



APRM
African Peer Review
Mechanism



**Pan-African
Parliament**
One Africa, One Voice

5TH APRM youth symposium

The Pan-African Parliament
Midrand, Republic of South Africa

10 - 11 November 2025

Outcome Report



African Union



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PAN-AFRICAN YOUTH UNION
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20 YEARS



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FOREWORD

Amb. Marie-Antoinette Rose-Quatre

Chief Executive Officer of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) Continental Secretariat

Africa's future is being shaped by its youngest and largest constituency. With nearly one billion Africans under the age of 35, the demographic dividend can no longer be treated as a promise that will mature on its own. It requires institutions to include young people in decisions, budgets, implementation, and oversight. Prosperity will depend less on demographic scale than on whether public systems can turn youth potential into real influence and opportunity.

Convened by the APRM Continental Secretariat in collaboration with the Pan-African Parliament and partners, the 5th APRM Youth Symposium examined this question at a moment of clear institutional urgency. Persistent unemployment, declining public trust, shrinking civic space, the rapid growth of digital activism and the resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government have made African youth inclusion a measure of governance effectiveness, not a secondary development concern.

The central message from the Symposium was direct. Young people are not only raising grievances; they are identifying governance failures, proposing alternatives and building new forms of civic action. The responsibility of institutions is to receive those

ideas seriously, test them through policy processes and scale what works through formal governance systems.

This report presents the outcomes of the 5th APRM Youth Symposium, successfully convened from 10-11 November 2025 at the Pan-African Parliament in Midrand, South Africa. Hosted under the theme "Youth in Governance: From Promise to Prosperity," the Symposium was strategically positioned as a continental agenda-setting platform ahead of the twentieth anniversary of the African Youth Charter (AYC) in 2026. Adopted by the African Union in 2006, the Charter remains Africa's foremost normative and legal instrument for advancing youth participation, empowerment, rights, and development. The Symposium was convened within the broader context of Agenda 2063, particularly Aspiration 6, the African Union Assembly Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.874(XXXVII) and preparations for the commemoration of twenty years of the African Youth Charter.

Critically, the Symposium contributed directly to the implementation of the APRM Strategic Plan (2025–2028), particularly under the strategic pillars of Implementation of the APRM Mandate with Impact and

Communications, Advocacy and Outreach. Through its inclusive engagement of youth, policymakers, civil society, academia, and continental institutions, the Symposium strengthened the APRM's role as a leading platform for inclusive governance dialogue and policy innovation. It also enhanced the visibility of the APRM's governance mandate, expanded strategic partnerships, amplified youth voices within continental governance processes, and generated evidence-based recommendations to inform governance reforms across Africa.

The Symposium also provided an opportunity to reflect on the progress achieved since the African Union declared 2017 as the Year of the Youth under the theme "Harnessing Africa's Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth Development." While significant strides have been made in elevating youth issues within continental and national policy frameworks, participants recognised that the African youth development ecosystem continues to face challenges of fragmentation, duplication, poor funding and limited coordination among institutions and programmes. Despite substantial investments by Member States, African Union organs, Regional Economic Communities, development partners, and youth-led organisations, efforts have too often proceeded in parallel rather than through a coherent and integrated framework capable of delivering transformative outcomes at scale. As a result, important gaps remain in implementation, accountability, impact measurement, and the translation of policy commitments into tangible opportunities for young people.

Against this backdrop, the 5th APRM Youth Symposium brought together policymakers, youth leaders, researchers, civil society organisations, development partners, and representatives of continental institutions to assess progress, identify emerging governance challenges, and advance

a collective vision for youth-centred governance in Africa. The deliberations underscored the imperative of moving beyond symbolic inclusion towards meaningful youth participation in political, economic, and social decision-making processes. Equally important, the Symposium served as the first continental consultative process informing the APRM's Africa Governance Report 2027: From Promise to Prosperity, which will examine the state of youth governance across the continent and propose evidence-based pathways for reform. The recommendations contained in this report therefore constitute an important contribution to both the African Youth Charter @20 appraisal process and the broader effort to strengthen policy coherence, institutional accountability, and youth-responsive governance across Africa.

This report adopts an analytical approach, synthesising the key policy debates, governance implications, and strategic recommendations emerging from the Symposium. It is intended not merely as a record of discussions, but as a call to action for governments, continental institutions, development partners, and young people themselves. The APRM remains committed to supporting Member States and African Union institutions in translating continental commitments into measurable outcomes. Ultimately, the success of our collective efforts will be determined by our ability to move from promise to prosperity, ensuring that Africa's young people are not only beneficiaries of development, but active architects of the continent's transformation and future prosperity.



The 5th APRM Youth Symposium



Hon. Dr.
Mzamo B.

Mr. Ivor
Ichikowitz



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 5th APRM Youth Symposium was held from 10 to 11 November 2025 at the Pan-African Parliament in Midrand, Republic of South Africa, under the theme “Youth in Governance: From Promise to Prosperity”. It brought together more than 700 young participants, including 300 international delegates, and reached an online audience of more than 100,000 people through live digital platforms under the hashtag #APRMYouth.

Beyond the scale of participation, the Symposium served as a high-level policy and consultative platform. It contributed to the institutionalisation of youth engagement within the APRM, responded to the AU Assembly Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.874(XXXVII), and generated inputs for the Africa Governance Report 2027. Its timing, ahead of the 20th Anniversary of the African Youth Charter in 2026, gave the discussions additional institutional weight. The proceedings showed that youth participation in Africa has entered a different phase. The question is no longer whether young people should be consulted, but whether governance systems can translate their presence into influence, delivery and accountability. Participants linked youth disillusionment to weak service delivery, unemployment, corruption, shrinking civic space, limited access to decision-making and the slow implementation of continental commitments.

