



Association of African Students in Austria

Call for Participants

Deadline 17th October 2014

International Youth Conference – Youth in Diaspora, a means to support development

22-24 October 2014 – Vienna, Austria



Organised by Association of African Students in Austria (VAS Austria) in collaboration with United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the partnership of Austrian Development Agency (ADA)
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1. Background on VAS Austria

The Association of African Students in Austria (VAS Austria) is an association created and registered in April 2012 in order to bring together African students to share ideas as well as map out solutions to certain challenges faced by students. VAS Austria is open to all African students and currently comprises 70 members from 18 African countries.

African students studying abroad often face serious challenges bordering on networking and the language of the host country as with most European countries where English might not be the first language. The facility of **integration** during the study period is thus important, not just for the completion of one's studies but to apply similar methods back in Africa as well as keep up good relations with the host country when the student finally returns to his or her home country. VAS committed to further **strengthening the interregional and global youth cooperation** and the impacts of its activities.



The Association has organized a number of projects and conducted conferences on the topic of **networking, capacity building and partnership**. In October 2013, for example, VAS organized a round table at which ten African ambassadors and entrepreneurs have come together for an international dialogue. The aim was to bring African students, African Ambassadors and African entrepreneurs closer together. Additionally VAS organized several workshops regarding the development of cooperation and transfer of knowledge with various NGOs.

VAS' mission is to create a suitable environment for academic success, to promote African culture and to encourage entrepreneurship and solidarity for a positive change.

VAS is an impartial, non-political and non-profit organisation. To achieve the above mentioned objectives, the organization has, ever since its creation, carried out activities in the following areas:

- Social field, solidarity and growth (Accommodation project, language courses project)
- Promotion of Integration; Cultural exchange and Partnership (Round table/Vision project)
- Information, Communication with Universities and local Governments
- Organization of events, trainings and seminars (Wake Up project)

VAS Austria is an association that aims to actively participate and contribute to the sustainable development of our societies. The establishment of this association is expected to bring value to the political support as well as to strengthen the impact of the work of the young African Diaspora.

2. Background on the International Youth Conference

The International Youth Conference is the first of its kind to be held in Europe and is aimed at addressing the needs and concerns raised by members of VAS and African Youth in Diaspora organizations across Europe. It is also a response to the African Youth Charter which refers in particular to the “call of Bamako (2005) by the youth organization across Africa to empower youth by building their capacity, leadership, responsibilities and providing access to information such that they can take up their rightful place as active agents in decision-making and governance.”¹

Regarding African youth, the International Labor Organization (ILO) stated that: “There is a lack of platforms and spaces for youth to voice and participate in national decision-making regarding their needs and interests in employment.”²

VAS Austria is dedicated to about coordinating development projects regarding the youth in Africa and in this regard, creating a platform that will bring together African students living abroad for discussion, exchange of information and taking part in policy making.

Hence the Model African Union project (MAU) proposes to support youth in developing their skills, competencies, and networking through a platform and a simulation session organized every two years. The first session will be held from 22-24 October, 2014 in Vienna.

The Conference creates a platform where African students in Austria and even in other European countries can acquire knowledge, develop their skills and have the opportunity of meeting and discussing issues of international development with students and important stakeholders from different parts of the world. Another interest is to participate in the online platform of student association in Europe.

Moreover, in order to answer to the priorities of the VAS Austria this International Youth Conference aims to:

¹ AU African Youth Charter, http://www.au.int/en/sites/default/files/AFRICAN_YOUTH_CHARTER.pdf, consulted the 20.07.2014

² ILO Africa's Response to the Youth Employment Crisis - Regional Report March - May 2012, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---africa/documents/publication/wcms_184325.pdf, p.8, consulted the 20.07.2014

- Promote the **empowerment** of young people;
- **Strengthen youth's capacity** to share information and to get involved in the national and international organizations, governance, and much more;
- Facilitate **exchange** between young Africans and other young as well as experts.

This program implemented by VAS Austria includes activities such as:

- **Four panel discussions** with the following titles: “Creation of decent jobs and development of ideas”, Industrialization: Cluster and Business Linkages”, “Financial environment: Difficulties in financing projects in Africa”, “Developing a sustainable cooperation with the youth and Diaspora”, “Youth in the development of strategies of the African-European cooperation” and “Peace and policy making”;
- **Four training courses** for youth and training opportunities for African Diaspora concerning entrepreneurship, coordinate projects and negotiation techniques;
- **Model African Union simulation session** with focus on the means to strengthen development, in particular the creation of decent jobs for youth in Africa for sustainable development;
- **Formulation of a joint declaration** at the end of the conference;
- Meeting experts and youth to transfer knowledge, to establish contacts and get to know how to work together in **reaching goals** in developing countries.

During the Conference, participants will develop competences to strengthen the role they play with regard to national and international cooperation and to develop the capacity of their organizations as active actors of sustainable development, peace and integration. Participants will exchange experiences and strategies to empower the youth community of African Diaspora and also to empower actions developed to achieve a positive change in their communities on a local as well as on a global level.

The focus of this Conference will be on the development of skills for youth leaders and their organization of projects and organizational management concerning capacity building, networking and coordinating projects to contribute to the fulfilment of their role as active decision makers.

