

AU-EU YOUTH CLUSTER IN NEW YORK

Outcomes and Recommendations

16 July 2026 at the EU Delegation to the United Nations, New York

1. Overview of the Launch Event

The AU-EU Youth Cluster in New York was officially launched on 16 July 2026 at the EU Delegation to the United Nations. The hybrid event brought together youth delegates, activists, experts and representatives connected to African Union (AU) and European Union (EU) Member States and the United Nations community.

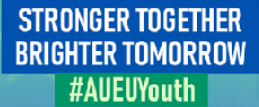
EU Ambassador Stavros Lambrinidis and AU Ambassador Mohamed Fathi Edrees delivered the opening remarks. The panel was moderated by EU Youth Delegate Lars Westra and African youth activist and engineer Djigui David Stéphane Yaméogo. After introducing the purpose and planned operation of the Cluster, the programme addressed four themes:

- Youth, Peace and Security (YPS), led by Isaac Sheku Bayoh, YPS Expert at the Sierra Leone Mission to the United Nations;
- SDG 6 on Water and Sanitation, led by David Yaméogo;
- SDG 17 on Partnerships and Financing, led by Lars Westra; and
- Youth Mental Health and promising practices, led by Georg Poensgen, co-founder of the Global Youth Call to Action on Mental Health.

Each contribution was followed by comments and examples from young people participating in person and online, including perspectives from Ethiopia, Poland, Malta and Romania. The moderators closed by connecting the four themes and inviting participants to join the Cluster's WhatsApp community. A networking segment followed.

2. Summary of the Launch Event

The opening remarks framed the Cluster as a space where young people can speak in their own voices, identify priorities and help shape policy. Ambassador Lambrinidis stressed that implementation requires determination, patience, trust, partnerships and clarity of purpose. Ambassador Edrees described youth



leadership, education, grassroots innovation and institutional participation as essential to peace, security and sustainable development, and called for aspirations to be translated into concrete action.

Lars Westra and David Yaméogo emphasised the purpose of the Cluster as an open and continuing network rather than a one-off event. It is intended to meet twice a year in New York, with online participation and topics selected by young people. Meeting outputs are expected to reach the AU and EU Delegations, relevant missions and the organisations' headquarters in Addis Ababa and Brussels. The WhatsApp community will support continued exchange between meetings.

Across the four themes, participants called for youth participation to move beyond consultation towards meaningful influence, institutional accountability and practical implementation. They also emphasised reciprocal learning, joint problem-solving and shared responsibility between Africa and Europe, rather than one-way approaches to knowledge, finance or capacity-building.

3. Outcomes and Recommendations

Each subsection links the outcome of the launch discussion to the main implementation challenge and the practical follow-up proposed by participants.

3.1 Establishing continuous youth–institution dialogue

Outcome: The Cluster was launched as an open, hybrid and youth-centred platform, with twice-yearly meetings, member-led topics, a WhatsApp community and a pathway for outputs to reach AU and EU institutions.

Key challenge: Youth input can lose credibility when engagement is irregular or when institutions do not explain how recommendations have been considered.

Actionable recommendations:

- Confirm the meeting calendar, member-led topic-selection process and accessible online participation.
- Operationalise the four-chair model with two AU and two EU chairs on rotating two-year mandates and maintain the WhatsApp community between meetings.
- Issue a written response after each meeting stating which recommendations will be taken forward, which will not and why.



3.2 Strengthening Youth, Peace and Security engagement

Outcome: YPS has gained political recognition, but youth networks are still too often treated as participants rather than strategic partners in implementation.

Key challenge: Implementation remains uneven, with tokenistic participation, weak accountability and data, shrinking civic and digital space, reduced financing and barriers affecting marginalised youth.

Actionable recommendations:

- Embed youth participation in institutional mandates and advance YPS national action plans with measurable targets, timelines, budgets and accountability.
- Protect flexible multi-year financing, civic space and young peacebuilders, and include young women, displaced and rural youth, persons with disabilities, and conflict-affected groups.

3.3 Advancing youth cooperation on SDG 6

Outcome: Water and sanitation were identified as shared AU-EU challenges requiring long-term planning and cooperation among youth, universities, public institutions and other stakeholders.

Key challenge: Responses remain fragmented across disciplines and institutions, while young people need stronger pathways to apply technical knowledge and contribute to implementation.

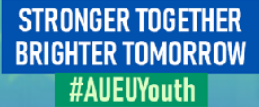
Actionable recommendations:

- Develop joint African-European partnerships for youth-led work on water data, satellite and artificial-intelligence applications, sanitation and hygiene.
- Expand supervised study-to-work opportunities and skills-based access to the water sector.

3.4 Making SDG 17 partnerships reciprocal and sustainable

Outcome: Partnership was understood to include finance, knowledge, technology, infrastructure and collaboration among governments, universities, businesses, civil society and youth.

Key challenge: Short-term or one-way approaches can create dependence and limit youth ownership of initiatives intended to serve their communities.



Actionable recommendations:

- Frame AU-EU cooperation around shared problems, mutual learning, joint investment and local capacity.
- Include young people in the planning, implementation and monitoring of SDG partnerships, not only in consultation. Promote and facilitate youth exchanges and collaborations across AU and EU.

3.5 Co-creating youth mental-health responses

Outcome: Mental health was recognised as a cross-cutting concern on which African community-based practice and European policy experience can support two-way learning.

Key challenge: Cost, distance, stigma and limited institutional responsiveness continue to restrict access, while youth participation in designing responses remains insufficient.

Actionable recommendations:

- Involve young people directly in designing services, recommendations and policy responses.
- Build permanent channels for youth mental-health leadership and exchange between community practice and regional and global policy processes.

4. Next Steps

No date for the next Cluster meeting was confirmed at the launch. In line with the proposed twice-yearly format, the meeting will be scheduled, where possible, alongside a major United Nations gathering when young people are already in New York. The upcoming potential fora are the Third Committee negotiations in October 2026, the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2027, or the ECOSOC Youth Forum in April 2027. The chairs will agree the date and theme in consultation with Cluster members and the AU and EU Delegations and circulate the details through the WhatsApp community.