Moreover, the Symposium showed that young Africans are already shaping governance through digital mobilisation, community organising, entrepreneurship, media, policy advocacy, peacebuilding and social innovation. The institutional challenge is to ensure that this energy is not left outside formal systems, where it can turn into frustration, protest or disengagement. The report therefore organises follow-up around youth co-governance and institutional reform; peace, security and democratic accountability; economic transformation, jobs and skills; digital governance and information integrity; social inclusion and well-being; and Pan-African integration.

2.1 Key Strategic Conclusions

- i. Youth visibility has increased, but influence remains uneven. Many institutions, including the AU, Regional Economic Communities, Member States, Civil Society Organisations, and the private sector, have opened consultative spaces without giving young people a clear role in decisions, budgets, or implementation.
- ii. Youth unrest should be read as a governance signal. Protests and digital mobilisation often point to deeper failures in service delivery, accountability, employment and trust.
- iii. The demographic dividend requires deliberate institutional design. Education, labour markets, digital systems, public administration and financing frameworks must work together if youth potential is to become a development accelerator.
- iv. Digital spaces are now governance spaces. Social media, artificial intelligence, online safety and digital content shape participation, public trust and information integrity.
- v. Follow-through is the central test. Recommendations should be translated into indicators, responsibilities and progress reporting through the AGR 2027 and APRM follow-up mechanisms.

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INTRODUCTION AND POLICY CONTEXT



3.1. Background

The 5th APRM Youth Symposium supported by the Government of the Republic of South Africa and the Pan-African Parliament, with technical and financial contributions from GIZ, ACCORD, the Pan-African Youth Union, Konrad Adenauer-Stiftung, the Inclusive Society Institute, the South African Institute of International Affairs, the Institute of Pan-African Thought and Conversation, G20/Y20, Afrobarometer, Paramount Media/MTV, the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation, the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, the European Partnership for Democracy, the Ichikowitz Family Foundation and UNFPA.

Since its inception in 2017, the APRM Youth Symposium has grown into a continental platform for intergenerational dialogue, youth-led policy reflection and governance innovation. The 5th edition built on this foundation by placing stronger emphasis on influence, implementation and accountability, rather than on consultation alone.

This focus reflected the wider African context in which the Symposium took place. Youth-led civic mobilisation, rising demands for accountable institutions, continued unemployment, technological change and renewed concerns over unconstitutional changes of government all shaped the discussion. Against this background, youth in governance was treated as both timely and urgent.

3.2. Purpose and Objectives

The process examined the evolving role of young people in governance, peace and security, economic development and continental integration. It also considered how digital governance, artificial intelligence, media and emerging technologies are changing the way young people participate in public life and hold institutions accountable.

Linked to this, the Symposium sought to generate practical, youth-driven policy recommendations aligned with AU frameworks and the APRM Strategic Plan 2025-2028. It also served as a consultative platform for the AGR 2027 on Youth in Governance, ensuring that the report is informed by direct youth perspectives and grounded in institutional proposals.

The design of the event supported that purpose. High-level addresses, plenary discussions, a youth perception survey, intergenerational dialogue, interactive sessions and communication-focused exchanges brought together AU institutions, youth networks, policymakers, development partners and national youth structures in one process.

3.3. Event Profile

Item	Details
Title	5 th APRM Youth Symposium
Theme	Youth in Governance: From Promise to Prosperity
Date and Venue	10-11 November 2025, Pan-African Parliament, Midrand, Republic of South Africa
Participation	More than 700 young participants, including approximately 300 international delegates; over 100,000 virtual participants reached through live digital platforms
Institutional Context	Agenda 2063 Aspiration 6; African Youth Charter 20th Anniversary; APRM Strategic Plan (2025-2028); AU Assembly Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.874(XXXVII); AGR 2027 on Youth in Governance
Core Methodology	High-level addresses, plenary discussions, youth perception survey, intergenerational dialogue, interactive innovation labs, live podcast and communication panel



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STRATEGIC ANALYTICAL FRAMING



The central question emerging from the Symposium was whether Africa's governance systems are adapting quickly enough to the expectations, capacities and frustrations of its youth. The discussions did not present young people as a passive demographic waiting to be empowered. They treated them as political, social and economic actors who are already reshaping public debate and institutional accountability.

A recurring concern was the gap between institutional language and lived experience. Many frameworks recognise youth as central to Africa's development, yet participants repeatedly pointed to weak implementation, limited access to opportunity, tokenistic representation and uneven accountability. This gap was presented as a source of public distrust and political volatility. For that reason, youth participation was not discussed in isolation. Employment, digital access, peace and security, education, mental health, public communication, service delivery and continental integration were all connected to the question of whether young people believe institutions are responsive and legitimate.

The report therefore reads the proceedings through four linked lenses: the quality of youth influence in governance systems; the ability of institutions to respond to youth concerns; the relationship between youth policy and development financing; and the mechanisms required to track implementation after the Symposium.

4.1. Analytical Assumptions Derived from the Deliberations

- i. Youth participation without institutional consequence reinforces frustration rather than trust.
- ii. Economic exclusion weakens democratic participation and can deepen social instability.
- iii. Digital mobilisation is no longer peripheral to governance; it is central to how young people organise, debate and demand accountability.
- iv. Pan-African frameworks will remain distant from citizens unless they create practical opportunities for youth mobility, trade, skills and representation.
- v. High-level commitments require tracking systems that identify responsible institutions, timelines and measurable indicators.

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CONSOLIDATED PROCEEDINGS AND DELIBERATIONS

5.1. Opening Messages and Institutional Direction

The opening session framed the Symposium as a governance discussion, not simply a youth event. Messages were delivered by Hon. Laila Dahi, Chair of the Pan-African Parliament Youth Caucus; Mr. Ahmed Bening, Secretary General of the Pan-African Youth Union; Mr. Linton Mchunu, Senior Advisor to the Chief Executive Officer of AUDA-NEPAD; and Dr. Bernice Hlagala, Chief Director in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities. Their contributions connected youth engagement to democratic renewal, peacebuilding, economic opportunity and institutional responsiveness. The common message was that Africa's youth should be recognised as present-day governance actors, rather than future stakeholders waiting for eventual inclusion.



