



"Youth growing with the Nation"



EUROPEAN UNION



Namibian Youth Conference Report on Sustainable Economic Development Opportunities for Youth in Namibia

**07 September 2017
Windhoek, Namibia**



1. Introduction and Background

The EU-Africa Summit of Heads of States and Governments is an event which takes place every three years alternatively in Africa and Europe. These Summits take stock of the progress made in the implementation of commitments made and provide political guidance for further work. The 5th EU-Africa Summit is scheduled to take place in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, on 28-29 November 2017 under the central theme 'Investment in Youth', which has become a key priority for Europe as well as Africa, in a context of African demographic trends creating major challenges for young people in terms of migration, security and employment.

In view of the upcoming 5th AU-EU Summit, the National Youth Council of Namibia (NYC) which is the coordinating body of youth organisations in the country in partnership with the Delegation of the European Union to Namibia initiated and spearheaded the hosting of a Youth Conference under the theme “Sustainable Economic Development Opportunities for Youth in Namibia”. The Conference was organized in close collaboration with Hanns Seidel Foundation, AIESEC, German Cooperation and the Franco-Namibian Cultural Centre. In order to identify the main theme and sub-themes of the Conference, the work that was done before was reviewed, for example, the report of the National Youth Development Seminar held in 2016.

The Conference took place on 7 September 2017 at the Franco-Namibian Cultural Centre in Windhoek where over 120 youth delegates from all walks of life, including representation from 10 of Namibia’s 13 regions, youth-led organisations, young entrepreneurs and the general public attended. The Conference was also attended by representatives from the EU Member States in Windhoek, Namibian senior government officials including the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Presidential Advisor on Youth Matters and Enterprise Development, senior officials of the National Youth Council of Namibia, the media, civil society and private sector also participated.

The aim of the conference was to bring together young people from a wide range of backgrounds to discuss their aspirations, challenges and recommendations on topics such as youth entrepreneurship, job creation and skills development. The Conference further aimed at ensuring that the ‘Voice of the Namibian Youth’ is heard and feeds into the 4th Africa-Europe Youth Summit to be held in October 2017 and ultimately the 5th AU-EU Summit in November 2017.

It is worth noting that at the time of the Conference, the twitter account created specifically for the event was the most tweeted account in the country. Similarly, the Facebook page for the Conference attracted over 500 likes and 504 followers which suggest that the total number of people who participated in the event physically and online was overwhelming. To ensure, the outcome of the Conference is utilised to the benefit of young people, this Report will be widely distributed in Namibia to inform national leaders and policymakers.

2. Overview of the Conference Programme

The Conference followed a three-pronged approach to ensure its objectives were met. These were: the official opening, a panel discussion, break-away group discussions and presentation followed

by closing remarks by the Country Director of the Hanns Seidel Foundation in Namibia, Dr Clemens von Doderer.

2.1. Highlights from the Official Opening

During the official opening session, statements were made by the EU and German Ambassadors to Namibia and the Executive Chairperson of the National Youth Council. The keynote address was delivered by Honourable Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation.

The Executive Chairperson of the National Youth Council of Namibia, Mr Mandela Kapere welcomed the participants and noted that promoting entrepreneurship and employability, which the Conference sought to achieve as an objective, presented the delegates with dynamic and potent mechanisms to prepare young people for the most monumental shifts in the nature and structure of employment relations anticipated to take place since the industrial revolution began in England more than 300 years ago. Mr Kapere further noted the digital revolution that has been occurring since the middle of the last century, which is characterized by a fusion of technologies is blurring the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres. He thus called for investment in the education, skills development, leadership capabilities and health of young people in view of the current open demographic window.

The EU Ambassador to Namibia, Her Excellency, Jana Hybaskova informed the conference about the paradigm shift in relations between the EU and Africa from traditional development cooperation towards increased engagement in trade and investment. She further emphasized EU support aims to bring about regional integration and intra-regional trade. Ambassador Hybaskova informed the conference about the support that the EU provides to Namibia, particularly in the Agriculture sector and through vocational training and urged the youth to familiarize themselves with training programmes such as the Erasmus Mundus Programme of the EU, which provides scholarship opportunities and exchange programmes. Similarly, she briefed the audience about the European External Investment Plan, recently launched by the EU that offers a wide range of possibilities to leverage additional private investment to finance viable projects. The EU Head of Delegation urged the youth to be innovative and to fully make use of technology to identify job opportunities in the market. In this respect, she added that the Tourism Sector and Renewable Energy still offers a lot of potential.

