by bringing them together to uphold democratic principles and facilitating connections between like-minded parties across Africa and Europe. Prioritize capacity-building for youth wings and emerging party leaders, and incorporate youth quotas, gender parity targets, and long-term civic and political education campaigns co-designed with youth and civil society organizations (both digital and community-based). Mandate an annual AU–EU public report on party reform, youth inclusion, and electoral integrity, developed with input from youth and CSOs.

Recommendation 3: *Ensure evidence-based decision making and Sustainable Approaches*

We call on the EU and AU institutions to promote data-informed decision-making and engagement based on local evidence. CSO and Youth organisations call on enhancing evidence-based decision-making processes. Investment in research on peace and security, facilitating knowledge exchange between AU and EU institutions are crucial.

Recommendation 4: *Promote inclusive and localised peacebuilding*

CSO-Youth participants call on AU member states to strengthen local and dialogue-centered approaches to conflict prevention and resolution, including indigenous and traditional methods such as restorative justice, and to advance a culture of peace and tolerance. They urge broad and genuine inclusion of cross-border and local communities, support for peace education and capacity strengthening, equal access to justice, and respect for human rights, while promoting joint AU-EU advocacy to build local capacity for peaceful dispute resolution thereby strengthening community resilience and social cohesion. Preventive diplomacy and local peace committees should be strengthened as primary tools for addressing emerging tensions.

Recommendation 5: *Addressing Conflict Drivers Through Youth Education, Skills, and Economic Empowerment*

Address the drivers and fuellers of conflict by investing in youth education, skills development, and economic empowerment. Expand access to quality education, TVET, and digital literacy for youth and women, particularly in fragile and post-conflict regions. Promote employment, entrepreneurship, and innovation to foster inclusive economic growth, reduce vulnerabilities, tackle



the root causes of violent extremism, prevent recurring conflicts, and strengthen communities in post-conflict rebuilding. Link green initiatives to job creation to provide tangible opportunities and enhance resilience among young people in conflict-affected areas.

Recommendation 6: Protection , early warning and Crisis Response

We call on the AU and EU to enhance gender-sensitive protection and emergency support for civilians in conflict and post-conflict areas—including refugees and displaced persons—by strengthening early-warning systems and preventing all forms of gender-based violence. A dedicated Prevention and Response Framework for Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV), with a specific focus on girls and young women, should be developed to advance justice and accountability through regional and international mechanisms. We further call for renewed AU-EU investment in conflict-prevention infrastructure, including community-based early-warning systems, rapid-response mechanisms, and youth-led mediation networks. These mechanisms must effectively link grassroots actors with regional and continental institutions to ensure timely, coordinated action and strengthen sustainable peace efforts.

Recommendation 7: Strengthen Financing, Monitoring, and Accountability Mechanisms

We call on the AU and EU to strengthen financing, monitoring, and accountability mechanisms by establishing predictable, transparent, and youth-inclusive funding systems that support peace, governance, and climate initiatives led by young people and civil society. This includes creating dedicated multi-year funding windows, simplifying access for grassroots organisations, and developing joint AU-EU monitoring and evaluation frameworks with publicly available progress reports. Robust accountability structures should be co-designed with youth and civil society to ensure that commitments lead to measurable impact. Additionally, increased investment in youth employment, entrepreneurship, and innovation—especially in fragile and post-conflict regions—is essential to foster inclusive economic growth, reduce vulnerabilities, and address the root causes of violent extremism and irregular migration.

Recommendation 8: Promote Digital Governance, Cybersecurity, and Responsible Use of Emerging Technologies

The AU and EU to establish a continental digital peace and security platform supported by community hubs that centralize conflict-related data. The platform should leverage youth-led tech, AI, and mobile tools for real-time monitoring, early warning, conflict mapping, and citizen reporting, ensuring information is responsibly shared across communities, civil society, and institutions. Both parties should integrate digital peace, cybersecurity, and responsible technology strategies into governance and peacebuilding, including strengthening digital literacy for youth and women, countering online hate and misinformation, and promoting safe, responsible AI use to enhance democratic participation and coordinated responses.