Ambassador Marie-Antoinette Rose-Quatre, Chief Executive Officer of the APRM Continental Secretariat, placed the Symposium within three institutional priorities: the 20th Anniversary of the African Youth Charter, the preparation of the AGR 2027 and the mainstreaming of youth participation in the APRM Strategic Plan 2025-2028. Her remarks moved the discussion beyond broad recognition of youth potential and towards the institutional responsibilities required to address unemployment, structural barriers and weak national youth institutions. Ambassador Rose-Quatre's intervention also linked youth participation to peace and democratic resilience. References to instability in Sudan, eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sahel located youth inclusion within the wider challenge of state legitimacy. The point was not only that young people should be heard, but that governance systems must deliver stability, opportunity and shared prosperity in contexts where young people are both affected by and responsive to crisis.



Hon. Inkosi Mzamo Buthelezi, Minister for the Public Service and Administration and APRM Focal Point of South Africa, reinforced this argument from a public administration perspective. He focused on youth access to policymaking, procurement systems and public administration, and presented co-creation as a practical requirement for responsive institutions. Hon. Chief Fortune Zephania Charumbira, President of the Pan-African Parliament, added a cautionary note, observing that with nearly 60% of Africa's population under 25, unstructured youth mobilisation can be captured by elite or military interests where democratic systems fail to create legitimate channels for leadership.



H.E. Vincent Angelin Meriton, Former Vice-President of the Republic of Seychelles, and Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Former Chairperson of the African Union Commission, widened the discussion by placing youth prosperity within an ethical and Pan-African frame. Prosperity was presented not only as economic growth, but also as justice, education, peace, environmental sustainability and public service. Dr. Dlamini-Zuma further connected youth empowerment to the African Youth Charter, Agenda 2063, the free movement agenda, the AU passport, food security, STEM education and direct engagement with executive and legislative institutions.

5.1.1. Analytical Assessment

The opening proceedings moved the Symposium beyond celebratory language. They made clear that youth inclusion has become a test of state capacity and democratic legitimacy. Where institutions offer visibility without influence, or commitments without implementation, participation risks becoming a source of frustration rather than confidence.

5.2. Youth Co-Governance and Institutional Reform



The deliberations drew a clear distinction between participation and influence. Participants acknowledged that young people are increasingly invited into formal spaces, but questioned whether those spaces shape decisions, budgets or implementation. This distinction gave the discussion its governance value: it shifted attention from representation to institutional consequence.

The Gen Z dialogue and plenary contributions gave this concern practical meaning. Mr. Ivor Ichikowitz, Chairman of the Ichikowitz Family Foundation, argued that Africa's transformation requires investment in youth leadership and in the continent's own intellectual and industrial capacity. Ms. Mpule Kgetsi, African Union Youth Ambassador for Peace for the Southern African region, and Ms. Sophy Nekoye Waliaula of the National Youth Council of Kenya highlighted the tension between youth expectations and institutional responsiveness, particularly where young people remain under-represented in governance structures despite being highly active in civic life.



The contribution from Madagascar brought the issue closer to daily service delivery. Participants heard how limited access to electricity, water and basic services constrains education, entrepreneurship and confidence in public institutions. This example reinforced a broader finding: youth anger often grows where governance failures affect daily life and institutions appear distant from citizens' immediate needs.

The Re-Engineering Africa's Now session then translated these concerns into practical proposals. Through interactive innovation labs, participants developed "Now Statements" on youth representation, a possible continental youth council, common policy language, rural investment, renewable energy, land access and formal working groups under APRM and the Pan-African Parliament. These proposals reflected a demand for youth participation to be structured and sustained, not occasional.

5.2.1. Outcome

Participants concluded that youth governance should be institutionalised through mechanisms that allow young people to influence policy design, planning, budgeting, implementation and oversight. Advisory bodies and consultations are useful only when they are linked to decision-making authority, measurable deliverables and reporting obligations.

5.3. Peace, Security and Democratic Accountability

Peace and security discussions treated young people as both affected populations and governance actors. Participants noted that formal institutions often underuse youth capacity in mediation, conflict prevention, early warning and community dialogue, even though young people are frequently first responders and organisers in fragile contexts.



Ambassador Welile Nhlapo, Senior Political Advisor at the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), delivered a guest lecture that placed current youth disillusionment within Africa's broader political evolution. He recalled the continent's movement from military-dominated politics towards democratic governance and referred to governance principles associated with the 1999 declaration on human rights, free elections, freedom of association and freedom of the press. His warning on unconstitutional changes of government and "soft coups" connected youth frustration to the weakening of democratic norms.

The lecture also raised a familiar implementation problem: continental decisions and declarations often do not translate into domestic action. This gap contributes to public apathy, especially among young people who see repeated commitments on governance, education, employment and accountability, but limited change in their lived experience.



Dr. McBride Nkhalamba, Acting Director of Governance and Specialised Reporting at the APRM Continental Secretariat, offered a more nuanced reading of youth unrest. He argued that youth mobilisation should not automatically be viewed as failure or disorder; in many cases, it reflects active citizenship and a demand for accountability. At the same time, participants emphasised that rights must be accompanied by responsibility, integrity and the skills required to participate constructively in governance.



The contributions of Ms. Lerai Rakoditsoe, Media Personality and Y20 Representative, and Mr. Emmanuel Muliisa of the National Governing Council of the Republic of Uganda highlighted two practical risks. Tokenism occurs when youth are present without influence. Leadership drift occurs when young leaders lose accountability to the constituencies they represent once they gain access to institutional privilege.

Young people have participated in dialogue platforms, reconciliation programmes, and cross-community initiatives aimed at reducing tensions and preventing violence.

