

## Editorial

### It is time to take action!

“ Act quickly and efficiently! This should be the motto of the African Union’s Heads of State and Government while they are gathered in the Ethiopian capital. Africa needs a strong commitment from its leaders to turn the utterances about the demographic dividend into practical actions. The millions of Africans who live in the continent and aspire to a better life are facing political, economic, social, security challenges. Africa is currently experiencing an unprecedented rapid growth of its young population. Today, 63% of the population in West and Central Africa are under 24, representing about 250 million young people.

The demographic dividend is a real opportunity for the States and an appropriate strategy to rule out other possible but not desirable scenarios such as the persistence of unwanted pregnancies, illegal migration, endemic youth unemployment, the rise of violent extremism and all the other scourges holding back the continent.

There is hope because African leaders have seized the opportunity and agreed to focus on the means to harness the demographic dividend and make it a continental initiative. This requires strategic investments for youth in priority areas such as education and training, health, wealth generation and governance.

The Heads of State and Government of the continent are invited to take action and build a prosperous Africa grounded on shared values to achieve the continental vision in the Agenda 2063, “The Africa We Want”. This new Africa is possible. Let’s not only dream it but act to realize it!

# Investing in youth to harness demographic dividend



This is the theme of the 28th edition of the African Union Summit, which runs from 22 to 31 January 2017. The capital of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, will host during ten days high-level decision-makers, development partners, the civil society and the media. The African Union Summit provides a major opportunity to strengthen political dialogue and advocacy with African Heads of State to realize the demographic dividend in Africa. In support of the Executive Director and with backstopping from the Liaison Office, the UNFPA Regional Office for West and Central Africa through its Director is strongly involved in advocacy, policy dialogue and capacity-building activities to encourage countries to increase their investment in human capital, especially in the youth.



**Echoes of the Summit** 28<sup>TH</sup> SUMMIT OF THE HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF THE AFRICAN UNION

# Parliamentarians are committed to harnessing the demographic dividend

As part of the African Union Summit, the African Parliamentarians Forum on population and development held a meeting on Thursday, January 26, 2017 in partnership with the International Federation of Family Planning (IPPF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The purpose of the meeting was to promote the Dakar Declaration on the commitment of African parliamentarians to contribute to the implementation of the AU demographic dividend roadmap.

The African Parliamentarians Forum on population and development presented its action plan for the implementation of the roadmap of the African Union on the demographic dividend. The President of the African Parliamentarians Forum, Honorable Marie Rose Nguini Effa from Cameroon recalled that in November 2016 in Dakar, at the International Conference of Parliamentarians on the Demographic Dividend, African parliamentarians affirmed that it was high time to stop talking and start acting efficiently.

She reiterated the commitment of parliamentarians to undertake advocacy with Governments to support efforts toward achieving the demographic dividend. As one of the keynote speakers, Mr. Mabingué Ngom advocated in favor of the youth. *"With proper management and good investments, this young population can become the biggest asset of the region"*. The Regional Director appreciated the work of parliamentarians. *"Thanks to your support, targeted policies, appropriate budgetary allocation and efficient implementation programs will enhance the well-being and skills of young girls and boys"*, he argued.

For the Director of the Africa region of the International Federation for Family Planning (IPPF), Lucien Kouakou, the theme of the African Union Summit



Presidium of the opening session: from left to right the Representative of the Ethiopian Parliament, the Chair of the Forum of Parliamentarians, the Regional Director of UNFPA and the Regional Director of IPPF.



Mabingué Ngom, Director of the UNFPA Regional Office for West and Central Africa

2017, is an opportunity to raise their voices to require compliance with the commitment that will be made at the end of the meeting of the Heads of State. *"We will rely on African parlia-*

*mentarians to raise their voice so that the leaders can listen and act," he said. According to him, African Heads of State must take previous decisions regarding the development of young people out of the drawers and put them in the center of all programs, policies and projects for the development of Africa.*

**Echoes of the Summit** HARNESSING THE DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND IN AFRICA

# Journalists and communication experts support advocacy

After parliamentarians, religious leaders and the youth, it's the turn of journalists and other communications stakeholders to engage in supporting advocacy to harness the demographic dividend. This commitment was reaffirmed, on Thursday, 26 January 2017, during an interactive discussion on the demographic dividend with the media. This meeting organized by the UNFPA Regional Office for West and Central Africa with the support of the UNFPA Liaison Office, brought together 30 journalists, coming from Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Congo, Cameroon, Mauritania, Senegal and Ethiopia.