People

Recommendation 1: Expand and Strengthen Legal, Inclusive Migration and Mobility Pathways

Review, simplify, and digitalize visa and work permit regimes between AU and EU countries, focusing on education- and skills-based mobility. Establish a dedicated “EU Mobility Visa Window” and consider a special “Youth/CSO visa” for participants in EU-funded programs, ensuring predictable processing, harmonized criteria, and efficient coordination with Member State embassies to reduce barriers and enhance safe access, particularly for persons with disabilities. Broaden reciprocal youth mobility programs for students, interns, and volunteers, and implement policies that facilitate family reunification with clear guidelines and expedited processes that reduce bureaucratization.

Launch a joint AU–EU “Digital Migration Literacy” initiative to raise awareness of legal migration pathways and counter misinformation. Fund community-based resilience programs to create local economic and educational opportunities, reducing pressures for irregular migration and supporting youth engagement in sustainable, inclusive development.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen Digital Accountability and reinforce multilateral legal frameworks

Intersectional discrimination and deep-rooted economic and social inequalities increase people’s risk of marginalisation, trafficking and exploitation along their migration journeys. Strengthening local systems that ensure access to rights, justice, basic services and social protection is essential. Trafficking should be prevented by expanding research and training, equipping law enforcement to dismantle networks and share intelligence across borders, enforcing stronger digital regulation for social media platforms, and prioritising the protection and empowerment of those most at risk.

Recommendation 3: Reduce the Cost of Remittances and Promote Financial Inclusion, Create Mechanisms for Diaspora Investment

The EU should support diaspora contributions, through tools like diaspora bonds and EU–Africa funds, while including diaspora voices in development and migration planning. Key steps include expanding cross-border digital and mobile money to reduce transaction costs, and creating diaspora-focused investment and youth empowerment mechanisms, such as dedicated funds, grants, financial literacy programmes, and streamlined digital ID systems to improve access to finance and entrepreneurship.



Recommendation 4: Prioritising human development for sustainable and inclusive societies

To build sustainable and inclusive societies, it is essential to place human development at the center of policy and investment decisions. This requires targeted actions that expand access to essential services, address systemic inequalities, and foster collaboration between public and private actors. Key priorities include: increasing public investment in health, education, and social protection; removing barriers to ensure no one is left behind by tackling intersecting forms of discrimination and empowering communities; and fostering partnerships with the social economy to support long-term sustainability while upholding ethical standards and equity.

Recommendation 5: Investing in inclusive, quality education at all levels

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Recommendation 6: Strengthening health for prevention, equity, and resilience

Public health and continuous wellbeing should be a central pillar of the EU–AU partnership, guided by an equity-driven approach that addresses social, economic and environmental determinants. This requires investing in resilient, people-centered, gender-responsive systems that provide inclusive primary care, SRHR, and universal access to clean water and sanitation, food security, while strengthening community health workforces, climate-resilient planning, and local manufacturing and innovation. Predictable financing and innovative funding mechanisms, including sustained support for global health initiatives, are essential to ensure comprehensive care and build healthier, more resilient communities prepared for future crises.

Recommendation 7: Strengthening civil society and community engagement for inclusion

Civil society organizations and local communities should be co-creators at all stages, ensuring the representation of all voices and addressing barriers faced by marginalised groups, including youth, women, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and migrants. This requires flexible funding for community-led, people-centered initiatives that promote resilience, equity and livelihoods, as well



as institutionalizing civil society participation through a dedicated platform within the AU–EU partnership through annual AU EU Dialogue Forum, rotating between Africa and Europe and supported by hubs in Brussels and Addis Ababa, to guarantee structured, transparent, and accountable engagement across all thematic areas. Systematic follow up should also take place after each summit as a way to increase accountability.