In his statement, His Excellency Christian-Matthias Schlaga, the German Ambassador to Namibia highlighted that in order to harness the "demographic dividend", huge investments are necessary. Without these investments into social infrastructure, the education of young people and the creation of jobs, the youth bulge will not be turned into an asset for the development of the country. German cooperation is supporting Namibia in some of these issues, for example through its technical cooperation programmes on Vocational Education and Training as well as Promotion of Competitiveness. The Ambassador thanked the Namibian Youth Organizations that have been active in conceptualizing and organizing the conference and welcomed that the EU-Africa Summit will not only be talking *about*, but also *with* young people. Finally, he encouraged the youth in Namibia to explore possibilities of ICT/Industry 4.0 and the chances these can bring to Namibia's

development, alluding to the positive development in Estonia, which, also a country with a small population, has consistently chosen digitalization and has gone on a positive development path.

The Namibian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Honourable Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah delivered the keynote address in which she underlined the need for a holistic approach towards youth development of which health education should be part of the efforts. She noted that "education is only one tool to escape poverty", albeit a very important one. Honourable Nandi-Ndaitwah called upon the young people to engage in agriculture. She further noted that more than half of Namibia's population lives in rural areas. It is therefore essential to identify and create job opportunities in the rural areas as this can be a good strategy to curb rural-urban migration. In the same vein, Honourable Ndaitwah reckoned that a productive agricultural sector can contribute to Namibia's goal to become self-sufficient in terms of food production for food security. This in turn will serve as a potential safety net for the country.



Panel Discussion and Q&A

Mr Alpheas Shindi
Senior Skills Development
Expert, NTA

Ms Daisry Mathias
Presidential Advisor on Youth
Matters and SME
Development

Ms Ilona Nkandi
Chief Economist Directorate of
Industrial Development

Ms Simonetta Musso
Journeys Namibia

Ms Hilda Nambili Liswani
Executive Coordinator at
Fiducia Strategic Advisors

Mr Norman Ndeuyeeka
Speaker of Namibia Youth
Parliament

2.2. Highlights from the Panel Discussion

A roundtable discussion composed of the Presidential Advisor on Youth Matters and Enterprise Development; senior officials from the Ministry of Industrialization, Trade and SME Development, the Namibian Training Authority, Speaker of the Namibian Youth Parliament as well as representatives from the private sector shared their expertise with the delegates.

The discussions were centred on existing provisions and available opportunities particularly in the field of vocational training, entrepreneurship and community tourism. The panelist noted the high unemployment rate, particularly among the youth in Namibia (43, 4%) according to the Namibia Labour Force Survey of 2016 as a cause for concern, as it creates social fragility. The Presidential Advisor on Youth Matters and Enterprise Development specifically highlighted the importance of inclusive economic growth and explained that the poor performance of the economy, especially during the past two years, and low growth in sectors such as agriculture, fisheries and retail can be linked to the increased unemployment figures.

As regards entrepreneurship, the panelists agreed that the country needed entrepreneurship but also reckoned that entrepreneurship is not the 'silver bullet', nor is it for everyone. The experts advised that it might be better to first gain some experience on the job before trying to set up a business. The lack of financial and business management skills has been identified as a big challenge in this respect while noting that it is not just enough to have a good business idea, one also need to know how to run a business. Much more needs to be done to overcome this situation by all stakeholders, be it by adjusting the curricula or by creating business mentoring and shadowing mechanisms, especially for young entrepreneurs, to name only a few possibilities.

Moreover, the panelists noted that if one wants to become an entrepreneur, they should think outside the box. Just to give an example in the tourism area in Windhoek: besides the Katutura tours, not much is on offer for tourists. Why not offer services in explaining the town / its museums as a guide? Experts further noted poor access to finance and lack of collateral was a problem for many young people who wants to start businesses. The Speaker of the Namibian Youth Parliament particularly noted that young and poor people might have good business ideas but may never get a loan as they cannot offer collateral securities to the bank. One also needs to take into account that many young people will already have debt obligations such as paying back study loans, making it even more difficult to obtain a loan.

Observations from the floor indicated that there is a lack of a service-oriented mentality and especially many coming out of university have too high expectations concerning salaries and what the job should entail. Delegates from the floor advised that a shift in attitudes is important and that one needs to be prepared to start from an entry level and do work, which may be considered as “below what you have studied for”.