5.3.1 Example of Best Practices :

a. African Union – African Youth Ambassadors for Peace (AYAP)

The African Union's African Youth Ambassadors for Peace (AYAP) initiative provides a continental platform for identifying and empowering young peacebuilders from Africa's five regions to champion conflict prevention, mediation, and peacebuilding. The programme demonstrates the value of institutionalising youth leadership within continental peace and security architecture while advancing the implementation of the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda.

b. Republic of Uganda – Institutionalised Youth Representation in Governance

Uganda has strengthened youth participation through constitutionally recognised youth councils, district youth structures, and youth representation in local government and Parliament. These institutional mechanisms provide young people with structured opportunities to influence governance, public policy, and peacebuilding processes, demonstrating how formal representation can enhance democratic participation and accountability.

c. Republic of Rwanda – Ndi Umunyarwanda Programme

Rwanda's Ndi Umunyarwanda ("I am Rwandan") programme promotes national unity, reconciliation, and social cohesion by engaging young people in civic education, dialogue, and peacebuilding initiatives. Through schools, communities, and national campaigns, the programme has fostered intergenerational dialogue, strengthened social cohesion, and contributed to sustainable peace following periods of conflict.

d. Republic of The Gambia – Youth Participation in Transitional Justice

During The Gambia's democratic transition, young people played a significant role in supporting the work of the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC). Youth organisations contributed to civic education, documentation, public awareness campaigns, and community dialogue, demonstrating how meaningful youth participation can strengthen transitional justice, reconciliation, and democratic governance.

e. Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) – Youth Peace Platforms

IGAD has established regional youth peace platforms across the Horn of Africa that support youth-led dialogue, mediation, and cross-border peacebuilding initiatives. By strengthening youth networks, promoting resilience, and addressing the root causes of conflict, the initiative illustrates the importance of regional cooperation in advancing the Youth, Peace and Security agenda and preventing violent extremism.

5.3.2. Outcome

Participants found that youth participation in peace and democratic accountability should be formalised through early warning systems, mediation platforms, civic education, parliamentary engagement and youth-led monitoring of governance commitments. Exclusion from these spaces weakens trust and can increase the appeal of disruptive or extra-institutional political expression.

5.4. Economic Transformation, Skills and Youth Investment

Economic transformation was treated as the material foundation of meaningful youth participation. Participants warned that young people cannot participate effectively in governance when unemployment, poverty, skills gaps, exclusion from procurement and lack of access to finance limit their ability to act as independent citizens and innovators.



Hon. Chief Charumbira linked youth inclusion to productive sectors such as agriculture, mining and the African Continental Free Trade Area. His intervention challenged programmes that create the appearance of empowerment without integrating young people into value chains, trade opportunities and resource-based industrialisation.



Dr. Dlamini-Zuma's emphasis on STEM, agriculture and industrialisation reinforced this direction. Her argument connected skills to sovereignty: Africa's ability to shape its future depends on whether young people are equipped to drive science, technology, food security, industrial production and regional integration. Education reform was therefore treated as both an economic and governance priority.



The high-level youth investment plenary added institutional examples. Konrad Adenauer-Stiftung, represented by Mr. Gregor Jaecke, Resident Representative and Head of the KAS Country Office, South Africa, highlighted leadership training, the School for Young Politicians, the Election Bridge Academy and the Parliamentary Scholarship Programme as mechanisms for building civic capacity. Y20 South Africa placed youth priorities within the G20 context, with attention to climate change, inclusive growth, artificial intelligence and digital innovation, youth engagement and social development.

The APRM Youth Perception Survey, presented by Ms. Karabo Chadzingwa-Mochebelele and Dr. Sampson Osei, both from the APRM Continental Secretariat, strengthened the evidence base for the discussion. The survey focused on demographic dividend investment, youth leadership across sectors and technology in e-governance. Preliminary insights indicated that young people view ICT skills as essential and see unemployment and marginalisation as drivers of social unrest.

Contributions from UNFPA, represented by Ms. Tamisayi Chinnengo on behalf of Ms. Won Young Hong, Deputy Regional Director for East and Southern Africa, and OIF, represented by H.E. Ms. Néfertiti Mushiya Tshibanda, Permanent Representative of the International Organisation of La Francophonie, broadened the discussion beyond employment figures. UNFPA placed young women's leadership, sexual and reproductive health, education and empowerment at the centre of youth investment. OIF highlighted digitalisation, innovation, entrepreneurship, youth networks across 32 countries, training in communication and web security, and a youth innovation competition that attracted approximately 2,000 applicants.

5.4.1. Outcome

Economic inclusion was identified as a precondition for democratic inclusion. The Symposium concluded that youth employment strategies should be linked to industrial policy, digital transformation, skills development, entrepreneurship support, procurement access and continental trade opportunities. Isolated youth projects will not be sufficient if they remain disconnected from national economic planning.

i. Republic of Mauritius- SME and Youth Entrepreneurship Support

The Republic of Mauritius has established dedicated small and medium enterprise (SME) support programmes that provide young entrepreneurs with business incubation, access to finance, enterprise development services, and market linkages. These initiatives have strengthened youth entrepreneurship, promoted innovation, and expanded youth participation in the formal economy, demonstrating how targeted government support can accelerate inclusive economic growth and job creation.

ii. Republic of Rwanda- YouthConnekt Africa Initiative

The Republic of Rwanda pioneered the YouthConnekt Africa Initiative, which connects young people to entrepreneurship opportunities, skills development, mentorship, finance, and employment. Through strong collaboration between government, the private sector, and development partners, the initiative has become a continental model for empowering youth, demonstrating how integrated partnerships can promote innovation, enterprise development, and sustainable livelihoods.

