Africa is a youth continent. Over 60% of Africa's population is made up of young people below 25 years and about 70% below 30 years. In spite of the numerical strength of the youth, they are largely marginalized in the political and governance processes of many African countries. Often times, they are regarded as a transitory social category driven by emotions and impulses and largely incapable of making informed political choices and decisions or 'matured' enough to govern. It is not surprising therefore that age qualification is one the criteria for contesting political office in many African countries. The implication is that a gerontocratic culture flourishes in which the average age of Africa's heads of state is around 62 years. As such, a generational disconnect exists between the majority of the population (made up of young people) and the rulers in Africa.

Youth disempowerment does not only manifest in the political realm, it is also profound in the economic and social spheres. Youth unemployment is high in many African countries averaging about 25-30% in most North African countries, which largely triggered the recent political uprisings in those countries. Youth friendly social services of health, education, sanitation, water supply etc are also in short supply in many African countries. This youth disadvantage mostly accounts for youth involvement in political conflicts and civil wars as they are vulnerable to the incentives of warfare through the plundery in a war economy.

The response of most governments to the youth question has been largely inadequate and uncoordinated. Most African governments dedicate ministries or departments to youth affairs treating the problem in a sectoral way. However, young people are not only recipients of development programmes but should also be active participants in the setting of development priorities and agendas. Recognizing the challenges and the potentials of African youth, the African Union in 2006 passed the African Youth Charter, a progressive framework for youth development and empowerment on the continent. Regrettably, the realization of this Charter remains a mirage.

This edition of the APCJ will address the youth question in a comprehensive and engaging way drawing on country and regional experiences by unraveling the background, issues, problems, and challenges militating against youth political, economic and social empowerment in Africa. It would address conceptual, theoretical and empirical issues on the youth problematic. Also, it would explore policy solutions and recommendations on the subject matter.
Papers should be 7,000 words maximum and be critical case studies and/or thematic discussions and analyses of topical governance, economic and security themes on the youth question. Book reviews should be 1,500 words maximum and briefings should be 2,000 words maximum, there will be a preference for reviews of decisive works that have influenced global thinking on African peace and conflict in the past thirty years. It is hoped that these reviews and briefings will serve to address the growing demand for research on the continent. Papers with a strong POLICY FOCUS will be given HIGH PRIORITY in this issue.

The aim of the APCJ is to make Africa’s voice on the pivotal issue of governance, peace and conflict on the continent heard, and to help ensure that the scholarly community in Africa engages with one another on issues relating to continental peace and security.

Papers, reviews and briefings can be submitted on a continuous basis, and will be peer reviewed. The focus will be on quality, originality and relevance and engagement with the scholarly literature on the topic addressed. All sources should be recognized and references provided in footnotes.

Articles must conform to the Guide for Contributors and may be submitted to editor@upeace.org and assted@upeace.org

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