

Speaking Notes from Comrade Mandela Kapere, Executive Chairperson of the National Youth Council of Namibia

Party Political Dialogue for Socialist and Democratic Parties in Europe and Africa.

**Youth and Inequality: What must be done?**

**Introduction.**

1. While appreciating the presentation and the great deal of detail and work that has gone into it, I request through you madam chair the liberty to focus my responses on what I think are major emerging trends that will influence the work of democratic and socialist parties in Europe and Africa as it relates to youth in the future.
2. It is my firm view that in Africa at least the voting demographic is becoming younger, radicalized and disenchanted with formal political structures. We must find new ways to engage younger voters by actively seeking to understand them, craft policy that are sensitive and attune to their realities and by creating spaces through which we can connect with them. The consequences of not doing so are existential for liberation movements especially.

**The trends.**

1. **The Changing nature of work.** Industry 4.0 is a German concept attributed to the emergence of the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution, following on the trend established in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, which saw the rapid mechanization of work and required unlearning of old skills and learning of newer skills sets. Similarly, the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution will require a massive reorientation of necessary skills and will require the current impulse towards vocational skilling to be reviewed in many ways. For example, with the emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI), robotics, self-driving cars Nanobiotechnology and the internet of things, we are seeing a shift away from the real physical world to less interactive world affecting everything from how we shop, work, learn to transportation and how we interact.  
Considering the world youth unemployment crisis many important policy questions arise around the nature of work and the future of skills. Another important considerations that our education systems must prepare youth to be multi-skilled, possessing a wide array of off intellectual, physical and emotional abilities, to compensate for 2<sup>nd</sup> way in which work is changing. With the significant influence of technology, we have also seen the emergence of what is called the gig economy. In today's world of work more and more jobs are limited and shorter in duration. Whereas our parent used to perhaps work for one or two companies their entire life, if they were lucky to get a stable job, they may have had a fixed pension, healthcare plans etc. In today's world younger workers may have to shift several times from one organisation to another, working three or four jobs at a given time selling their labor and know how, instead of being permanently employed as it were.
2. **Lowering voting age.** It goes without saying that progressive parties the world over need to court younger voters to stay alive. In Africa we have seen a growing disenfranchisement of the post liberation generation of youth from the history and politics of our struggles. Today's youth are

detached, disenchanted and disillusioned with “liberationism” in many ways. They do not feel the emotional bonds to liberation movements as perhaps their parents or the first generations after independence did. The causes of this discord are many and deserve a platform of their own to interrogate but what is clear is that the sentimentalism of the past will not be able to win us votes in future. The numbers are mixed, in countries like Namibia and South Africa we see higher number of younger voters at the polls, in fact in Namibia the number of young voters now constitute almost 50% of the total electorate. In more advanced democracies younger voters vote infrequently and vote depending on the policy issues at play in a particular election cycle. It is also a mammoth challenge to get young voters to register to vote. To compensate for this disillusionment and wedge between younger voters and society, many societies are looking at lowering the voting age. Lower voting age is also becoming a significant youth development agenda on the international stage. It is important that democratic and socialist parties make youth engagement strategies part of their key party policy outlook.

3. **Radicalization of Youth Perspectives.** #Fees must fall, orange revolution, Arab spring, affirmative repositioning and other “hashtag movements” have given rise to a more vocal, more radicalized voice to the challenge of political exclusion that youth claim. The lack of internal party platforms for youth engagement and inability of internal youth structures to effectively influence policy at national level have given rise to the view that youth leagues, merely placate youth discontent rather being organs that have the ability and capability to influence policy.

A strange paradox is also emerging, in that youth have become more disengaged from formal political structures and more engaged in radical social movements that often use the internet as a platform to engage and vent frustrations. While attempts are being made to formally create structures for youth engagements the continent over, such as youth parliaments, youth councils and so forth, again as is in the instance of youth leagues these are often dismissed as tokenistic and without power to influence. The internet has also become a breeding ground for radical movements of all kinds, where grooming of often angry, disillusioned and the disenchanted young people takes place. Movements like ISIS, Boko Haram and Al Qaeda are all known for such grooming tendencies.

4. **Youth Demographic Explosion.** As is widely reported and addressed significantly in Dr Rutaremwa presentation Africa youth population is expected to increase exponentially, requiring shift toward youth centered planning and programming. The AU has dedicated the decade from 2018 to 2029 as the decade of youth in line with this emerging trend. Many countries are not sufficiently investing in youth services and programs such as education and health, employment and civic participation which may result in a deadweight effect on society.