iii. African Development Bank Group- ENABLE Youth Programme

The African Development Bank Group's ENABLE Youth Programme equips young people with agribusiness skills, entrepreneurship training, and access to finance to create employment opportunities across agricultural value chains. The programme demonstrates the potential of youth-led agribusiness to drive economic transformation, strengthen food security, and reduce youth unemployment across Africa.

iv. Mastercard Foundation-Young Africa Works

Through the Young Africa Works strategy, the Mastercard Foundation partners with governments, financial institutions, educational institutions, and private sector actors to expand employment, entrepreneurship, and financial inclusion for young Africans. The initiative demonstrates how multi-sector partnerships can create sustainable work opportunities, particularly for young women and disadvantaged youth, while advancing inclusive economic development.

v. Google- Hustle Academy Africa

Google's Hustle Academy Africa provides young entrepreneurs and small business owners with business management training, digital skills, mentorship, and access to professional networks. The programme demonstrates how digital innovation and private sector investment can strengthen youth-led enterprises, improve business competitiveness, and support inclusive economic transformation in the digital economy.



5.5. Digital Governance, Communication and Information Integrity

Digital transformation emerged as one of the clearest areas where young people are already ahead of institutions. They are using social media, artificial intelligence, digital storytelling and online mobilisation to debate governance, expose failures and organise across borders. The question for institutions is whether their communication and accountability systems can adapt to this reality.



Mr Monde Twala, Senior Vice-President and General Manager, Paramount Africa, and Lead, BET International, placed African identity within the digital governance discussion. He questioned whether artificial intelligence reflects African languages, cultures and lived realities, and emphasised media platforms that address youth concerns, including mental health, suicide, online bullying and online safety. Technology was therefore linked not only to innovation, but also to dignity, protection and cultural agency.



The launch of the APRM Communicators' Network on Day Two gave institutional form to this discussion. Mr. Constantin Lebogo, Coordinator and Supervisor of Communication, Conferencing, Publications and Protocol Services at the APRM Continental Secretariat, explained that the Network is intended to improve communication among APRM structures, strengthen social media engagement, increase visibility, address misinformation and make APRM work more accessible to citizens. Ambassador Rose-Quatre linked this directly to the need to tell Africa's governance story with accuracy, confidence and relevance.



The communication panel added practical lessons. Ms. Susan Mwape, a Member of the APRM Communicators' Network and Former APRM Champion from the Republic of Zambia, stressed the need to simplify APRM language and combine digital outreach with face-to-face communication in rural communities. Mrs. Nanding Bachir Diallo, a Member of the APRM Communicators' Network from the Republic of Senegal, emphasised transparency, accountability and early responses



to misinformation. Mr. Fabrice Vianney Bekale Akendengue, a Member of the APRM Communicators' Network from the Republic of Gabon, highlighted the shift from top-down communication to interactive public engagement. Mr. Jules Neville Hoareau of Citizen Engagement Platform Seychelles and Mr. Frankline Kaburu, a Member of the APRM Communicators' Network from the Republic of Kenya, focused on the human, linguistic and cultural dimensions of communication.

The Q&A discussions confirmed that communication is not a technical afterthought. It affects whether citizens understand governance processes, whether young people trust institutions and whether misinformation fills the space left by weak public engagement.

5.5.1. Outcome

Participants concluded that communication and digital governance should be treated as core governance functions. Institutions that cannot communicate clearly, respond rapidly, engage in local languages and protect digital rights will struggle to build trust with young citizens.

i. YouLead Africa - Youth Leadership and Governance Initiative

YouLead Africa has established a continental youth leadership platform that equips young Africans with leadership skills, civic education, policy engagement, and entrepreneurship - opportunities while facilitating meaningful participation in African Union policy processes. Through partnerships with governments, regional economic communities, civil society organisations, and development partners, the initiative demonstrates how youth-led networks can strengthen democratic governance, accountability, and youth participation in decision-making across Africa.

ii. African Governance Architecture (AGA) - African Governance Architecture Youth Engagement Strategy

The African Governance Architecture (AGA) has advanced digital governance through initiatives that strengthen civic participation, digital rights, strategic communication, and information integrity across the continent. By promoting responsible digital citizenship, countering misinformation and disinformation, and supporting inclusive digital public participation, AGA demonstrates the importance of coordinated continental governance in safeguarding democratic processes and strengthening public trust in the digital age.

iii. Restless Development Africa – Youth-Led Accountability

Restless Development has supported youth-led accountability initiatives across several African countries by equipping young people with civic education, social accountability tools, and platforms to engage public institutions. Through evidence-based advocacy and citizen monitoring, the initiative demonstrates how organised youth participation can strengthen transparency, responsive governance, and public service delivery.

iv. West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) - Youth Early Warning and Peacebuilding

The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) has strengthened community-based peacebuilding by supporting youth participation in conflict prevention, early warning, mediation, and social cohesion initiatives across West Africa. Through collaboration with governments, regional institutions, and local communities, the initiative demonstrates the value of civil society in promoting peaceful governance and preventing violent conflict.

v. Code for Africa-Civic Technology and Information Integrity

Code for Africa has strengthened digital governance through civic technology, investigative journalism, fact-checking, and open data initiatives that enhance transparency and combat misinformation across the continent. By empowering citizens with credible information and digital tools, the initiative demonstrates how technology can improve accountability, information integrity, and democratic participation.

5.6. Social Inclusion, Well-being and Gender-Responsive Governance



The discussions avoided treating youth as a single category. Participants recognised that youth experiences are shaped by gender, geography, disability, language, education, employment status and access to services. This has direct policy implications: programmes that are not disaggregated risk benefiting those already closest to institutions.

UNFPA's contribution connected governance to young women's participation, sexual and reproductive health, education and economic empowerment. These issues are often treated as sectoral social policy questions. Still, the Symposium positioned them as governance matters because they determine whether young people, especially young women, can exercise voice and agency.

