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European Year of Youth 2022: EU adopts the first Youth Action Plan in EU External Action to strengthen engagement with young people worldwide

Strasbourg, 4 October 2022

Today, the Commission and the High Representative adopted the Youth Action Plan in the European Union external action for 2022-2027, the first-ever policy framework for a strategic partnership with young people around the world to build a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable future. It will help deliver on international commitments, such as the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Climate Agreement, by enhancing meaningful youth participation and empowerment in the EU's external action policies.

High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission Josep **Borrell** said: *"The world is home to the largest generation of young people in history. Sadly, 600 million young people live in conflict or fragile situations and about 264 million children and youth are out of school. These last years have also shown how youth bear the brunt of crises and instability caused by armed conflicts, rising inequalities and global challenges such as climate change, environmental degradation or the COVID-19 pandemic. It is our responsibility to ensure that youth have the tools and opportunities needed to fully develop and participate in everyday life. They are the adults of tomorrow, we must invest in their present and future."*

European Commission Vice-President for Democracy and Demography Dubravka **Šuica** said: "*With the world undergoing a demographic transition, the Youth Action Plan will be an important contribution to our pursuit of intergenerational solidarity and equity. We need to empower children and young people across the world, ensure that they have concrete opportunities and promote the effective engagement of young people and children as a right, ensuring no one is left behind. We share the collective responsibility to*

build more democratic, equal and peaceful societies, also for future generations."

Commissioner for International Partnership Jutta **Urpilainen** added: *"The Youth Action Plan lives up to our commitment to putting youth at the centre of the EU's external action for sustainable development, equality, and peace and giving them a real voice to shape the solutions for a better future. We have heard young people and will meaningfully engage, empower and connect with them while providing them with opportunities, starting with the Global Gateway Strategy, the EU's offer to partners for investments that work for people and the planet."*

The Youth Action Plan in EU External Action is guided by three pillars of action that will help shape the EU's partnership with young people in partner countries:

1. **partnership to engage**: increasing young people's voices in policy and decision-making;

Young people demand and deserve a comprehensive approach to ensure meaningful, inclusive and effective youth participation. The EU is committed to increasing the voice and leadership of young people worldwide, in particular young women and girls, youth activists and organisations, at all levels of governance, from domestic politics to multilateral forums, and within EU policy-making processes.

2. **partnership to empower**: fighting inequalities and providing young people with the skills and tools they need to thrive;

Young people are empowered when their voices are heard and the inequalities that affect their lives are tackled. The EU will continue its support to transform education worldwide not least through Global Gateway investments, to improve young people's access to economic opportunities, strengthening young people's capacity to contribute to sustainable development and drive the green and digital transitions across the world, and for young people's health, mental and physical well-being and access to sexual and reproductive health and rights. The EU will continue paying a particular attention to children and young people living in conflict settings.

3. **partnership to connect**: fostering opportunities for young people to network and exchange with their peers worldwide.
The EU aims to promote youth mobility, exchanges and networking as an essential aspect of the people-to-people dimension of the Global Gateway strategy. The goal is to ensure diversity and inclusiveness, while paying special attention to social and economic barriers, the digital divide and risks related to disinformation.

The Youth Action Plan in EU External Action will reinforce ongoing initiatives and launch new key initiatives targeting young people worldwide including:

- The **Youth and Women in Democracy Initiative** worth €40 million will increase the voice and leadership of young people, youth activists and youth-led organisations across the world, by strengthening their rights, empowerment, and participation in public and political affairs. The initiative will support grassroots organizations and young activists in the institutional oversight, anti-corruption, citizen election observation, democratic reform advocacy, civil education, promotion of the right to vote, freedom of association and assembly and human rights.

- The **Youth Empowerment Fund** is a new pilot initiative worth €10 million that will provide direct financial support to youth-led initiatives in partner countries focusing on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at local level, in particular on environment and climate change and the inclusion of vulnerable and marginalised youth.

- The **Africa-Europe Youth Academy** will channel financial support of €50 million to formal and informal learning opportunities and exchanges for young people willing to improve their leadership skills and create networks of change-makers in Africa.

The Youth Action Plan is part of the EU institutions efforts to mark the European Year of Youth 2022 and its international dimension, shining a light on the important role of young people in building a better future – greener, more inclusive and digital.

The Youth Action Plan is the result of extensive consultations with over 220 stakeholders across the world, in particular children's rights and youth organisations. It responds to the legitimate demand by young people, also

reflected in the outcomes of the Conference on the Future of Europe, to be involved in a more structured way in EU policy- and decision-making processes.

The Youth Action Plan strengthens the international dimension of the EU Youth Strategy and builds on the EU Strategy of the Rights of the Child.

It draws on the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy that stresses the need for equal, full and meaningful participation of young people in public and political life, and the European Pillar of Social Rights. Finally, it implements the EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III, by focusing on the empowerment of girls and young women.

A report on youth related indicators and its accompanying dataset by the Commission Joint Research Centre (JRC) contributes to the evidence-based approach to the Youth Action Plan. It offers a map of international data on youth across a series of main thematic areas and make recommendations to all stakeholders working on youth towards greater coherence.

The Youth Action Plan will also support the implementation of the UN Youth, Peace and Security Agenda and the role of young people in building lasting peace, contributing to justice and reconciliation and countering violent extremism.

Source: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/api/files/document/print/en/ip_22_5884/IP_22_5884_EN.pdf.

European Commission

Global Gateway: EU and US boost cooperation on green energy in Africa

Washington DC, 14 October 2022

The European Union and United States of America agreed today to increase their collaboration to boost sustainable energy in Sub-Saharan Africa, by unlocking more of the continent's abundant renewable power generation potential and improving local access to affordable green energy.