This session was facilitated by Mr. Mabingué Ngom, Regional Director of UNFPA in West and Central Africa, Ambassador Olawale Maiyegun, Director of the Department of Social Affairs of the African Union, Mr. Jacob Enoh Eben, Spokesperson of the President of the African Union Commission, Mr. Serge-Constant Bounda, Head of the UNFPA Liaison Office in Ethiopia and Mr. Samuel Kissi, Policy and Advocacy expert at the UNFPA Liaison Office.

The different interventions focused on the challenges related to population growth which puts a strong pressure on basic social services including health and education and the social demand being more and more urgent in particular with young people. For the Director of the of the Social Affairs Department of the African Union, the choice of the demographic dividend as the theme of the African Union Summit 2017 is an expression of the African Union's determination to consider the issue of youth as a priority.

The Spokesperson of the President of the African Union Commission talked about the initiatives implemented by the African Union Commission to communicate on the concept of demographic dividend. He invited journalists to own this concept in order to explain it in simple and accessible terms to the public.

In his response, the UNFPA WCARO Regional Director insisted on the importance of the information, education, advocacy, oversight and alert roles played by journalists. Reacting to the various interventions, on behalf of his media colleagues, Mr. Alassane Cissé, President of the Association of Journalists in Population and Development in Senegal, reaffirmed the commitment of journalists and communicators to assume their share of responsibility as development actors in this challenging process.



*Speech by Ambassador Olawale Maiyegun, Director of Social Affairs of the African Union.*



*Journalists from West and Central Africa are committed to advocate for harnessing the demographic dividend.*

## Words from

**MABINGUE NGOM, DIRECTOR OF THE UNFPA REGIONAL OFFICE FOR WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA**

**“The achievement of the SDGs and the realization of the Africa We Want mainly depend on the harnessing of the demographic dividend”.**

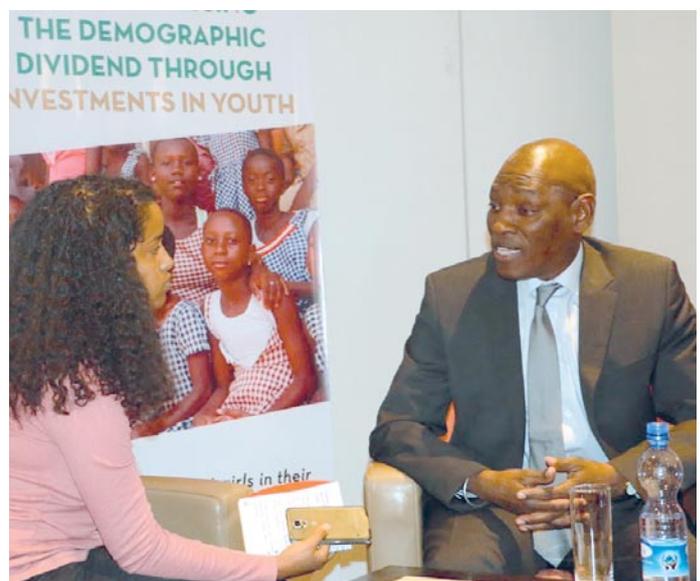
This is what the Director of the UNFPA Regional Office for West and Central Africa believes. For Mr. Mabingue Ngom, a moderate population growth will allow African leaders to invest in the youth and to address the needs in health, education and employment. Interview!

**Why do they say that a high population growth is an obstacle to the development of our countries?**

A very strong population growth causes additional needs in terms of education, including classrooms, teachers and other means that support education. This growth puts the same pressure in the health sector with regard to the additional needs in health coverage. The same applies to other sectors of development because every additional person in a household means additional needs. In countries where the population growth is strong, the State must make additional tax efforts to meet the additional needs of the population. We have countries where the needs are not well covered and services are of poor quality, therefore, it's hard to improve the coverage of services for countries with high rates of population growth. Also, the efforts of public authorities are not felt by the population. The best way to deal with this issue is to encourage a reduction in population growth. This will improve the coverage and quality of services. The same phenomenon applies to individuals, communities and families. The effect of strong population growth on the well-being of people and the contribution of communities to peace, security and stability are very often underestimated.

