

## NATIONAL YOUTH CONVENTION III – AUGUST 11TH – 12TH 2007.

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### CONCEPT PAPER

### FOR NYC III<sup>1</sup>

#### **Background to a national youth convention in Kenya**

The National Youth Convention (NYC) has evolved since 1997 as the most powerful space of young people of Kenya between the age of 18 and 35 years to meet, audit the state of the nation, the state of the young people, decide the direction the country should take to realize change development and enhance the place and role of young people in the desired state of the republic. The youth of Kenya take this responsibility knowing that every country is liberated, re-created, build and developed by organized young people.

NYC III comes at an historical time. It occurs 10 years since NYC I of March 1997 and nine years after NYC II of April 1998<sup>2</sup>. NYC III shall be historical because it shall significantly consolidate the gains and resources young people have gathered and shaped in the various realms of development– in the private sector and enterprise, in community development and civic engagement, in politics, in the trade unions, students movements, professions, public service and at the international stage– to finally launch the most sustained journey to recreate our republic.

NYC III shall be a convention that awakes a nation that has gone to slumber, content with poverty, injustice, massive regional, social, gender, intergenerational and class inequalities; unemployment, corruption, discrimination and exclusion of the majority of the people of Kenya; a nation that has learnt to live within a state that is undemocratic and unaccountable and that disregards the rule of law.

About 2000 young people of Kenya from some eleven regions<sup>3</sup> and from various social sectors and even the diaspora shall convene in Nairobi to deliver a new message; a

<sup>1</sup> National Youth Convention (NYC) III follows the successful NYC I (1997) and NYC II (1998).

<sup>2</sup> NYC I was held at Limuru Conference Centre in March 1997. It was historic and forceful and its resolutions and impetus flowed into the first and also historic National Convention Assembly that was convened to organized Pro– democracy forces to bring about fundamental constitutional, socio–economic and political changes in the country. NYC II was held on 17 to 20<sup>th</sup> April 1998 at Limuru Conference Centre and its resolutions were far reaching and instrumental in the gains young people have thus Far realized. The resolutions of NYC shall be assessed and a report presented assessing the accomplishments and frustrations 10 years later.

<sup>3</sup> These eleven regions are Coast, NEP, Upper Eastern, Lower Eastern, Central, Nairobi, South Rift, North Rift, Western, Nyanza South and Central Nyanza.

message declaring that time has come for Kenya to change, to be liberated and to be recreated. The young people shall declare that they are the ones appointed by God, history, our country and the future generations to undertake this mission by organizing to do the job. The awakening that shall touch and shake all sectors of the society and the state, shall feature the setting of new benchmarks; the definition of the new struggles and content of the liberation the country must embark on at once while identifying the new frontiers that must be broken.

### **NYC III theme: “Organize, Liberate, Re–create Kenya”**

The Convention shall place the young people at the centre of these new challenges and endeavor. The convention shall define the role of the young people of Kenya and mandate them to go out after the convention to create a new Kenya.

The theme of NYC III fits the historical times that we are living in; it is a call to young people of Kenya to organize, so that in their organized force they may liberate Kenya and recreate this republic.

The youth must organize because in their current state of acting separately, their great and admirable even ground breaking works, they have not become the most respected force– the necessary force that Kenya requires urgently to liberate the nation and therefore recreate the republic. Organizing is the secret of the young people of Kenya. Lessons can be borrowed from the women’s movement that has recorded innumerable successes in raising the women’s agenda, enhancing women’s empowerment and participation at all levels in society.

The project of liberating and recreating the republic is decisively conceptualized around five key pillars that address issues of leadership, culture, politics, the economy and social institutions. The overall aim here is to transform the current order and create a new paradigm for organizing and governing our society.