Commissioner for International Partnerships, Jutta **Urpilainen**, and USAID Administrator Samantha Power signed in Washington a renewed Memorandum of Understanding on closer EU–US cooperation that will allow joint promotion of projects such as the African Continental Power System Masterplan.

Commissioner for International Partnerships, Jutta **Urpilainen**, said: "*Under Global Gateway, we are boosting our cooperation with the US administration to build the strategic autonomy of our African partners, including by unlocking more opportunities to ensure affordable, reliable and sustainable energy. Together, we can electrify even more schools and health centres, and fight even more efficiently the inequalities linked to energy poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa*."

Increasing production and access to sustainable energy in Africa

The closer EU–US cooperation aims at supporting a just and green energy transition, reducing energy poverty, and increasing access to affordable, reliable and modern energy for all in Sub-Saharan Africa. By working together towards these common goals with their respective strengths, expertise and resources, the EU and US hope to boost their impact in increasing sustainable energy availability and access in Africa as part of poverty reduction, fostering inclusive and sustainable economic growth, and mitigating climate change.

The EU and US intend to coordinate efforts supporting projects in Sub-Saharan Africa at regional and national level in the following areas:

- Small-scale and off-grid power generation to increase access to renewable energy, including the electrification of health facilities and schools, women and youth-led businesses, and rural households.
- Energy storage, energy efficiency, and transmission line development.
- Empowering women in the power sector.
- Policy dialogue and regulatory reforms to improve the enabling environment, and institutional investments to leverage new sources of capital and drive investment.
- Knowledge sharing to maximise mutual technical assistance and the progress of reforms and capacity building activities.
- Specific flagship projects to further mobilise public resources and leverage private sector investments.

Nearly two out of three people in Sub-Saharan Africa do not have access to electricity, a serious limitation to accessing quality health care, education, and economic opportunities for up to 600 million people.

Under Global Gateway, the Africa–EU Green Energy Initiative aims to support Africa's green transition in the energy sector by supporting the deployment of renewable energy generation, ensuring access to affordable and reliable energy, promoting energy efficiency, and supporting market integration and sector reforms. The EU supports Africa's ambition by 2030 to increase the renewable energy generation capacity on the continent by at least 300,000 megawatts.

The first EU–US Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation on energy availability and access in Sub-Saharan Africa was signed in 2015. Coordinated by USAID, the Power Africa Presidential Initiative aims to leverage private and public sector partnerships to double access to electricity in Sub-Saharan Africa, adding at least 30,000 megawatts of new, cleaner electrical power generation capacity, 60 million electrical connections, and 5 000 kilometres of new transmission lines by 2030.

The European Union and United States of America are working together in the G7 context of the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investments (PGII).

Source: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/api/files/document/print/en/ip_22_6083/IP_22_6083_EN.pdf.



Aviation: Landmark EU–ASEAN agreement to connect 1.1 billion people

Bali, 17 October 2022

Today, the European Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)[1] signed a comprehensive air transport agreement that will open up more air transport opportunities and enhance direct connectivity between the two regions, while upgrading rules and standards for concerned flights. The agreement will apply immediately. By setting global benchmarks that commit all 37 countries in the two regions to fair competition and to improving social and environmental conditions, it is the latest example of a new generation of international air transport agreements. The signing means new opportunities for consumers, airlines and airports both in Europe and in ASEAN countries.

Commissioner for Transport Adina **Vălean** said: *"This first-ever 'bloc-to-bloc' air transport agreement brings the EU–ASEAN aviation partnership to a new level. It will support the aviation sector's recovery after COVID-19 and restore much-needed connectivity to the benefit of some 1.1 billion people, enabling greater business, trade, tourism and people-to-people exchanges. It replaces more than 140 bilateral air services agreements, providing a single set of rules and reducing red tape. It also gives us a new platform to work jointly towards our shared commitment to economically, socially and environmentally sustainable aviation."*

Stronger connectivity and level playing field

ASEAN is a global economic powerhouse with a fast-growing aviation market. In 2019, it was the EU's 9th largest market for freight and the 16th largest for passengers with more than 8 million travellers. Introducing a modern framework for air services between Europe and Asia, which opens up opportunities while ensuring high standards is therefore an investment in the future.

[1] ASEAN members: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Today's agreement provides for a level playing field and is expected to bring about new air transport opportunities and economic benefits for both sides:

- It replaces more than 140 bilateral air services agreements, thereby providing a single set of rules and reducing red tape. EU Members States without any bilateral agreements with ASEAN States are now also covered by a modern legal framework.
- All EU airlines will be able to operate direct flights from any airport in the EU to all airports in ASEAN States, and vice versa for ASEAN airlines. This will help EU and ASEAN airlines to compete with competitors targeting the lucrative EU-ASEAN market.
- Airlines will be able to fly up to 14 weekly passenger services to or from each EU Member State, and any number of cargo services via and beyond the two regions, to any third country (‘fifth freedom traffic rights').
- The agreement includes modern and fair competition provisions to address market distortions.

Both parties also recognised the importance of environmental and social matters, agreed to cooperate on them and to improve their respective social and labour laws and policies.

In 2016, the Commission obtained authorisation from the Council to negotiate an EU-level aviation agreement with ASEAN. Negotiations were finalised in June 2021.

Similar EU comprehensive air transport agreements have been signed with other partner countries, namely the United States, Canada, Qatar, the Western Balkans, Morocco, Georgia, Jordan, Moldova, Israel, Ukraine and Armenia.

The agreement starts to apply from today's signature. As a next step, the parties will launch the ratification process in line with their respective procedures to bring the agreement in force.

Source: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/api/files/document/print/en/ip_22_6126/IP_22_6126_EN.pdf.