



MOMBASA DECLARATION 2025

MOMBASA DECLARATION AT THE 2ND SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON QUALITY SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND APPRENTICESHIP UNDER THE THEME ‘TRANSFORMING APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEMS IN THE INFORMAL ECONOMY FOR YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY IN AFRICA’ HELD IN KENYA, FROM 14 – 16TH MAY, 2025

Preamble:

We, the SASASNET members, representatives of Governments and government agencies, African Union Agencies, United Nations Agencies, non-governmental organizations, informal sector, social partners, youth organizations, development partners and other stakeholders, have gathered in Mombasa, Kenya, under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the Kenya Skills Community of Practice (KSCOP) and the Sub-Saharan Africa Skills and Apprenticeship Stakeholders Network (SASASNET), from 14th - 16th May 2025, to explore ways of advancing and implementing actions and commitments on transitioning skills development and apprenticeships from the informal to formal economic systems.

RECALLING:

1. The African Union Agenda 2063, with its commitment to “Africa’s youth as agents of change” and skills as a pillar of inclusive development;
2. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 on quality education and lifelong learning and Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth;
3. The ILO Recommendations No. 204 and No. 208, which provide guidance on transitioning from informal to formal economies and advancing quality apprenticeships, respectively;
4. AU/ILO Youth Employment Strategy (YES-Africa) which commits to transforming the world of work to create decent jobs and opportunities for African youth.
5. The Continental TVET Strategy for Africa and the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF) as foundational instruments for harmonizing and scaling skills across the continent;
6. The UNESCO Global Strategy on TVET and the Mahe process aimed at strengthening TVET policies, systems and practices within the African continent and beyond;
7. The African Development Bank (AfDB) Group Ten-Year Strategy 2024-2033 where Human Capital Development is one of the key pillars of the Strategy implementation framework in member countries;
8. The UNIDO contribution in advancing inclusive and sustainable industrial development and apprenticeship (ISID), as reaffirmed by the Lima Declaration (2013) and the Abu Dhabi Declaration (2019, through skills development and apprenticeship initiatives that are aligned with industrial value chains, to support Member States, particularly through inclusive and scalable models such as the Public Private Development Partnership (PPDP) framework.

NOTING WITH CONCERN:

- That over 80 per cent of the workforce in sub-Saharan Africa operates within the informal economy, with apprenticeship systems that are largely undocumented, unsupported, and under-recognized.
- That youth unemployment, underemployment, and skills mismatch remain persistent challenges, exacerbated by limited access to tertiary education and training, outdated curricula and equipment, insufficient labor market information, and inadequate active labour market policies.
- That young women, rural youth, and marginalized populations face even more barriers to meaningful skills acquisition and economic participation.
- The youth voices and testimonies presented during the conference which articulated lived realities and challenges faced by them in accessing quality skills training programmes and decent jobs.

ACKNOWLEDGING:

- The formation and operationalization of SASASNET, now active in 43 African countries, as a unique continental platform advancing skills development and apprenticeship reforms.
- The inspiring leadership demonstrated by various member countries in advancing Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and integrating informal systems into national frameworks.
- The partnerships and technical support provided by international multi-lateral institutions such as the ILO, AfDB, UNIDO, UNESCO, European Training Foundation, and the World Bank.
- The organisations, networks and initiatives such as UNESCO/UNEVOC, BILT Project, National Skills Development Corporation (India), Mastercard Foundation, OSCARS Olympiads, PROMETRIC, Swisscontact, ILO PROSPECTS Project, Don Bosco Tech Africa, Commonwealth of Learning.
- The 24 countries that participated in the 2nd Sub-Saharan Africa Regional Conference On Quality Skills Development and Apprenticeships held in Mombasa, Kenya.

OUR SHARED COMMITMENTS AND DECLARATIONS:

1. To transition from informal economy to formal economy

We will develop regional and national strategies to facilitate the transition from the informal to the formal economy towards enhancing decent work.

2. To upgrade informal apprenticeships to quality apprenticeships

We commit to develop, adopt, and implement comprehensive policy and legislative frameworks that facilitate the upgrading of informal apprenticeship systems into quality apprenticeships in the skills ecosystems. We will ensure these systems are inclusive, quality-assured, and responsive to local economic needs so that no skill is wasted and no worker left behind.

3. To institutionalize Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

We affirm the critical role of RPL in enabling informal workers, especially youth and women, to receive validation and certification for their skills against prescribed standards. We commit to establishing an African Continental RPL Policy Framework and national RPL frameworks, investing in assessor capacity, and embedding RPL into national qualification frameworks.

