A CALL TO ACTION :
"ACCELERATE THE PACE TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE SDGs"

ADDRESSED TO

THE UNITED NATIONS
THE AFRICAN UNION
THE GOVERNMENTS OF ALL AFRICAN COUNTRIES

We, the civil society organizations from across Africa; community groups representing the youth, women, Persons with Disabilities, ethnic minorities; economically disadvantaged groups as well as individual participants from across the world; and who identify with the cause for social and economic justice and the value of achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Africa;

Note with concern about the deteriorating life conditions of the poor and vulnerable groups of people in Africa occasioned by a range of human factors which continue to create barriers to the realisation of development goals (including the SDGs), freedoms and rights of the people;

Are alarmed by the following specific challenges, all of them man-made and avoidable; and we also share our thoughts on how they can be addressed:

1. **Slow Progress Towards SDGs Achievement**

We acknowledge with appreciation that nearly all governments of the countries in Africa committed with honesty and sincerity to achieving the SDGs not later than the year 2030 as a development pledge to their citizens. **However, we are disappointed** that many countries in Africa lag far behind in the implementation of many of the SDGs mid-way to 2030 and that the continent trails all the other regions in implementation of the goals.

We in effect call on all the African governments to go beyond mere political statements to implement actual and transformative development projects and programs that guarantee the achievement of the SDGs within the next eight years. **We further urge the African governments to strengthen plans and increase the pace** of implementation of the AU Agenda 2063, the goals of which are consistent with the SDGs. **We urge each African government to also prepare annual progress reports** and share the same with its citizens as a measure of transparency and accountability on the implementation of these commitments including the AU Agenda 2063.

2. COVID-19 Pandemic and Vaccine Inequality

We note with alarm that so far only about 20% (https://covid19.who.int/table) of Africa's population of more than 1.3 billion people is fully vaccinated from the deadly virus compared to the global average of above 62%. Other regions of the world have already surpassed 50% coverage of their fully vaccinated. Coupled with Africa's weak health Institutions, the continent continues to experience vaccine marginalisation arising from a global trade system that places the highest premium on business interests and far less, ironically, on saving human life. **We note the heightened impact of the pandemic on women and girls**, and the limited access to health services experienced by rural communities, Persons with Disabilities and other marginalized groups. **We also note that along with vaccine inequity**, our continent is also experiencing inequity in terms of tests and treatments, both critical tools to managing and responding to the pandemic and ensuring economic recovery during challenging times.

We therefore call on all African governments to put more effort to improve plans and mechanisms to avail COVID-19 vaccine, diagnostics and therapeutics to all their populations while ensuring that no groups are marginalised for whatever reasons. **We urge all the African governments to continue to collectively** address global challenges that affect access to COVID-19 vaccine, tests and therapeutics in Africa.

We call on African countries to speak with one voice in international forums regarding this pandemic. **We encourage them to stick firmly to their position** at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to circumvent Intellectual Property barriers to lifesaving COVID-19 technologies and products established under the TRIPS Agreement. **We call on the African governments** to also engage actively in the WHO "pandemic treaty" negotiations and promote solutions that improve international collaboration and ensure that global public health considerations are prioritized over commercial interests.

We further urge all the African leaders to add strong and loud voices to the global effort by hundreds of civil society organisations led by global campaigns such as People's Vaccine Alliance (PVA), in calling for sharing of COVID-19 technologies to countries across the world (including in Africa) that are capable of undertaking vaccine manufacturing. **Above all, we urge African leaders to use the lesson of COVID-19** to expedite plans for permanent solutions to vaccine access for the continent by supporting Africa-led scientific innovations and local manufacturing and also device coordination mechanisms in line with the Africa Health Strategy.

We are further calling on the UN General Assembly to urgently and effectively provide effective leadership in addressing the global challenges of the vaccine inequalities through its relevant agencies especially the WTO. **Finally, we highlight** that any adequate responses developed to improve the response to COVID-19 will serve Africa well in responding to future pandemics, a future we must prepare for now.

3. Persistent Insecurity and Poor Governance

We are concerned that out of the 32 countries in the world currently experiencing armed, violent and sustained conflicts, 16 are in Africa; and the effects of which are monumental including needless loss of human lives and displacement of millions of people from their homes. While each is the result of unique, context-specific circumstances, some general patterns are evident. Chief among these is the role of poor governance and social exclusion. Many more others are experiencing limited democratic spaces and a number are under authoritarian or autocratic leaderships. The Sahel region is particularly affected by violent actions of extremist groups operating under the guise of religious fundamentalism especially jihadist groups. The combination of these factors continues to limit freedoms of citizens, underpin exclusion, drive up poverty, deepen hopelessness, fuel civil strife and even needless loss of lives.

We call on African governments, the AU the UN and other international stakeholders to come together and address the root causes of many of these conflicts as most of them stem from well-known causes and vested interests, including social exclusion, undemocratic governance, corruption and illegal scramble for natural resources, the nature of which in many cases extends beyond the control of the countries caught up in the conflicts.

4. Worsening Poverty Levels, Inequalities and Exclusion

We note with disappointment that of the [27 countries](#) worldwide currently ranked by [World](#) Bank as [Low Income Economies](#), indicating they are the very [poorest countries in the world](#), 23 are located in Africa, specifically in the Sub-Saharan Africa and where hundreds of millions of people continue living in abject poverty or on less than 1.9 US dollars per day. **We further note that the number increased** recently due to the effects of COVID-19 pandemic between the years 2020 and 2022. This situation is further exacerbated by failed and unsustainable economic models adopted by many African governments where opportunity is available only to a few, well connected people to the exclusion of majority of citizens, thus driving up poverty, inequalities, and where the rich are getting richer while the poor are becoming poorer.

