

## Statement by the Chief Executive Officer of the National Youth Authority, Ghana

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The 1992 Constitution of Ghana has the vision of building a fair and equitable society where every citizen has the opportunity to live a long, productive and meaningful life. The Constitution is therefore set up to protect the fundamental rights of all citizens, irrespective of age, to enable them to take an active part in national development. This aspiration is the bedrock of the directives and principles of state policy.

Based on this vision, the Government has been pursuing socio-economic policies, programmes and projects in all sectors of the economy to advance the social, political and economic well-being of the people of Ghana. According to statistics, Ghana has made significant strides in terms of economic growth and improving the general living conditions of its citizens since the adoption of the Fourth Republican Constitution in 1992. There has been a significant reduction in poverty and unemployment, an improvement in school enrolment and progress with regard to infrastructure development, provision of utility services, health care delivery and social cohesion, among others.

In spite of these remarkable achievements, there are obvious indications of impediments preventing youth from exploring their potential and contributing actively to the national development process. Currently, national statistics show that the average youth unemployment rate is 8 per cent. Out of the total youth population of 9,698,576 (34.2 per cent of the national population), 63.5 per cent are economically active and 36.6 per cent are not in the labour market. The statistics also show that about 80 per cent of economically active youth are engaged in the informal economy, specifically in vulnerable employment. Many of these youth do not have access to health care, in particular mental and reproductive health services. The participation of youth in governance, decision-making and community development leaves much to be desired, as a result of cultural and structural barriers in this regard. This has culminated in lack of patriotism, low engagement, timidity and inexperience in governance and community development among youth. Young women and youth with disabilities are challenged by discrimination and inequities in the system, which leave them exposed to abuses, vulnerabilities and exclusion in the socio-economic development processes of the country.

These persisting challenges undoubtedly thwart efforts by Government and its partners to achieve the aspirations of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana for all citizens, including youth. The youth bulge in the national population is an advantage that should be harnessed for accelerated national development. This can occur when measures are put in place to create an environment for youth to develop healthy living

habits and to participate in economic development, governance and community development without any form of discrimination.

It is against this background that, the National Youth Authority, with technical support from the Commonwealth Secretariat, decided to produce this *Overview of Youth Development in Ghana*. The aim is to provide detailed information about the challenges facing youth, so as to enable policy-makers and development partners to take the necessary steps to bridge existing gaps.

It is my fervent hope that this document will serve as a baseline for state and non-state agencies to develop the policies, programmes and projects required to build capacities, generate a knowledge base, establish structures and create an environment for a more inclusive system for youth development.

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