Recommendation 8 :Community and people centered climate change adaptation and natural resource governance

An inclusive approach is essential for effective climate adaptation, land governance, and anticipatory action, supported by strengthened legal frameworks like the Kampala Convention. The AU and EU should ensure IDPs, returnees, and migrants have access to services, documentation, education, and sustainable livelihoods, while protecting land rights. Grounded in humanitarian principles, both institutions should strengthen locally led responses to displacement from climate impacts and conflict, including promoting secure pastoralism through the AU Transhumance Protocol, reducing barriers in sustainable value chains to support youth-led enterprises and small-scale producers guaranteeing living wages and incomes, and funding programmes that secure youth land tenure, inclusive governance, and rural entrepreneurship hubs for innovation and job creation.

Prosperity

Recommendation 1: Reform global and domestic financing systems to unlock affordable resources for Africa

Support international financial architecture reform, a UN Debt and Tax Convention. Advance dialogue about debt cancellation and reparation's agenda. Strengthen progressive domestic tax systems and explore innovative financing options like solidarity levies or SDRs. Combat corruption and illicit financial flows through stronger institutions and harmonized regulatory frameworks. Expand fiscal space to drive green industrialization, digitalization, SME growth, public services, and youth employment.

Recommendation 2: Scale and strengthen sustainable and inclusive development and climate finance

Expand concessional, debt-free finance for adaptation, biodiversity, and social protection, prioritising community-led nature-based solutions. Align AU–EU investments with LT-LEDS, NAPs,



NDCs, and Community-Determined Contributions. Mobilise private capital for mitigation in EMDEs while strengthening inclusive Country Platforms engaging governments, civil society, Indigenous peoples, communities, and the private sector.

Recommendation 3: Food sovereignty through agroecology

Food sovereignty must be advanced through agroecology that centres small-scale producers, territorial markets, and farmer-managed seed systems—rather than imposing UPOV 91-type regimes that undermine farmers’ seed rights. Strengthening community-led systems is essential for resilient, climate-responsive food pathways. Halting land and ocean grabbing done under the guise of conservation or climate mitigation is critical to protecting Indigenous and local livelihoods. Equally urgent is stopping the export of toxic agrochemicals and pesticides banned in Europe, which continue to harm African ecosystems and communities.

Recommendation 4: Promote a Just, Inclusive, and Skills-Driven Green Transition

Invest in a just, community-led green transition that protects and upholds rights, and creates jobs. Prioritise agroecology and people-centred land governance to strengthen climate and biodiversity resilience. Support technology transfer and training partnerships to reskill workers for emerging green jobs. Expand access of local SMEs to finance and capacity building.

Recommendation 5: Expand Inclusive Digital Connectivity, Financial Access and digital literacy

Expand inclusive digital connectivity through AU–EU initiatives like D4D Hub and Smart Africa. Enable digital trade using tools such as digital wallet and cross-border payments Invest in SME digital infrastructure, reskilling, and digital literacy. Support smart city development to improve public services and mobility. Strengthen cybersecurity and digital governance through the Malabo Convention and AU Digital Strategy.

Recommendation 6: Modernise and Integrate Regional Transport Infrastructure to Improve Affordable and Efficient Mobility Across Africa



Prioritise the development and rehabilitation of inter-African multimodal transport that connect production hubs, ports, and domestic markets while upgrading logistics systems to lower trade costs and boost regional value chains.

Recommendation 7: Strengthen Partnerships with AU–EU Green Industrial Value Chains Through Accelerated Trade

Accelerate monitoring of the implementation of a people-centred AfCFTA, simplifying cross-border trade in low-carbon goods and fostering regional industrial clusters to de-risk capital while ensuring value creation for local communities. Trade and economic agreements, including on Critical Raw Materials, must serve as platforms for strategic regulation, technology cooperation, and capacity building, while including binding clauses on human, labour and environmental rights, robust complaint mechanisms, and civil society consultation. Targeted support should empower SMEs and artisans through networking, and cultural exchanges.

Recommendation 8: Investments that deliver for People and Planet

Focus Global Gateway Investments on the needs and aspirations of the partner countries, engage with and advance the collective well-being of local communities and grassroots populations, and ensure they contribute to advancing sustainable development goals. Critical Raw Materials exploration, governance and transformation should ensure added value and revenues are reinvested in women, and youth employment and community development.

