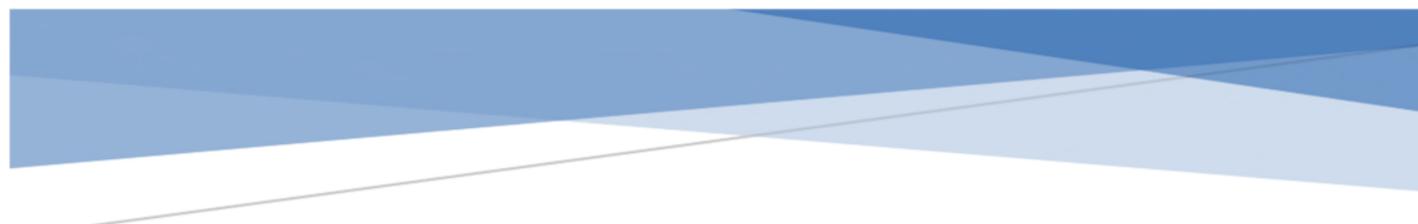


REPORT OF THE HIGH-LEVEL MINISTERIAL DIALOGUE ON HARNESSING THE DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND FOR AGENDA 2063



Sunday, 29 March 2015
United Nations Conference Center, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



1. Introduction

UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund), in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), held a high level ministerial dialogue with African Ministers in charge of planning, finance and economic development on the issue of harnessing Africa's potential demographic dividend on the 29th March 2015. This high level event occurred on the margins of the First Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration and the ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, which was devoted to the theme of *'Implementing Agenda 2063 - Planning, Mobilizing and Financing for Development'*.

Agenda 2063 is set to be Africa's blueprint for an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena. The vision, amongst others, is premised on the ability of Africa to harness one of its biggest assets - its youthful population, for the next 50 years. The returns are expected to be accelerated economic growth, induced by a change in the population structure and by the contribution of healthy, educated and skilled youth to economic growth as a result of their higher employment and increased incomes.

The high level event provided a platform to discuss practical ways and concrete investment policy choices that will support countries to create and harness the demographic dividend and contribute to achieving the aspirations of Agenda 2063. It offered the opportunity to exchange experiences, provide country perspectives, share insights and contribute to the debate on what it will take to realize Africa's demographic dividend towards Agenda 2063.

2. Attendance

The meeting was attended by African ministers, members of the diplomatic community, United Nations agencies in Africa, bilateral institutions, civil society organization and media

outlets. The event was moderated by Ms Dede Amanor-Wilks, a development specialist and journalist.

3. Opening session

Mr Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director of UNFPA, welcomed the ministers, their delegations and participants to the meeting. During his introductory remarks, Mr Osotimehin highlighted that Africa's population is set to be the youngest and this opportunity to gain so much economic and social progress may likely never occur again. He stressed that, to create the windows of opportunity that will lead to harnessing the demographic dividend, actions must be taken on three critical fronts: i) the need to make the right investments to enable the demographic transition; ii) the need to make these preparatory investments right now; and iii) the centrality of investing in adolescent girls and empowering women. Mr Osotimehin went on to show that investments are possible and cost effective and concluded with a call to work together to unleash the power of Africa's young people to build a better future.



UNFPA Executive Director, Mr Babatunde Osotimehin delivering his welcome remarks

Ms Takiwaa Manuh, on behalf of ECA, delivered the opening remarks. Through her speech, ECA welcomed the focus of the dialogue and commended the leadership of the African Union in ensuring that population issues have been accorded a ‘pride of place’ in Agenda 2063. She noted the unique factors that have the potential to impact significantly on the continent’s transformation prospects to become the next global growth pole. These include the continued robust growth rates being recorded, the wealth of natural resources and the massive urbanization process with its ensuing benefits of agglomeration.



