



CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

1st Annual Debate: Youth and Political Decision-Making in Africa

Deadline: 27 February 2017

Organized by the Alumni Network of the Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS)

"The youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow" -- Nelson Mandela

Executive summary

Engaging young people in politics is critical to the safeguarding and strengthening of democracy worldwide. With an estimated 1.2 billion people aged 15–24 on the planet, justice and democratic legitimacy demand more than a token youth presence in parliament. People between the ages of 20 and 44 make up 57 per cent of the world's voting age population but only 26 per cent of the world's MPs.¹ In addition, the presence of young people in political positions can change attitudes, eroding stereotypes about readiness or fitness to lead, while also encouraging young people to see politics as an arena open to their participation.

Two seemingly contradictory trends in youth engagement can currently be observed. The first, considered a sign of political indifference, is that young people tend to be less engaged than older generations in voting, party membership, volunteer work and participation in group activity. The second trend concerns the active role young people have played in democracy movements around the world. Youth mobilization has been critical to a host of anti-government protests and the emergence of new democratic regimes, thus in turn, youth asking to be part of the political decision making process. During the Arab Spring for example, young people marched on the streets and used the Internet, including social networking sites, to reach domestic and international audiences.

Debates on youth participation in politics have traditionally focused more on young people's role as voters and activists than on their election to political office. But as with gender equality – where the increased participation of women benefits society as a whole – the presence of young people in elected positions benefits all citizens and not just youth. This being a crucial point, the UN Security Council Resolution 2250 states, in the first ever resolution² regarding youth, that the youth should be actively engaged in shaping lasting peace and contributing to justice and reconciliation, as they represent a unique demographic dividend that can contribute to lasting peace and prosperity if inclusive policies were put in place.

¹ <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/>

² Security Council, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2250 (2015), Urges Member States to Increase Representation of Youth in Decision-Making at All Levels, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc12149.doc.htm>



Therefore, these factors coming into play, the IPSS Alumni Network is organizing its first annual debate under the theme “**Youth Participation in Political Decision-Making in Africa**”.

Application guidelines

- Youth applicants between the ages of 18-35 are welcome to participate.
- Applicants should submit a 300-word abstract on the theme “Youth in political decision-making in Africa” by 27 February 2017.
- Shortlisted applicants will be contacted for a preliminary training and assessment session on 13 March. Applicants located outside Addis Ababa, Ethiopia will be interviewed via Skype.
- The organizers will announce the teams on 20 March and preparations for the debate will be held on 21 March.
- The final debate will be held on 31 March in Addis Ababa (location TBD).

Debate procedure

After the preliminary training and assessment session on 13 March, each team, consisting of three individuals, will answer two essay questions based on a set of thematic questions or a case study; one supporting the topic and the other against. Each team will be assigned to a supervisor who will support the team on basic structure and formatting. The teams will debate one side of the argument based on their submitted essays and through the use of other sources of information. The floor will then open for a Q&A session for further discussion and clarification. After examining the essays and verbal arguments, independent evaluators will grade each team and announce the final winner.

Reward

- The winning team will have the opportunity to participate in the upcoming Tana High-Level Forum on Security in Africa on 22-23 April 2017 (Accommodation and flights to Bahir Dar, Ethiopia will be covered).
- They will also have the opportunity to publish their essay in the upcoming AfSol (African Solutions) book series, IPSS website as well as other IPSS web platforms.
- A certificate of participation on behalf of the IPSS Alumni Network will be given to all participants.

Timetable

13 February	Call for Applications
27 February	Deadline for submission of Abstracts
13 March	Shortlisted applicants’ announcement and interview
20 March	Debate team categorized and announced
21 March	Preparation for debate for applicants
30 March	Debate

Contact

For questions and to submit abstracts, please contact alumni@ipss-addis.org.