#YouLead22: Africa's biggest youth gathering

By Grace Abaho - Essayist and Creative writer - You Lead Alumnus 2017 -2019.

The YouLead Africa Summit 2022 is here and **applications calling for delegates** are already rolling; have you applied yet? It is not yet late but as they often say, the early bird catches the worm. YouLead Summit, convened annually by the Secretary-General of the East African Community, in collaboration with MS Training Centre for Development Cooperation, and other partners, now marks the second time since going Africa (initially covering the countries of the East African bloc but now going yonder to all the 22 African countries, since 2021). Since inception in 2017, the Summit has always been the annual climax event of YouLead's work - bringing together over 300 young leaders and policy makers in a physical gathering in Arusha, Tanzania, and virtually on zoom and other platforms, as of last year, there were 11,704 virtual attendees, across Africa and the rest of the world.

The youth are the future of Africa; Africa – we move it! Mr. Ivan Atuyambe - YouLead Africa Director, Head of Leadership and Governance Academy at MS Training Centre for Development Cooperation (MS TCDC), also the YouLead founder and Director, while speaking at last year's summit was crystal clear : "Young people do not only form the biggest population of Africa and the world, they are an asset. But again, population that is unskilled and unemployed can be a demographic curse; so this is the challenge, but the opportunity is in us trying to convert this demographic dividend into opportunities because the richness of nations is not in stones but in its people. " As leaders and policy makers, this begs the question: towards what shall we orient our lives?

While YouLead Summit cannot give all the answers to the never ending questions on harnessing the youth potential, evidently the biggest in numbers by a wide margin, but it offers a big platform to youth and policy makers alike, to discuss and find solutions under the two major pillars of YouLead: youth in business and youth in Leadership.

H.E Jakaya M Kikwete, Former President of the Republic of Tanzania and the current YouLead Patron, while speaking last year's Summit, under the theme - The Future of Africa - challenged

Delegates and all African leaders to mobilize local resources to boost education on the Continent by reducing donor dependency and tapping into sustainable domestic funding, but also ensuring that investment into education policies and services results into relevant skilled for creating solutions and having positive impact. “It is important to ensure that Africa’s youth population is skilled and trained adequately, to take full advantage of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Only then will the continent holistically achieve Agenda 2063,” he emphatically noted.

The YouLead22 journey is already begun is closer to home; the Summit Director and founder, Ivan Atuyambe, is very optimistic this is going to be the biggest Summit since inception. ‘While it is the second time the Summit is going Africa, it is the first time we have the African Union’s Peer Review Mechanism as an official convening partner – Africa we move it!,” Ivan mentions with joy. He adds, “For the first time, the summit is open to all registered and accredited delegates. In the past, we have always limited access to 300 delegates that we sponsor; now the sky is no longer the limit.” Be part of the YouLead experience, head out to youlead.africa and find your way home.