Mental health was also discussed as a governance issue. Media and youth contributors referred to suicide, online bullying, fatigue and the psychological burden of exclusion. These concerns show that youth well-being cannot be separated from systems that influence access to services, safety, dignity and community support.

H.E. Vincent Angelin Meriton, Former Vice-President of the Republic of Seychelles, framed governance as an expression of care. Public institutions are judged not only by the policies they adopt, but by whether they respond to citizens' lived realities. The example of the National Youth Council in Seychelles showed the value of structured engagement channels that connect youth concerns to government responses.

Prof. Adeoye O. Akinola, Associate Professor and Head of Research and Teaching at the Institute for Pan-African Thought and Conversation, broadened the conversation by emphasising education systems, traditional institutions, civil society, financial systems and research as part of the governance ecosystem. His contribution suggested that youth empowerment should not be limited to representation in political bodies; it also requires knowledge systems that prepare young people for public leadership and innovation.

5.6.1. Outcome

Participants found that inclusive youth governance requires disaggregated policy design, stronger attention to young women and marginalised groups, and recognition of well-being as part of institutional responsiveness. Youth participation frameworks should therefore be assessed not only by who is invited, but also by who remain excluded.

i. African Union – Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2016–2025)

The African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa has encouraged Member States to reform curricula by strengthening science, technology, innovation, digital skills, technical and vocational education, civic education, and inclusive learning. The strategy demonstrates the value of continental policy frameworks in modernising education systems and preparing young Africans for sustainable development.

ii. Republic of Botswana – Mental Health Integration into Primary Healthcare

The Republic of Botswana has integrated mental health services into primary healthcare, expanding community-based mental health care, awareness campaigns, and early intervention services. The initiative demonstrates how integrating mental health into public health systems improves well-being while reducing stigma and inequalities in access to healthcare.

iii. Drama for Life, University of the Witwatersrand (South Africa)- Arts for Healing and Social Inclusion

Drama for Life employs theatre, performance, music, and creative arts to promote mental health, social cohesion, disability inclusion, and community healing. Through partnerships with schools, communities, and public institutions, the programme demonstrates how creative expression can support psychosocial well-being while advancing inclusive governance and human dignity.

iv. Africa Down Syndrome Network- Disability Rights and Inclusion

The Africa Down Syndrome Network advocates for the rights, education, healthcare, and social inclusion of persons with Down syndrome across the continent. Through awareness campaigns, family support, and policy engagement, the network demonstrates how disability-led organisations can strengthen inclusive governance and equal access to public services.

v. The Global Alliance for Africa (Creative Arts for Mental Health Initiatives)

Across several African countries, community-based arts organisations have used music, theatre, poetry, dance, and visual arts to address mental health stigma, gender-based violence, and youth social exclusion. These initiatives demonstrate how cultural and creative industries can strengthen community healing, civic engagement, and psychosocial well-being while promoting social cohesion.

5.7. Pan-African Integration and Continental Solidarity



Pan-African identity was presented as both a political value and a practical development requirement. Dr. Dlamini-Zuma urged young people to understand continental unity as an active responsibility, linking it to the free movement protocol, the AU passport, food security, industrialisation and Africa's ability to act collectively in a changing global order.

The discussions on AfCFTA, mobility and youth economic participation showed that continental integration will not automatically benefit young people. Youth must be deliberately included in trade, entrepreneurship, skills mobility, manufacturing, digital markets and regional value chains. OIF's interventions demonstrated the value of regional and linguistic networks. Consultations with young Francophones identified concerns around education, digital entrepreneurship and political representation. In contrast, the inclusion of young representatives in high-level Francophonie processes showed how youth participation can be linked to institutional platforms.

The Symposium also highlighted the value of cross-border youth networks in peace and security, governance literacy and policy advocacy. These networks can help young people move from fragmented national advocacy towards coordinated continental influence.

i. African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) - Advancing Africa's Single Market

The African Continental Free Trade Area has established the world's largest free trade area by bringing together African Union Member States under a single continental market for goods and services. By promoting intra-African trade, industrialisation, regional value chains, and the free movement of investment, the Agreement demonstrates how economic integration can strengthen Africa's competitiveness, create employment opportunities, and accelerate the implementation of Agenda 2063.

ii. Africa Credit Rating Agency (AfCRA)

The APRM's Africa Credit Rating Agency seeks to strengthen Africa's financial sovereignty by providing independent, transparent, and context-specific sovereign credit assessments that better reflect the continent's economic realities and development trajectories. The initiative demonstrates how African-owned financial institutions can enhance investor confidence, reduce borrowing costs, and support sustainable development through more balanced and credible credit assessments.

iii. Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS)

The Pan-African Payment and Settlement System developed by the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) in partnership with the African Union and AfCFTA Secretariat, enables businesses and financial institutions to conduct cross-border transactions in local currencies. The initiative demonstrates how African financial innovation can reduce transaction costs, facilitate intra-African trade, and strengthen continental economic integration.

iv. African Union- Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM)

The Single African Air Transport Market seeks to liberalise air transport across Africa by improving connectivity, reducing travel costs, and facilitating the movement of people, goods, and services. The initiative demonstrates how transport integration can support regional trade, tourism, investment, and the broader objectives of African economic integration.

v. African Union- African Passport and Free Movement of Persons

The African Union's African Passport and Free Movement of Persons Initiative promotes the progressive removal of barriers to mobility across the continent by facilitating the movement of African citizens for work, business, education, and tourism. The initiative demonstrates how greater mobility can strengthen continental identity, regional cooperation, and socio-economic integration.

vi. African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank)- Intra-African Trade Promotion

The African Export-Import Bank has expanded access to trade finance, export development programmes, and industrial financing to support African businesses participating in intra-African trade. Through targeted financial instruments and support for regional value chains, the Bank demonstrates how African financial institutions can advance industrialisation and economic integration under the AfCFTA.

vii. All-Africa Students Union (AASU) – Pan-African Youth Solidarity

The All-Africa Students Union (AASU) has strengthened Pan-African solidarity by promoting student leadership, academic cooperation, civic engagement, and youth participation across African universities. Through continental dialogue and advocacy, the organisation demonstrates how youth-led networks can foster a shared African identity, strengthen democratic citizenship, and contribute to regional integration.

