

**Climate Smart Agriculture Youth Network (GCSAYN)
African Youth for the Sustainable Development Goals,
the official launch of the SDG Summit Dialogues on**

Friday, 10 February 2023, 9am EST

Greetings from the Department of Global Communication at the UN Headquarters in New York. I bring you a big hello from Maher Nasser, our director in the department's Outreach Division. Maher sends his regrets. He would have loved to be with you but has a previous conflict engagement.

So welcome everyone, my name is Hawa Diallo, and I am the Chief of the Civil Society Unit in the Department of Global Communications.

Thank you to the Climate Smart Agriculture Youth Network (GCSAYN) for inviting me to speak at this critical SDG Summit Dialogues launch. What I love most about GCSAYN is that it bridges the gap between young people in Africa and the SDGs. This is important for African development!

The year 2023 marks the mid-point of the SDGs implementation before the target year of 2030. With less than 10 years left, young people must have a global outlook and open mindset that allows them to look beyond their borders with empathy and a desire to help others.

According to recent reports, today, more than 60% of Africa's population is under the age of 25. By 2030, young Africans are expected to constitute 42% of global youth.

For policymakers, this is a challenge: more mouths to feed, more bodies to keep healthy, and millions of job seekers waiting in line. It is in our interest to speed up

real investment, especially in young Africans, to spark growth throughout the continent.

So, Africa's challenges are varied, complex, and very real. Namely, lack of quality education (2 out of 5 cannot read or write), poverty (rapid population exacerbating poverty levels), inadequate investment in sustainable agriculture, and significant social protection remain the major blocks to enhancing food availability. Poverty has also adversely affected many countries and compromised their ability to feed their citizens.

The efforts of networks such as the Climate Smart Agriculture Youth Network Global are commendable on youth education and empowerment for the SDG agenda, including training on the SDGs in several African countries; the translation of the SDGs into local languages; guidance of youth leaders as SDGs Goodwill Ambassadors and support for projects aimed at contributing to the achievement of the SDGs.

Here at the United Nations, the focus on youth is more vital than ever, and African youth stand to reap the benefits.

In 2021, the Our Common Agenda report was released, sharing the Secretary-General's vision of the future. While pressing for strengthened multilateralism, the unpacking of this report has led to rethinking how the UN should operate and engage with stakeholders. One significant outcome of this process has been the creation of a UN Youth Office. - What a milestone!

The establishment of the UN Youth Office was one of the most exciting developments during this year's General Assembly High-Level period that took place across the rooms of UN Headquarters in September last year. What has been gratifying is to see how the UN has engaged and consulted with youth

networks representing the various voices of young people, including those from Africa.

Creating the Office will allow the United Nations system to promote youth development and leadership worldwide. Again, Youth networks from various regions have had a say in the design and creation of the UN Youth Office. This is a milestone achievement!

I am personally proud of the work of the Civil Society Youth Representatives Steering Committee that is hosted in the Civil Society Unit in DGC. The committee comprises civil society youth leaders who actively advise and collaborate with DGC to bring meaningful initiatives. They also had several opportunities to make their voices heard during the consultations to support the creation of the UN Office.

The 2023 SDG Summit will mark the mid-way point toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda. So much has been completed, yet so much more needs to be done. Thus, the SDG Summit will serve as a reflection point for measuring progress toward implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.

Building on the 2023 SDG Summit, the Summit of the Future, planned for 2024, will focus on Multilateral Solutions for a Better Tomorrow. This high-level event aims to forge a new global consensus on our future and what we can do today to secure it.

The Summit of the Future will also further identify actions we can take to make sustainable progress toward implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Progress on the continent needs to be more balanced. We must help each other as we advance while identifying individuals and organizations to collaborate to co-create the future we envision. In saying this, what can you do to advance the cause of your continent?

Thank you for inviting me to speak today. I wish you the best for the remainder of the discussion.