We urge African government leaders to address extreme poverty, inequality and social exclusion in all African countries through sustainable economic models, just and equitable recovery measures as well as sustainable and effective social protection mechanisms targeting People with Disabilities, women, the youth, low wage workers, ethnic minorities and other vulnerable groups indiscriminately. **We demand the abandonment** of unfair and failed economic policies; exclusion of any sections of populations from mainstream development plans; debilitating austerity economic programmes; underhand, unfair and illegal dealings with foreign business companies on Africa's natural resources as they only fuel armed conflicts on the continent with crippling impacts on the already poor and vulnerable groups. **We encourage African**

governments   to introduce Wealth Tax as a redistributive mechanism to generate resources to fund much needed investments in health, education and social service delivery.

5. Sovereign Debt

We note with grave concern the growing trend of many governments of African countries of contracting increasingly unsustainable foreign debts through opaque means while using key national and public assets as collaterals to secure the public loans. **We note that huge chunks of national revenues** collected by these countries through high public taxations are currently channeled to service the foreign debts denying investment in other development sectors especially the social sector which is the most adversely affected. At worst, trends of default to repayment of these debts are beginning to emerge threatening not only the security but also the sovereignty of some countries in Africa.

We therefore demand that African governments develop comprehensive national debt sustainability plans to wean their countries off debt-fueled economic growth at the expense of the masses. **To the foreign lenders of these unsustainable debts, we reiterate our demand for Debt Cancellation** now as a matter of justice.

We urge the UNGA and G20 to vigorously pursue legally-binding measures to compel Private Creditors to participate in the already limited and inadequate debt restructuring measures such as the G20's Common Framework for Debt Treatments. **We further urge global leaders** to collectively amplify the development of a global sovereign debt restructuring mechanism. **We urge African countries to invest** in the strengthening of Parliamentary accountability, monitoring and oversight in debt contraction and repayment processes.

6. Climate Change Disasters and Justice for Poor Communities

We agree with climate scientists' continuous, empirical assertions and warnings that the global climate is changing due to human activity and in a manner that threatens existence of all forms of life on the planet including human life. The widespread use of fossil fuel remains a key driver to this negative change. **We are concerned that manifestations of this change** as experienced in Africa include, among others, frequent and unprecedented floods and droughts resulting to wanton destruction of property, farmlands, settlements and causing deaths of people, livestock and wildlife. **We are further concerned that poor communities** in many parts of Africa are hit the hardest, despite contributing very little to the causes of the phenomenon.

We therefore urge African leaders to commit to rights-focused and people-centered actions to help poor and vulnerable groups in the Region to address climate adaptation challenges and increasing related losses and damages. **We call on African leaders to create regional funds** to increase the Region's capacity to adapt to effects of climate change and also to move towards a just, clean and inclusive energy transition with a

priority focus on increasing access to cheaper decentralised renewable energy, ending deforestation, reducing household energy poverty and powering key economic sectors. **We urge African leaders to increase support and financing** towards locally-led adaptation processes and disaster reduction mainstreaming in plans targeting vulnerable groups such as smallholder farmers, pastoralists, fishing communities and others. **We call upon African leaders to collectively engage global leaders** during the upcoming COP 27 Summit in Egypt and at the UNGA for increased accountability on pollution to poor communities especially in Africa within the framework of UNFCCC and other globally agreed accountability mechanisms.

7. Shrinking Civic Engagement Spaces

We are concerned by the many civic engagement space issues relating to threats to liberties, freedoms and rights of association and assembly in many African countries, and which affect genuine and constructive activities of many civil society organisations. **We are concerned by the increasingly shrinking civic space** characterized by violations of these rights, harassment and enactment of repressive laws with unclear, overbearing, overstepping, or outright brutality by state security agencies in some African countries under the pretext of maintaining law and order.

We therefore urge African governments to align legislative frameworks, policy and practice to constitutional provisions that guarantee civic and political rights. **We condemn the increased cases of state-sponsored** harassment and abuse targeting civil society, religious organisations, student leaders and Human Rights Defenders especially during election campaigns on the continent.

Signed,

1. Cadre de Concertation des ONG et Associations actives en Education de Base au Burkina Faso (CCEB)
2. GCAP Senegal
3. Nigeria Network of NGOs (NNNGO)
4. Reseau Des Organisations du Secteur Educatif du Niger (ROSEN)/GCAP Niger
5. Jeunes Verts - Togo
6. Nobel Delta Women for Peace and Development Int'l (NDWPD) - Nigeria
7. L'Action Mondiale Contre la Pauvreté (AMCP)/AMASBIF - Mali
8. Youth Partnership for Peace and Development (YPPD) – Sierra Leone
9. GCAP Ghana
10. Lutte Nationale Contre La Pauvrete (LUNACOP) – D.R. CONGO
11. TUMUKUNDE/GCAP Rwanda
12. SAHRiNGON – Tanzania Chapter
13. Halley Movement - Mauritius
14. Civil Society SDGs Campaign GCAP Zambia
15. Council for Non-Governmental Organisations of Malawi (CONGOMA)
16. National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (NANGO) – Zimbabwe
17. Step Up Youth Initiative – Uganda
18. GCAP Global