5.7.1. Outcome

Participants concluded that Pan-African integration must be made practical for young people through mobility, skills recognition, cross-border collaboration, trade access and participation in continental institutions. Without these linkages, continental frameworks risk remaining distant from the daily concerns of young Africans.

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CROSS-CUTTING FINDINGS AND
POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Finding	Policy Implication
Youth participation is more visible, but not yet consistently consequential.	Invitations to youth forums, panels and consultations have increased. The next step is to mainstream youth input to mandates, budgets, decisions and monitoring systems.
Youth disillusionment is a governance indicator.	Youth experiences with unemployment, weak service delivery, corruption, digital exclusion and limited civic space signal wider institutional performance gaps that affect trust in the state.
Implementation failure remains a recurring continental risk.	The gap between AU normative frameworks (AYC) and Member State domestic action weakens confidence in continental frameworks and reduces the ability of young people to use formal institutions as vehicles for change.
Economic transformation is central to democratic participation.	Young people require material pathways into employment, enterprise, procurement, productive sectors and digital markets if they are to participate as independent citizens and innovators.
Digital governance is now part of democratic infrastructure.	Information integrity, online safety, AI governance, digital literacy and access to platforms are now essential to participation and public trust.
Communication affects legitimacy.	Institutions that communicate in inaccessible language, or fail to respond to misinformation, widen the distance between governance processes and citizens.
Youth leadership requires access and ethics.	The Symposium supported youth entry into leadership spaces, while also warning against complacency, privilege and disconnection from constituencies once access is achieved.

Social inclusion requires disaggregated policy.	Youth policies must account for gender, geography, disability, language, income and access to services, otherwise they risk reproducing inequality within youth populations.
Pan-Africanism must produce practical opportunity.	AU flagship initiatives such as AFCFTA and youth networks should the Pan-African Youth Union must translate the Pan-African ideology into youth mobility, skills development, access to trade and opportunities across the Africa cross-border markets.
Tracking mechanisms are necessary for credibility.	Without indicators and reporting, the Symposium risks producing valuable dialogue without measurable institutional change. AGR 2027 and APRM structures provide practical platforms for monitoring youth development.

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CONSOLIDATED OUTCOMES

A clear governance outcome emerged from the proceedings: youth inclusion should be treated as a structural requirement for democratic legitimacy and development delivery. The discussion moved beyond general statements of youth potential and identified practical reforms needed to shift from symbolic inclusion to institutionalised co-governance.

This was closely linked to peace and security. Participants argued that youth engagement should be integrated into formal mechanisms, especially where exclusion, unconstitutional changes of government, service delivery failure and civic mobilisation are already placing pressure on democratic systems. The economic discussions produced another central outcome. Youth empowerment should be connected to the productive economy, with skills, entrepreneurship and innovation programmes linked to agriculture, mining, manufacturing, digital services, the creative economy, green industries and AfCFTA-related opportunities.

The launch of the APRM Communicators’ Network provided a practical institutional outcome. It creates a platform for improving governance literacy, addressing misinformation, strengthening public engagement and making APRM processes more accessible to youth and communities. The process also generated evidence and policy inputs for AGR 2027. The Youth Perception Survey, intergenerational dialogue, breakaway recommendations and interactive “Now Statements” should be consolidated into the report and used to inform AU and APRM policy processes.

Finally, the proceedings reaffirmed the relevance of the African Youth Charter as it approaches its 20th Anniversary. The Charter should be used not only as a normative instrument, but also as a basis for assessing domestic implementation, institutional accountability and the status of national youth governance systems.



The 5th APRM Youth Symposium

Recommendations



08

RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1. Institutionalise Youth Co-Governance

- i. Establish or strengthen youth participation mechanisms with clear legal or policy mandates, defined responsibilities and access to decision-making processes.
- ii. Link youth advisory structures to planning, budgeting, implementation and evaluation cycles, rather than limiting them to consultation or event-based engagement.
- iii. Ensure that youth representatives are selected through credible, inclusive and transparent processes that reflect gender, geography, disability and marginalised groups.
- iv. Use APRM National Programmes of Action and peer review follow-up to track reforms affecting youth participation and institutional responsiveness.

8.2. Strengthen Youth Peace, Security and Democratic Accountability

- i. Integrate youth into national and regional early warning, mediation, conflict prevention and civic education mechanisms.
- ii. Protect civic space and recognise peaceful youth mobilisation, digital advocacy and community organising as legitimate forms of democratic participation.
- iii. Strengthen youth-led monitoring of governance commitments, including those related to human rights, elections, public finance and service delivery.
- iv. Develop leadership programmes that combine governance skills with ethics, constitutionalism, accountability and public service values.

8.3. Align Youth Investment with Economic Transformation

- i. Connect youth employment strategies to national development plans, industrial policies, AfCFTA implementation and productive sectors, including agriculture, mining, manufacturing, renewable energy, digital services and the creative economy.
- ii. Expand access to procurement, finance, mentorship, markets and business development support for youth-owned enterprises.
- iii. Prioritise STEM, TVET, artificial intelligence, ICT, data skills and policy literacy within education and skills systems.
- iv. Use youth perception evidence to identify barriers to employment, entrepreneurship and leadership across sectors.

8.4. Deepen Digital Governance and Communication Reform

- i. Operationalise the APRM Communicators' Network as a platform for governance literacy, public trust and misinformation response.
- ii. Simplify APRM and governance language for public audiences, while expanding multilingual and localised communication approaches.
- iii. Strengthen digital rights, online safety, protection from cyberbullying and youth participation in AI governance.
- iv. Invest in digital platforms that allow youth feedback, public reporting, access to information and dialogue with institutions.