Reacting to some observations from the floor, the Deputy Prime Minister expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to learn from 'the horse's mouth' about the challenges young people are facing on their road towards economic development. She informed the gathering that young people do not want to make their hands dirty anymore and as a result, they are not interested to work in agriculture as well as in other jobs, such as plumbing and alike. In support of the Deputy

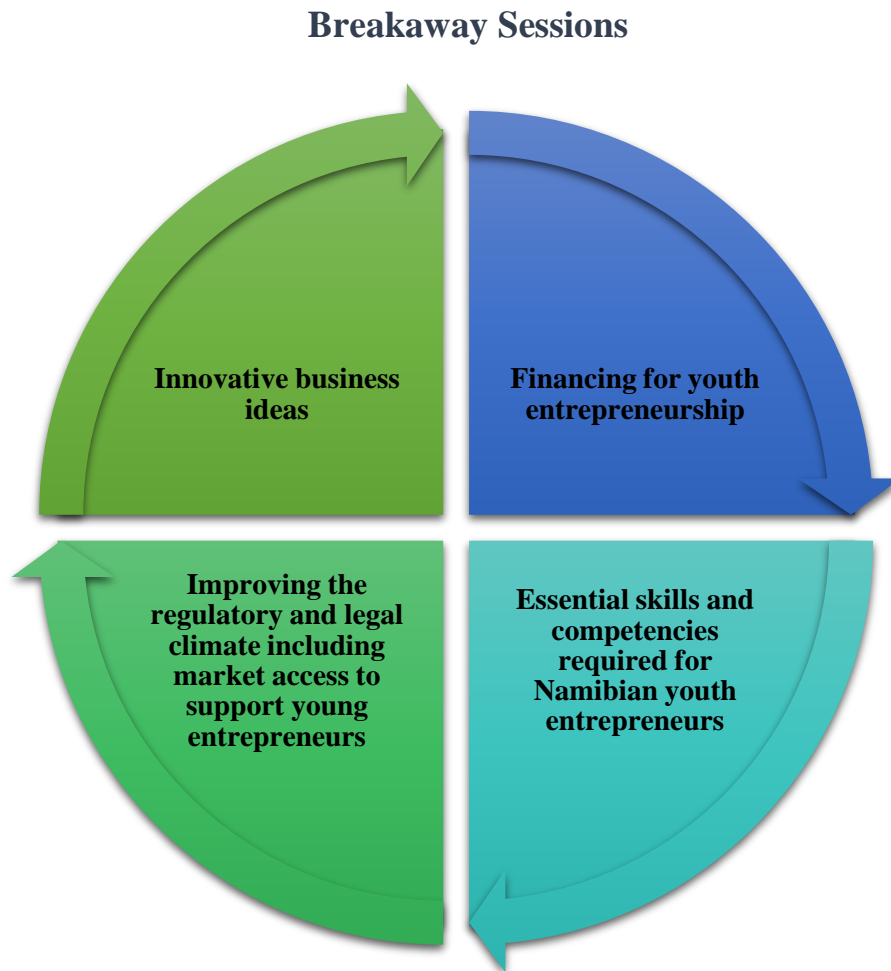
Prime Minister's sentiments, the NTA representative indicated that university education is not the only option to make a good living and therefore encouraged young people to consider vocational training as a mode of education like any other route. He further expressed the need for the government to put more efforts in the campaign for TVET. Likewise, the representative of the tourism industry urged the National Training Authority to be more open and register more private training providers.

The expert from the Ministry of Industrialization, Trade and SME Development informed participants of youth strategies in Namibia's 5th National Development Plan, the government's micro, small and medium enterprise policy and strategy, as well as the Student Entrepreneurship Programme. The Deputy Prime Minister informed the delegates about funding opportunities offered by the Namibian government through the Namibian Youth Credit Scheme under the Ministry of Sport, Youth and National Services and the 'Credit for Youth in Business' under the National Youth Council of Namibia. The panelists agreed that support strategies and programmes for the youth are fragmented and that young people are often not aware of existing programmes and support. With regard to the discussion on the need for infant industry protection for Namibian SMEs and advocacy for a "Namibia first" strategy by the Speaker of the Namibian Youth Parliament, the panel concluded that a successful Namibian would probably at one stage also want to sell on other markets. Delegates were therefore advised that thinking only local and not regional is shortsighted in the nowadays world and encouraged competition.



2.3. Overview of Breakaway Sessions

During the afternoon session the participants were grouped into four groups and discussed the following sub-themes in more depth:



Four parallel sessions were held to discuss and identify issues affecting young people in the areas of Financing for Youth Entrepreneurship; Essential Skills and competencies, improving the regulatory and legal climate; Innovative Business Ideas as well as making recommendations. Each group had a facilitator and was required to come up with some key recommendations, which were then reported upon during the plenary.