**You also mentioned the difficulties for African countries to follow a roadmap, can you define your main concerns related to the decision that will come out of this Summit of Heads of State regarding the demographic dividend?**

Unfortunately, as I often say, there was a roadmap in 2006, when the African Youth Charter was adopted, but there was no follow up. Actually, more than 10 years later, many countries have not still ratified the Charter. This means that we need to do better when it comes to the implementation of the decisions taken by the authorities at the continental



level. That is my major concern regarding the demographic dividend. My second concern is the ability to work together on large-scale programmes and focus on a limited number of high-impact interventions, in order to change the lives of people.

*The demographic profile allows us to avoid groping in dark and have data or evidence...*

**Regarding the demographic profile, how important will it be for each country to identify its needs in this dynamic of harnessing the demographic dividend?**

The demographics of a country is simply a photo that somehow describes the economic situation of the country, identifies the needs and the mainstays on which to rely on in order to harness the demographic dividend. This profile varies from one country to another. In some countries, it will be necessary to fight for an end of early marriage. In others, we will have to focus on voluntary family planning by providing more services, because the demand is high. Elsewhere, tough actions will be required in terms of job creation. The demographic profile allows us to avoid groping in dark and have data or evidence showing us where the scarce resources we have can have the most effect or serve as leverage for harnessing the demographic dividend.

## Advocacy

### A healthy and well-trained youth is a great opportunity for economic and social development.

To increase the quality of human capital, it is necessary to invest in the social and health sectors to eradicate avoidable maternal deaths, ensure that every child and every young person has access to education and that employment opportunities are created to address the radicalization of youth and violent extremism. Investment in population and youth is therefore the most profitable investment for Africa.

Africa is the fastest growing continent in the world - 2.6% per year over the period 2010-2015 - with the highest fertility rate.

This young population represents an economic growth and development potential that can contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the aspirations of "The Africa We Want" provided appropriate social policies are in place.

### It's high time to embrace the demographic dividend



Since 2000, most African countries have had dynamic economic growth rates, exceeding 5 percent. It is the rapid growth of the population that has mainly annihilated the efforts made by countries in key sectors such as education, training, health, and especially in the field of productive and decent jobs creation.

For this reason, in order to carry out effective economic policies, we need to take into account the demographic issue and multiply efforts to manage the demographic pressure. When households have less dependent children, breadwinners can invest more resources for each child. Households are also able to save more. If this extra savings is oriented towards productive investments in human and physical capital, it will help accelerate job creation and increase productivity and economic growth in general.

**A demographic dividend (DD)** is an acceleration of the economic growth that occurs when the proportion of the economically active population is higher than the number of people under or above working age. The creation and implementation of a demographic dividend is based on empowerment, education and employment, as well as an increase in savings and investment in productive categories.

### Demographic dividend is not automatic; it is the result of proactive policies

Demographic dividend is a development tool and a means to achieve resilience against the challenges of climate change, the rise of instability linked to terrorism, and the uncontrolled demographic dynamic of the continent. Taking into account the demographic variable is a strategic priority to achieve the changes expected by 2030 and even 2063.

Demographic dividend requires implementing mechanisms through:

- Development and reduction of dependency with the mobilization of a larger work force that will be more productive because being better equipped.
- Resilience and therefore improved governance of public and private institutions, including the family as the basic structure of society. So that "no one is left behind".
- Enlargement of the circle of stakeholders thanks to a powerful and targeted communication policy that will reach women, young people, religious leaders and the private sector
- Strategic, innovative and determined actions with the implementation of programs such as the "Sahel Women's empowerment and Demographic Dividend" (SWEDD) project, the project for accelerating the reduction of maternal, neonatal and infant mortality (French Muskoka Fund) or other joint programmes on early marriage and female genital mutilation abandonment.
- The availability of human, financial and institutional resources.