8.5. Advance Inclusive and Gender-Responsive Youth Governance

- i. Integrate gender, geography, disability, language and socio-economic status into youth policy design and monitoring.
- ii. Treat mental health, sexual and reproductive health, online safety and access to essential services as governance issues affecting youth agency.
- iii. Expand structured platforms for young women and marginalised youth to influence policy, implementation and accountability.
- iv. Strengthen education systems so that they prepare young people for civic participation, technological change, entrepreneurship and leadership.

8.6. Strengthen Pan-African Youth Integration

- i. Advance practical measures that support youth mobility, mutual recognition of qualifications and cross-border collaboration.
- ii. Integrate youth into AfCFTA-related strategies, including trade information, regional value chains, digital markets and entrepreneurship support.
- iii. Support continental youth networks as platforms for peer learning, policy advocacy, peacebuilding and accountability.
- iv. Use the 20th Anniversary of the African Youth Charter to renew commitments to ratification, domestication, implementation and reporting.

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING MATRIX – RESPONSIBLE AFRICAN UNION INSTITUTIONS

Suggested institutional responsibilities to complement the Implementation and Monitoring Matrix on page 28 of the 5th APRM Youth Symposium Outcome Report.

Priority Area	Proposed Action	Lead / Supporting African Union Institutions	Monitoring Indicator
Youth co-governance	Institutionalise meaningful youth participation in continental and national governance, including planning, budgeting and oversight.	AUC – Women, Gender and Youth Directorate (WGYD); APRM; Pan-African Parliament (PAP) and PAP Youth Caucus; RECs	Youth participation mechanisms institutionalised and evidence of youth inputs reflected in policies, budgets and decisions.
African Youth Charter	Accelerate ratification, domestication, implementation and reporting on the African Youth Charter, using the AYC@20 process to identify implementation gaps.	AUC-WGYD; APRM; PAP; African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC); RECs	Increased ratification/domestication and periodic Member State reporting on AYC implementation.
Peace, security and democratic governance	Mainstream youth participation in early warning, mediation, peacebuilding, elections and democratic governance processes.	AU Peace and Security Council (PSC); AUC Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS); APRM; African Governance Architecture (AGA); PAP; AU Youth Ambassadors for Peace	Youth representation in AU/REC peace and governance mechanisms and number of youth-led initiatives supported.
Economic transformation, employment and skills	Connect youth employment, entrepreneurship and skills programmes to AfCFTA implementation and productive sectors.	AUC Economic Development, Trade, Tourism, Industry and Minerals (ETTİM); AfCFTA Secretariat; AUDA-NEPAD; AUC Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (ESTI); RECs	Youth employment and enterprise measures incorporated into AfCFTA, skills and continental development programmes.
Digital governance and AI	Advance digital rights, AI literacy, online safety, digital inclusion and meaningful youth participation in digital governance.	AUC Infrastructure and Energy; AUC ESTI; APRM; AUDA-NEPAD; PAP; RECs	AU and Member State frameworks incorporate youth-focused digital rights, AI literacy and online participation measures.

Priority Area	Proposed Action	Lead / Supporting Actors	Monitoring Indicator
Communication	Operationalise the APRM Communicators' Network and simplify public communication.	APRM Secretariat; APRM communicators; national structures; media partners	Network workplan adopted; multilingual content produced; misinformation response mechanisms established.
Inclusion and well-being	Integrate gender, disability, geography, mental health and SRH into youth policy frameworks.	Member States; UNFPA; civil society; youth organisations	Disaggregated indicators included in youth policy monitoring and reporting.
Follow-up and accountability	Establish periodic reporting on implementation of the Symposium recommendations.	APRM; Member States; youth focal points; partners	Annual progress updates submitted to APRM or AU youth governance platforms.

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WAY FORWARD AND CONCLUSION

10.1. Way Forward

The APRM Continental Secretariat should consolidate the outcomes of the Symposium as a formal input into the AGR 2027. This should include the Youth Perception Survey, the intergenerational dialogue, communication discussions, partner contributions and recommendations generated through breakaway and interactive sessions.

To preserve momentum, a follow-up mechanism should be established through existing APRM and AU governance platforms. Periodic updates from APRM national structures, national youth councils and youth focal points would help keep the recommendations visible and connected to implementation. The APRM, the Pan-African Parliament and partners should also consider thematic working groups linked to the main outcomes of the Symposium. Areas could include youth co-governance, youth peace and security, economic transformation, digital governance and public communication.

The APRM Communicators' Network should be operationalised with a clear workplan. Its activities should support governance literacy, localised communication, youth engagement, misinformation response and stronger visibility of APRM processes.

African Union Member States should use the 20th Anniversary of the African Youth Charter to assess progress, renew political commitments and identify practical reforms. The anniversary should be treated not only as a commemorative moment, but as an opportunity to strengthen governance accountability.

10.2. Conclusion

The 5th APRM Youth Symposium reaffirmed that youth participation is no longer a peripheral development issue. It is a central measure of governance quality, institutional legitimacy and Africa's ability to deliver Agenda 2063.

The discussions were candid about persistent failures, including tokenistic inclusion, weak implementation, unemployment, inadequate service delivery, fragmented communication and limited follow-up. They were equally clear on the direction of reform: formal co-governance structures, stronger youth economic investment, digital rights, communication reform, inclusive policy design and practical Pan-African opportunities.

The value of the Symposium will depend on whether its recommendations are implemented. The immediate task is to convert dialogue into institutional action, align recommendations with existing APRM and AU processes, and ensure that young people are not only heard, but positioned to shape and monitor the decisions that affect their future.

Africa's youth are already organising, innovating and demanding accountability. The responsibility now rests with institutions to respond with seriousness, openness and measurable action.







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