Multilateralism

Recommendation 1: Ensuring AU-EU Youth and Civil Society Consultative Status and Meaningful Participation

Establish a permanent AU-EU council to grant civil society and youth formal consultative status, ensuring their balanced input on key policies. Introduce a "Youth Test" for new legislation, requiring a transparent assessment of its impact on young people. This includes mandatory consultation, analysis, and mitigation of negative effects to safeguard their future.

Recommendation 2: Fostering an inclusive and future-proof global financial architecture



The AU and EU must champion a comprehensive reform of the global financial architecture to make it fairer and more effective. This includes establishing rules-based debt restructuring through a UN mechanism and creating an African Credit Rating Agency for greater transparency. International financial institutions must be reformed to be more democratic and accountable. Furthermore, the EU must ensure its Global Gateway strategy prioritizes local benefits and climate action over its own geopolitical interests, and official development assistance must meet the 0.7% GNI commitment. Ultimately, the governance of development aid should be moved from the OECD to the inclusive forum of the United Nations.

Recommendation 3: Deliver of the UN Pact of the Future, Paris Agreement, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and just transition

Urgently implement the Paris Agreement, support Africa's renewable energy ambitions, and deliver on climate finance promises. Scale up grants and concessional finance to at least USD 1.3 trillion annually for developing countries. Support Africa's just transition by ensuring critical minerals fuel local industrialization and decent jobs, using debt cancellation as a tool to free up capacity for climate action.

Recommendation 4: Protect and Leverage Creative Mechanisms to Democratize Engagement

Recognize the vital role of creative sectors—media, arts, and culture—in making multilateralism accessible to the public. These actors can translate complex negotiations, facilitate informed debate, and use artistic research to reveal unique insights into global challenges. The AU and EU should establish a creative diplomacy lab to harness these skills and address knowledge gaps. Crucially, creative and media organizations must be included as substantive partners in policy consultations, not just for reporting, enabling their networks to amplify outcomes and foster cross-border solutions.

Recommendation 5: Promoting a safe and enabling environment - both physical and digital - for civil society, media and youth

Jointly commit to protecting and expanding a safe environment for civil society, media, youth and women, both offline and online. Safeguard freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly, and prevent digital surveillance and harassment. Emphasize state compliance with human rights obligations and push for legal reforms to strengthen journalism and ensure accountability for violations against press freedom.

Recommendation 6: Amplify Marginalized Voices and Strengthen Democracy



Make AU-EU dialogues more inclusive by delocalizing forums and enabling inclusive hybrid participation to reach underrepresented groups. Intentionally engage local CSOs, women and youth networks, and social partners to ensure community-level evidence informs policies. Strengthen democracies and democratic institutions by promoting rights-based approaches to peace, security, and governance, supported by flexible funding for civic actors.

Recommendation 7: Accelerating the 2030 Agenda and co-creating its successor framework

Reaffirm commitment to the 2030 Agenda and co-lead with civil society and youth to accelerate progress and shape a post-2030 framework. Integrate accountability mechanisms and civic evidence into policy-making. Ensure all member states ratify and implement international human rights law and ILO conventions, and enhance the implementation of the African Youth Charter with added accountability.

Recommendation 8: AU and EU working together to reform the international trade system

Ahead of the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference, the AU and EU should pioneer a joint initiative for meaningful trade reform. Together, they can champion a more inclusive and equitable global trading system that serves our shared populations. This renewed partnership should advance sustainable trade corridors, unlock mutual economic opportunities, and strengthen the cultural ties between Africa and Europe.

Conclusion

We hereby engage to follow up on the content of the present Declaration and instruct Mr Ramon Moraes Sales Moura, representing European Civil Society and Young people, and Mr Daniel Adugna, on behalf of the African Union Commission and representing the African Civil Society Organizations and Young people, to bring the instances contained therein to the attention of and consideration by the Heads of State of the European Union and of the African Union at the seventh Summit, taking place on 24 and 25 November 2025 in Luanda.