4. To establish a permanent SASASNET Youth Forum

We endorse the creation of a Youth Forum within the SASASNET governance structure to ensure that youth perspectives inform all decision-making. This forum will include diverse youth categories—out-

of-school youth, youth in rural areas, youth with disabilities, and youth entrepreneurs—and will engage regularly with continental and national skills chapters/platforms.

5. To adopt the African Union 1 Million Next Level Initiative

We will adopt and implement the African Union 1 Million Next Level Initiative to reach at least 300 million young people in Africa by 2030, with opportunities for promoting Education, Entrepreneurship, Employment, Engagement and Health and Wellbeing (4E+H).

6. To hold an African Youth conference

We will organize a SASASNET African Regional Youth Conference on Skills and Apprenticeships and strategies for education, entrepreneurship, employment, engagement, and health and wellbeing. The first conference will be hosted by Kenya, while the subsequent fora will be held alongside the SASASNET annual regional conferences.

7. To strengthen an African skills recognition and standardization framework

We will align national qualifications frameworks with the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF) to ensure harmonization and cross-border recognition; and establish African occupational standards, along with African Sector Skills Bodies with a structured continental policy framework outlining its governance and objectives.

8. To enhance the participation of African countries in the World Skills Competition

We will adopt and implement the national, African and World Skills Competitions to harness the power of skills development and regional and international cooperation towards achieving One Africa, One Skill, One Future.

9. To establish African Integrated Labour Market Intelligence and Data Systems

We will develop an integrated labour market information system with harmonized data collection methodologies; and ensure comparability, accuracy, and real-time analytics to inform policy decisions and workforce planning.

10. To strengthen regional trade through skills development

We will enhance skills development initiatives aligned with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreements to support regional trade and value chains, fostering economically integrated, inclusive and competitive African economy.

11. To enhance regional skills mobility

We will under the auspices of the African Union promote regional labour mobility through the development of the African Skills Passport (ASP), improved cross-border skills recognition and employment facilitation mechanisms.

12. To enhance Active Labour Market Policies

We will strengthen Active Labour Market policies, including career guidance, job assistance services, reskilling and upskilling and work-based learning to ease school-to-work transitions.

13. To strengthen youth enterprises and access to finance

We will advocate for youth-friendly financial products, grants, and start-up support mechanisms, while working to eliminate bureaucratic and regulatory bottlenecks that discourage youth entrepreneurship and small business development including promoting commercialization of innovation towards enhancing self-employment.

14. To strengthen cross-border and regional collaboration

We will promote strategic linkages and partnerships to enhance skills development and partnerships, including linkages with the African Union, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Skills Development Communities of Practice (SDCoPs), informal sector bodies and social partners across Africa. We will also advocate for stronger coordination between continental bodies, national governments, and sub-national actors.

15. To promote sustainable financing

We will promote results-based financing mechanisms that support skills development and apprenticeship programmes in Africa.

16. To establish centres of excellence

We will establish African Centres of Excellence for strengthening the capacity of Master Crafts Persons (MCPs) and other trainers and managers in the skills development and apprenticeship ecosystems.

17. To promote knowledge management

We will establish a regional knowledge-sharing platform that provides seamless access to research, best practices, and expert insights on skills development and apprenticeship.

18. To declare the African Decade for Skills Development

We will urge the African Union Commission to declare the African Decade for Skills Development 2025-2034 in recognition of the critical role of skills development and apprenticeship in fostering economic growth, social inclusion, and youth empowerment.

CALL TO ACTION

We call upon:

1. Governments to recognize, engage and promote the informal sector as a critical entity in their economic development strategies.
2. Governments to prioritize funding and implementation of skills transformation strategies.
3. Development partners and donors to align their support with national and regional priorities.
4. Employers and worker organizations to actively co-design apprenticeship models and provide structured on-the-job learning.
5. Youth organizations to continue advocating, innovating, and holding institutions accountable.

The Mombasa Conference recommends to the Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union at its next session to adopt the Mombasa Declaration for Action.

CONCLUSION

This Declaration represents our shared vision and collective will to transform apprenticeship systems across Africa, grounded in inclusion, relevance, dignity, and opportunity. We pledge to translate words into action—within our governments, institutions, and communities—to ensure that Africa’s youth are equipped, empowered, and elevated to lead the continent’s next chapter.

Adopted in Mombasa, Republic of Kenya, this 16th day of May 2025.



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Hon. Ousman Sillah
Secretary General
SASASNET