Ms Takiwaa Manuh, ECA's Director of Social Development Policy Division

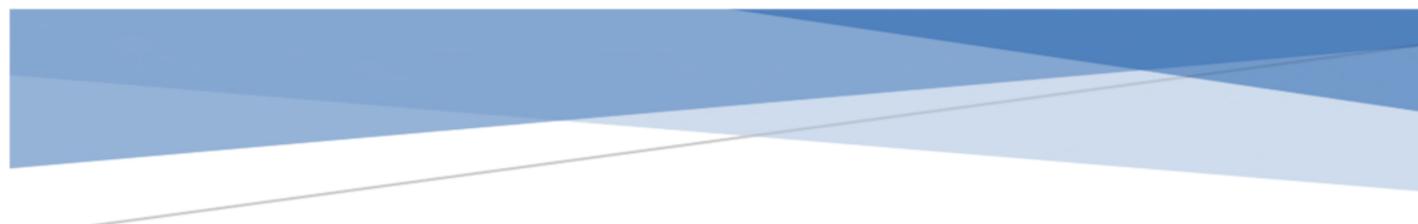
Ms Manuh, however, drew attention to the fact that despite these positives, Africans continue to live in dire poverty, facing high unemployment rates especially among the youth, high malnutrition among women and children, high maternal mortality, and low life expectancy at birth. In her concluding remarks, she stressed that if the demographic dividend is to be harnessed, Africa must take advantage of its population structure and its natural resources endowment to coordinate the expansion of investments in human development and social

protection to achieve sustainable higher levels of equitable and shared growth; employment creation; boost agriculture and food security; speed up the pace of regional integration; and enhance state and institutional capacities for improved economic and social governance. Central to these must be ensuring gender equality, building national statistical capacities and domestic resource mobilization.



(L-R) Ms. Takiwaa Manuh (ECA), Dr. René Kouassi (AUC), Mr. Babatunde Osotimehin (UNFPA), Ms. Dede Amanor-Wilks (moderator)

Finally, **Dr. René Kouassi, on behalf of the African Union Commission (AUC)**, delivered the keynote speech. He reaffirmed the importance of the implementation of the first 10-year framework of Agenda 2063 to carving out the path towards harnessing the demographic dividend in Africa. This was visible in one of the key aspirations of Agenda 2063, *“An Africa where development is people-driven, unleashing the potential of women and youth”*. Dr. Kouassi noted that changes in the age pyramid experienced throughout Africa can lead to



economic growth and specified that the main goals of demographic dividend are reflecting equality in treatment and poverty reduction and alleviation.

4. Presentation of demographic dividend opportunities and initiatives in Africa

Dr. Eliya Zulu delivered provided a continental overview of the demographic dividend prospects in Africa as well ongoing initiatives at national and subregional levels. He focused on the importance of recognizing Africa's population as the greatest resource worth investing in to realize Agenda 2063 and achieve long-term development strategies, especially in view of the fact that by 2063 Africa's youthful population is set to reach nearly 1 billion, which is more than double the current estimated size of 400 million. Dr. Zulu also paid special attention to Africa's rapid urbanization and showed that by 2032, Africa is likely to experience an urban/rural tipping point. However, he showed that currently, two thirds of Africa's urban population currently live in 'classified poverty', i.e. slum dwellings, thus creating new challenges and opportunities for health care and development.

Dr. Zulu identified child dependency burden, where high fertility rates lead to limited ability to accumulate household savings, investments, income, etc. and barriers to contraception and family planning as key challenges to harnessing the demographic dividend.

Dr. Zulu argued that African governments must simultaneously accelerate fertility decline, human capital development and job creation if they are to harness the dividends due from their changing population structures. He added that, to create the window of opportunity, immediate actions are needed to accelerate fertility and mortality decline, and these actions are:

- Reinforcing progress in reducing child mortality
- Enhancing education, particularly female school enrollment and general female empowerment; and

- Expanding access to effective family planning to reduce unplanned pregnancies and births.



Dr Eliya Zulu, Executive Director of African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP), delivering a presentation on ongoing demographic dividend initiatives in Africa

Following a comprehensive overview of initiative ongoing on the issue in Africa, Dr Zulu concluded by reiterating that whilst Africa can harness the dividend, much more needs to be done. He argued that governments needed to take the following actions:

- Make a conscious decision that the status quo is not acceptable and not sustainable – and mobilize citizens, government machinery, and private sector to act.
- Enhance investments in family planning, public health, and empowerment of women in order to accelerate decline in birth and death rates.
- Ensure universal access to quality and labour-market oriented education focused on developing innovation and economic skills, with particular focus on secondary and higher levels and closing all gender and related inequities.