Furthermore, the course is a unique moment of practical experiences for all the participants to gain knowledge to build future African leaders.



3. Background on UNIDO

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) is the specialized agency of the United Nations that supports industrial development for poverty reduction, inclusive globalization and environment sustainability in developing countries and economies in transition.

The Organization draws on four mutually reinforcing categories of services: technical cooperation, analytical and policy advisory services, standard setting and compliance, and a convening function for knowledge transfer and networking.³

UNIDO's vision is a world where economic development is inclusive and sustainable and economic progress is equitable. The Organization focuses on three main thematic areas:

- Poverty reduction through productive activities,
- Trade capacity-building,
- Energy and environment.

Recognizing that foreign direct investment (FDI) plays a vital role in generating sustainable economic growth for the achievement of development goals, UNIDO launched a Regional Programme on Investment Promotion in Africa. By bringing together successful UNIDO programs and innovative ICT solutions, the Programme assists African countries to better leverage FDI for significant human capital formation, transfer of technologies, international trade integration and enhanced enterprise development. UNIDO envisages that the implementation of the Regional Program will complement the efforts of African governments to drive industrial development, promote domestic investment for competitive growth and build partnerships between public and private stakeholders for sustainable investment policies implementation.⁴

4. Aims of the Conference

The Conference aims to:

- **Strengthen the role of young people**, particularly youth workers **from the African Diaspora**, which take active part in youth organizations, groups or movements.
- **Empower and promote the capacity, leadership and responsibilities to organize, take action and foster their political participation** in their communities, and take up the rightful place as active agents in decision-making and governance.

³ UNIDO, <http://www.unido.org/en/who-we-are/unido-in-brief.html> , consulted the 07.08.2014

⁴ I.D.E.A. Newsletter – Issue 1 – December 2009, http://www.unido.org/fileadmin/user_media/Publications/Newsletters/IDEA_11_2009.pdf , consulted the 07.08.2014

5. Objectives of the Conference

The concrete objectives of the Conference are to enable participants:

- To develop a **common understanding** of the situations, challenges and advancements faced by young people from the African Diaspora living in Europe;
- To grasp **knowledge of the role of Diasporas in development** and in this order engaging Diasporas as development partners;
- **To build capacity** of multipliers from youth leaders from the African Diaspora in youth/civil society organizations in Europe with the necessary competences to better manage their projects and organizations, develop their network and strengthen youth participation;
- To **cooperate in a network** with other participants and experts from the African Youth, Youth in general and other important stakeholders in Austria and other European countries;
- To get acquainted with different tools for **coordinating projects and international dialogue** amongst important stakeholders for African development;
- To live through an intercultural experience with the opportunity to develop expertise and know-how on intercultural learning.

6. Expected Results

The expected result from this Conference would be:

- To **build future African leaders** and others that will strengthen integration among Africans, promote good governance, enhance peace and security, and spur growth and prosperity across Africa as well as its European counterparts;
- They will get an insight into AU diplomatic work, **improve their negotiation skills, become a better team-worker and leader and make practical use of their knowledge**;
- An **online platform** of students associations will be established to meet and stay in touch with youth from all around the world, and contribute to the richness of Africa's cultural diversity;
- The long term results consist in developing partnership and continuous training of youth to be good entrepreneurs and active actors of development which will lead to an atmosphere of **sustainable development, peace and integration**.

7. Profile of Participants

The participants in this Conference are representatives of **African Students in Austria, African Student Organisations in Europe, Students in general, youth, Diaspora Organisations, development NGOs, Development Organisations** and are working / interested to work directly with African Diaspora youth. The Conference is open for residents of all member-states of all continents.

Concerning participants and their profile:

- Should be from African origin or working/interested to work directly with the African Diaspora youth community, or playing an active role within a youth organization, network or service at local, national or regional level, and plan to continue this work in the near future;
- Should have any other origin working or interested to work directly with the African Diaspora youth community;
- Aged between 18 and 35;
- Have already some qualification or experience in terms of international youth work and project management;
- Be committed to attend the full duration of the course and be supported by a youth organisation or service;
- Be able to work and communicate in English;

The selection process will take into consideration organisational, gender and geographic balance.

8. Logistics

The VAS Austria will **do its best to fully cover the international travel** costs of African participants from Europe. Selected participants will receive an invitation to participate in which the conditions for travel reimbursement will be outlined.

Local transfers between the Vienna International Airport and the central train station have to be organized by you. We will give you all the necessary information.

Board and lodging will be assured by the organizers for the entire duration of the Conference (including breakfast and dinner).

It is expected that participants / organization support the **expenses related with local transports in the home country and transit**.

9. Conference Fee

The Conference will have a participation fee of **25€ (twenty-five euros)**, which will be paid during the Conference.

10. Deadline for Applications

All candidates fulfilling the criteria and interested to participate should send the enclosed Application Form to corinne@vas-oesterreich.at and to office@vas-oesterreich.at by **the 17th October 2014**.

All applicants should receive a **confirmation email of reception of documents** as soon as possible after the deadline. If you do not receive it please contact us.

Deadline for submission: 17th October 2014
Application sent after deadline will not be considered

