

Proposal for Paper Submitted to the Association of African Universities, (AAU)

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The 15<sup>th</sup> General conference of the Association of African Universities, AAU with the theme; *Sustainable Development in Africa: The Role of Higher Education* is timely and appropriate because it is coming in a qualitatively different political climate in Africa and in the world. In looking at this theme, it will enable us to identify the roles of students in the sustainable development of Africa. The roles of students will be examined by exploring the opportunities and challenges related to teaching and learning, community services, IT and Health. The student role must be prioritised to address the opportunities and challenges in the sustainable development of Africa. In this regards, the proposed paper will portray student organisations as viable partners in development and core active participants from the academic community based all issues summarised below.

It is expected that African students and their organizations must demonstrate significant strides in the sustainable development efforts of their respective countries. AASU is actively monitoring the process of implementation of Agenda 21 in Africa as one of the Major Groups under the UN Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) which is overseeing the implementation of the Rio de Janeiro Agreement on the Environment and Sustainable Development.

In view of student capacity in term of population and commitment, AASU has continued to make sustainable development a reality in Africa through various efforts and collaboration with local member unions. For years, youth have shown a willingness and commitment to play

an active role in development via student governance, information technology, and academic freedom and autonomy (e.g Nigeria, South Africa, Ghana, Kenya, Togo and Libya).

AASU engagement in programmes to educate and train communities, including work-based education on sustainable development issues in partnerships with institutions of learning, trade unions, business, local authorities and other interested partners; utilise university campuses as sustainable models for other offices and institutions in society. Local student groups works together with the administration to use renewable and sustainable resources on campuses.

Establishment of sustainable IT centres with virtual classrooms in rural communities and networked with universities (e.g. University of Benin students union, Nigeria). Using multi-media conferencing methodologies, young people are trained in areas of their interest and learn new skills and techniques, such as web design, computer programming and organic sustainable agriculture techniques (e.g. South Africa Union of Students, SAUS). Initiatives to engage in effective peer to peer sexual health education, implementing programmes aimed at promoting the concept and practice of positive living as well as put in place mechanisms to ensure behavioural change amongst youth in the fight against HIV/AIDS in our society.