## They said

- **H.E. Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)**  
 “Investments to harness the demographic dividend which are based on human rights and create opportunities for all youth will generate the change towards a better future for Africa and the world”. @BabatundeUNFPA
- **Dr. Barack Dlamini-Zuma, President of the Commission of the African Union**  
 “In “Email from the future”, I highlighted the significant role that successive generations of young people can and must play in the development process of our continent. It’s essential to undertake key investments in the African youth today to implement the Agenda 2063 and to raise the continent to a strong and influential global actor”.
- **Dr. Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, Executive Director, New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)**  
 “Demographic dividend is a window of opportunities in Africa that needs to be capitalized. Now it’s high time to take decisions and strategic actions required to harness demographic dividend through increased investment and policy implementation.”
- **H.E. Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba Gabon**  
 “It’s an opportunity for me to pay tribute to our youth. I would like to tell them that they are the future of tomorrow. They should be aware that since now we are taking on commitment for them and we shall succeed with them”.
- **H.E. Ms. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf Liberia**  
 “... Creating a sustainable and peaceful social environment is directly linked to the way young women and men find their rightful place and opportunities offered to them”.
- **H.E. Mr. Mahamadou Issoufou Niger**  
 “Creating conditions conducive to demographic transition is another aspect of cultural revival. We must fundamentally change our behavior on this important issue ... our religion, Islam, is not an obstacle in our efforts to meet the demographic challenge”.
- **H.E. Mr. Muhammadu Buhari Nigeria**  
 “We recognize the importance of the youth in the national development and remain committed to harness the potential of the youth demographic explosion. We must take advantage of the amount and creative energy of young people in their majority in Nigeria and in the most of the other Member States.”
- **H.E. Mr. Macky Sall Senegal**  
 “Now we must open this vast project to allow Africa to develop other sources of economic growth by harnessing our major asset, which is the youth of our population.”
- **H.E. Mr. Idriss Déby Itno Chad**  
 “In order to harness demographic dividend, we need to implement bold interventions to manage fertility and population growth, to accelerate the demographic transition, economic growth and job creation”.

## Facts and figures

### Maternal mortality

Maternal mortality rates in West and Central Africa are amongst the highest in the world. Each year, there are 679 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in West and Central Africa. This rate varies between 17 and 198 maternal deaths per 100,000 births in other regions outside sub-Saharan Africa. This is mainly the result of poor access to quality health services that are able to support the obstetrical emergencies.

### Fertility

In sub-Saharan Africa, and especially in West and Central Africa, fertility remains high with respective synthetic fertility indexes of 4.9 and 5.5 children per woman. Regarding the fertility of adolescents, there are 128 live births per 1000 teenage girls aged of 15-19 years in West and Central Africa while in the other regions of the world like Europe & Central Asia there are 18 live births per 1,000 girls. This phenomenon is mainly due to early marriages, the low level of education of girls, the lack of access to quality reproductive health services, socio - cultural and economic factors, etc.

### Family planning

In West and Central Africa, the modern contraceptive prevalence rate remains one of the lowest in the world with a contraceptive prevalence of 13% against 27% for the whole of Africa and more than 50% for the other regions of the world. The acceleration of the demographic transition will be achieved through access to contraception methods that promote birth spacing and an effective strategy for reducing maternal and infant mortality.

## Pre-Summit on Gender

### “The active engagement of Ministers in charge of gender issues is crucial to achieving the demographic dividend”.

This was the strong call made by Mr. Constant-Serge Bounda, Head of the UNFPA Liaison Office to the African Union and the Economic Commission for Africa. He was speaking at the pre-Summit on gender which was held from 22 to 27 January 2017, in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, under the theme “Harness demographic dividend by investing in youth: empowering young people particularly young girls for leadership and civic participation”.

More than 300 participants, from different countries and different international, regional, national and civil society organizations, universities and media organizations took part in this meeting.

The Head of the UNFPA Liaison Office underlined the role women play in the transformation of society. However, he recognized the need to act in a co-



Speech by Mr. Constant-Serge Bounda, Head of the UNFPA Liaison Office, to the African Union and the Economic Commission for Africa.

herent and coordinated manner with Heads of State, First Ladies, civil society, the private sector and the develop-

ment partners, under the coordination of the Commission of the African Union.

## GENDER AND DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND

### Increase investment for the benefit of women and girls

Ms. Compaoré Zoungrana Cécile Marie, representative of UNFPA Mauritania spoke on “How to create the gender dividend in order to harness demographic dividend”.

“By investing in women's human capital, we can create the gender dividend and from there, the demographic dividend”, she said. According to her, the gender dividend helps to expand the effects of the economic dividend through increased investment in girls and women in the continent.

To achieve this, the decline in fertility should be pursued through access to sexual and reproductive health services, delaying the age of first birth, increase in access of girls to education, empowerment of women, facilitated access to remunerated work with better pay and improved access to quality health services. The representative of UNFPA



Representative Resident of UNFPA Mauritania, Mrs Cécile Compaoré Zoungrana, at the pre-summit on gender.

Mauritania recommended the implementation of integrated policies taking into account the social, economic and

cultural factors related to inequalities between men and women.



## Investing in young people

Newsletter of the 28<sup>th</sup> African Union Summit -  
UNFPA Regional Office for West  
and Central Africa

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### **PAGE LAYOUT**

Sidy Mohamed Diagne

### **PRINTING**

UNFPA Liaison/Addis Ababa Office