- Adopt economic policies and reforms that help develop industries of comparative advantage to ensure creation of secure jobs and livelihoods, which will enhance savings and investments.
- Improve governance and accountable use of public resources, including laws that prevent exploitative use natural resources by foreign investors and local companies.

5. Ministerial Discussion

H.E. Dr. Kesetebirhan Admasu, Minister of Health, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, spoke to the critical importance of investing in health, particularly the health of women and adolescent girls, in order to successfully accelerate a demographic transition in the region. He emphasized the importance of health workers educating and closely working with local communities, particularly women, to empower those communities.



H.E. Dr. Kesetebirhan Admasu, Minister of Health, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Dr. Admasu outlined some of the means through which funds and resources can be mobilized and targeted to strengthen health systems and ensure specific, effective health investments in women and girls in Africa. “Having a health system that closely works with the community . . . to empower women . . . with a broader range of services . . . will expedite our process to this demographic dividend.” He highlighted successful development initiatives within Ethiopia’s health system, noting that “three years ahead of schedule Ethiopia has achieved its MDG goals.” This announcement was met with audible and visible support from fellow panelists and attendees.

H.E. Mrs. Mariam Mahamat Nour, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, Republic of Chad, addressed the challenge of African economies facing competing priorities and the often greater emphasis that is placed on infrastructural investments.



H.E. Mrs. Mariam Mahamat Nour, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, Republic of Chad

She spoke to how to ensure that policy priority areas like job creation and targeted investments in skill building and quality education, including for adolescent girls, are given the central focus in national development plans for inclusive economic growth and

sustainability. Mrs. Nour outlined the pertinence of the subject of demographic transition and investment in youth for Chad specifically, as currently two out of three Chadians are under age 25. Mrs. Nour also highlighted the importance of including the peace and security component(s) to the implementation of policies concerning women and family planning, stating “We have to have accompaniment measures.”

H.E. Mrs. Amina Billa, Minister of Budget, Burkina Faso, hailed the theme of the event, stating “*We are very happy to welcome this agenda.*” She outlined the important areas to address in order to move the demographic dividend initiative forward in terms of assessing the prospects of harnessing it through concrete investment priorities that can be adopted in other countries as part of a wider continental framework. “*We need to have a vision and we need to plan . . . we have to allocate the necessary resources to meet the expectations.*”



H.E. Mrs. Amina Billa, Minister of Budget, Burkina Faso

Mrs. Billa referenced Burkina Faso’s experience with development initiatives directly related to the investment in employment/jobs component of achieving the demographic dividend.

“In Burkina Faso . . . efforts are being made . . . [on] agriculture . . . we have land emphasis on agribusiness . . . It has all created jobsWe have a huge potential to create jobs.” She reiterated that, “Burkina Faso is in a very good position to highlight [the impact] of the demographic dividend for [other] countries.” She also addressed the importance of challenging certain social/cultural status quo by promoting women entrepreneurship in spite of the fact that certain prejudices exist stemming from certain customs/cultures that are rooted in patriarchal family structures.

H.E. Mr. Jeffrey Thamsanqa Radebe, Minister in the Presidency, South Africa, welcomed the collective effort to prioritize harnessing the demographic dividend for Africa and addressed the urgency and vitality of pursuing the initiative comprehensively and practically in order to accelerate transformative continental development. He encouraged that all of these issues must be considered during interactions with BRICS nations and others.



H.E. Mr. Jeffrey Thamsanqa Radebe, Minister in the Presidency, South Africa

Mr. Radebe called on all stakeholders to fully appreciate the urgency and timeliness of the issue, stating, *“On this demographic dividend, we dare not lose out....Let’s leave no stone*

untuned.” He identified key issue areas to focus on in order to fulfill necessary prerequisites to harness demographic dividend. *“Our number one priority is education, is job creation and also emphasizing the point of women’s empowerment.”* Mr. Radebe made reference to demographic dividend’s relevance to South Africa, a very youthful nation itself.

6. Interactive Dialogue

The ensuing dialogue between panel members, ministers, ambassadors, members of the international community and civil society networks, highlighted the following:

- Educational provision has to focus on quality, move beyond literacy and basics and ensure the employability of graduates.