Specific Observations from the Sessions



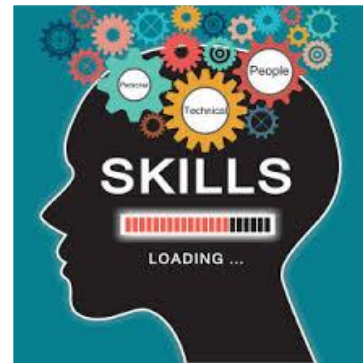
Financing for Youth Entrepreneurship

The group observed the importance of financial and business acumen while recognising lack of capacity among young people as one of the stumbling block between them and access to financing. The absence of dedicated fund for youth enterprise development as well as lack of collateral was also identified as major factors hindering youth to fully engage in entrepreneurship.

Also, lack of trust by investors and commercial financial institutions to finance youth –owned enterprises due to the risk perception attached was also observed.

Essential Skills and Competencies

In this group, skills and competencies were ‘unpacked’ and the following areas were highlighted as important: a) entrepreneurial skills, mentorship and incubation centres; re-skilling or continuously acquiring new skills and articulation between different training institutions.



Improving the regulatory and legal climate

This group observed the importance of training and retraining of civil servants. Civil servants should interact with people in the business industry so that regulations and policies correspond to the needs and changing environment. Human resources are one of the most important assets of a company/organization and entrepreneurs that are starting out need to be familiar with the labour law and apply it properly.



Innovative Business Ideas

Observations from this group included the acknowledgement of the beneficial role which local institutions such as the Namibia Business Innovation Institute (NBII) play in training, mentoring and providing business support to entrepreneurs. Additionally, the group observed the need to identify and capitalize on innovative business opportunities to come out of the very challenges that Namibian youths themselves face daily. The group also emphasized the importance of creating platforms for entrepreneurs to test and improve their products, ideas and services.



3. Conclusion and Recommendations

The Conference concluded that issues affecting the participation of young people in entrepreneurship are interrelated and in addressing such, a holistic approach needs to be identified. In other words, the presence of one and the absence of the other(s) does not lead to sustainable economic development of young people as far entrepreneurship is concerned. Thus, the Namibian Youth representatives are:

- ⊙ Calling on the Heads of States and Governments as well Ministries and Departments responsible for enterprise development, to create platforms for the youth to exchange knowledge, skills and experience on financing for young entrepreneurs including funding opportunities;
- ⊙ Calling on African Heads of States and Governments to expedite the establishment and adequate funding of Youth Funds at regional and national level to follow suit in the African Youth Fund as established by the African Union Commission in line with the declaration of the African Youth Charter;
- ⊙ Realizing the importance of crowdfunding as a potential source of funding, the Namibian youth calls for a legal framework to be developed in order to govern the operations of crowdfunding in the country and which will provide peace of mind to both donors and recipients;
- ⊙ Recognizing the importance of knowledge, skills and experience in financial and business acumen, the Namibian youth calls for States and Governments to invest in capacity building of young people in order to improve their financial understanding and business management through business shadowing and internship schemes;
- ⊙ Recognizing the challenges facing young people in start-up enterprises, the Namibian Youth call for the establishment of a dedicated monitoring and evaluation system to observe both positive and negative changes which can assist the government to respond to such changes effectively and efficiently;
- ⊙ Calling on States and Governments to accelerate marketing efforts aimed at changing the mindsets of young people and the society to recognise vocational training education as equally important as other formal education approaches;
- ⊙ Noting the challenges associated with the requirements for doing business in the country, the Namibian Youth calls for the States and Governments to develop and review existing legal frameworks including the creation of ‘one-stop-centre for business registration, administration and protection of business ideas to support young people to participate in economic development in a sustainable manner;
- ⊙ Recommending the inclusion of structural support and protection for locally produced goods (for example giving shelf space to products produced in Namibia in foreign-owned shops) and to create a youth-friendly loan scheme;

- ⊙ Requesting national and continental youth business development policy frameworks to place more emphasis on youth mentorship and coaching programmes for business development and these programmes should also be decentralized in order to be accessible to the youths throughout the country;
- ⊙ Urging that more platforms should be created where groups of youth can come together and discuss business ideas without the fear of it being stolen;
- ⊙ Advocating for innovative sources of funding mechanisms to be established in order to source the funds for innovative ideas of the youth and business start-ups; and
- ⊙ Promoting that teaching and learning on innovation be incorporated into primary and secondary level schooling across the country so that the youth are groomed and have entrepreneurial skills and mindsets from a very young age.