### **Five Pillars of the project of liberating and re–creating the republic**

The key discussions and resolutions of NYC III shall be founded on five key pillars as follows:

- i. Ethical and transformative leadership: Leadership is the most important pillar of recreating the republic. Kenya's institution of leadership today is characterized by mediocrity, lack of vision, impunity and corruption. This leadership is largely accessed through inheritance, violence, corruption and on the basis of tribalism. The leadership (not merely leaders) that Kenya wants today is ethical, accountable, visionary and transformative leadership at all levels which is founded on sound principles, standards, values and expectations. Kenya requires a new leadership that is visionary, based on knowledge and research and that is faithful to the true interests of our republic.
- ii. Resolving our identity "dilemma": Culture is a paramount pillar of the project of recreating the republic. We have witnessed a culture in Kenya dating back to the pre-independence period a culture of treachery, betrayal, and exclusion; a culture that rewards the bad elements and those who do not work and punishes those who do well and those who work. It is a culture of injustice. The youth have suffered most through out history on modern Kenya. We want to define a new value and cultural framework that supports the vision of a new republic. This requires that we must engage in resolving our identity dilemma as a republic and define what the acceptable, celebrated and popular Kenyan culture is. *We want to define a new "Kenyan-ness"*. Inevitably this must happen within the context of regional integration processes, the role and place of citizens in the East African Community (EAC) as well as our position on (and perhaps in) the Union of African States.
- iii. Equity: factors, actors and influences (as they influence resource allocation and distribution: Our current political process is to a large extent based on "personalities" rather than "issues". Political institutions such as political parties have been blocked from evolving and becoming institutions of political participation and good governance. Ours is "politics of exclusion" that excludes young people, women, people with

disabilities and minorities and sections of the country that did not vote for the sitting president. The political leadership largely performs in ways that betray national interest and serve the narrow elite interests of those in power! The youth have suffered under this political order. The youth have become the fodder for this political order not the foremost drivers of the national agenda and governance. No sector is served best under this political order. This political system must be transformed, if not Kenya will diminish, not emerge stronger in this new millennium. The environment will collapse, dependency and inequality will increase, poverty and unemployment will increase and the independence of our country will be jeopardized.

The reformed political order envisaged by young Kenyans must be designed to guarantee and serve equity. Our politics must feature institutions, actors, factors and influences that support the vision of the new republic and society we want. We want the management of the economic resources, power, opportunity, deference and all interests and endowments of the republic to be done in a way that equity is guaranteed.

- iv. Economic management - innovative production and efficient distribution: the economy is so important a pillar to the success of the vision of the new republic the young people of this generation want to create. The Kenyan economy remains small and weak to offer 33 Million Kenyans the opportunity to meet their needs and a decent living standard; it is dependent on foreign forces, underdeveloped and inefficient. It is neither a just nor fair economy with limited training and skills development, limited research, inaccessible capital resources to the majority, dismal wages and an unfair tax system. We want a strong, innovative and efficient economy.
- An economy based on innovative and efficient production and efficient distribution shall benefit the young people- the majority and most

productive members of our society. This will mainstream the fundamentals of innovative production that serves the innovation that is a characteristically best identified with young people – the innovator of our country but also ensure efficient distribution of the production of our society. This is the secret to innovation, creativity and opportunity and therefore a strong and dynamic economy.

- v. Responsive social institutions: we want a reliable health care system, a transformational and empowering education not just for employment but for powering the thinking and informing the creation of new better society; we want a dynamic and strong labour, and a dynamic and dependable social security system. We want a media, families and religious organizations that are responsive and not obstructionist, to the aspirations, dreams and goals of our republic.

### **The expected outcome**

The expected outcome of NYC III is that young Kenyans adopt resolutions that guide and mandate them to develop and implement various strategies aimed at realizing the agreed upon youth agenda over the next ten years.

The resolutions agreed upon shall be implemented by various organizations and shall also serve, where applicable, to work in tandem with targeted ideals subscribed to by Kenyans, including the Millennium Development Goals, regional integration and enhance the peer review process, and economic development agenda, among others.

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