Mr Babatunde Osotimehin discussing with ministers on the actions needed now to achieve the demographic transition

- The practical realities of employment prospects in most developing and developed economies must be recognized, along with the policy-level responses that are necessary to respond to and compensate for those realities. As such, creativity has to be incorporated in education, so that graduates have the potential to be entrepreneurs and to be independently employed.
- To prevent exclusion, Africa needs to utilize subnational (regional, district, community) data collection methods, not only national-level. Comprehensive, reflective data is not only necessary but can be more effectively gathered via more localized collection methods and procedures.
- The need to challenge the concept of culture if Africa is to move forward and achieve its broader development goals.



Ministerial delegations in attendance

- The need for restructured economies through a comprehensive mapping of the African markets to know the needs of the people, using the data revolution. That



knowledge will then inform investment orientation for local industrialization through the development of the local small and medium size enterprises, by ensuring that small economic operators can have access to financing with microfinance policies that convert existing resources in our central bank and abroad into development financing resources.

- The importance of a self-assisting and financially self-sufficient Africa. This requires a continental policy framework that is fundamentally rooted in promoting a financially self-sufficient, independent Africa. Thus, investment in agriculture and agribusiness are practical policy means of achieving this aim. This means increased investment in agriculture, as 60 percent of land [in Africa] is fertile, and an integrated effort among Africans to implement Agenda 2063.
- Going beyond promoting macroeconomic stability to also include institutions and services that address issues of health, food security, nutrition, immunization, and accessibility to resources like family planning, including ensuring sustainable financing mechanisms for these services beyond donor funding.
- Zambia underscored the urban/rural dynamics and highlighted the challenges of incentivizing high-skilled workers to move from urban to rural areas and on-the-ground challenge of translating policy deliberations and incentive measures towards ensuring education, access to health services, etc. is extended to both rural and urban populations.
- Sudan reflected the importance of integrating population issues into development programs and the integration of population issues into the educational curricula as a key aspect of high quality education investment.
- Senegal highlighted three key reform areas for Africa: agriculture as the key sector for growth; increasing access to land; and addressing the vulnerabilities of the informal employment sector.



Mr Pierre Ndiaye, Director General Planification et Politique Economique, Ministere de l'Economie du Finance et du Plan, Senegal

- The importance of capitalizing on public/private partnerships and the need to deploy resources toward valued investment in areas like infrastructure that can support the acceleration of the demographic dividend.
- The centrality of transformative education that addresses issues of social skills development, problem solving skills/peace and security.
- South Africa reinforced the issue of transformative education that provides basic needs and life skills, early childhood development, basic education that include life skills, include sexual reproductive education, secondary education that emphasize physics and math and technology and links school education to higher education to development imperatives and production sectors (skills required by our national and regional industries).
- The need for innovative financing mechanisms, especially working closer with African central banks, pension funds and use of remittances.

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- The importance and need of incorporating STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) capabilities in investment in education, development and employability of youth, particularly adolescent girls.
 - The importance of leveraging comparative advantages to have integrated systems of service provisions was highlighted, especially in light of the reality that women are over stretched, with limited free time. Thus it is important to bring services closer to them and possible options include the utilization of places often frequented by women on a daily basis like the marketplace, where information/knowledge of rights can be distributed, access to healthcare provisions can be made.

7. Conclusion

In closing, **Dr. Julitta Onabanjo, UNFPA Regional Director for East and Southern Africa**, thanked panelists and participants for their engagement and commitment to harnessing the demographic dividend. She emphasized her appreciation and enthusiasm for the commitment of UNFPA to harnessing demographic dividend for Agenda 2063. Dr. Onabanjo stressed that Africa must pay attention to the importance of movements within Africa and that “demographic dividend must be central to any transformative agenda we have for the continent.” She echoed the sentiments of speaking with a united African voice in the pursuit of the agenda at hand, stating, “investment must be integrated . . . to ensure that we can deliver on that demographic dividend”.

The event concluded with a strong call for African countries to act quickly because delivering the potential of the demographic dividend is time sensitive and requires urgent and immediate actions if African countries are to meet the development goals of Agenda 2063.



Mr Babatunde Osotimehin and Dr Julitta Onabanjo, UNFPA's Regional Director for East and Southern Africa interacting with the Burkina Faso delegation



UNFPA/ECA study on demographic dividend initiatives in Africa