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**KEYNOTE STATEMENT BY H.E. DR MOHAMED IBN CHAMBAS,
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THE GUNS**

**SIDE EVENT OF THE YOUTH CREATIVE CONSORTIUM (YCC)
2.0 AT THE 5TH CONTINENTAL DIALOGUE ON YOUTH, PEACE
AND SECURITY AND WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY,
BUJUMBURA, BURUNDI**

**Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Youth Leaders,
Development Partners, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great pleasure to join you today at this gathering of the Youth Creative Consortium 2.0, held within the framework of the 5th Continental Dialogue on Youth, Peace and Security and Women, Peace and Security.

Allow me first to commend the Government of the Republic of Burundi, under the leadership of H.E. President Évariste Ndayishimiye, African Union Champion for Youth, Peace and Security, for hosting this important continental engagement. I also wish to recognise the African Union Commission, our partners, and the leadership of the Youth Creative Consortium for their commitment to creating platforms that elevate the voices, aspirations, and contributions of young Africans.

As I reflect on Africa's journey, I am increasingly convinced that no conversation about the continent's future can be meaningful without placing young people at its centre.

Africa today is the youngest continent in the world. This reality presents both an immense opportunity and an equally significant responsibility. It means that the success of Agenda 2063, the realisation of the Africa We Want, and indeed the future of peace,

governance, and development on our continent will be determined largely by the choices, leadership, and contributions of Africa's youth.

And this is why the African Heads of State and Government are determined through the Silencing the Guns Initiative to bequeath to future generations an Africa free of violence, at peace with itself and with the rest of the world.

For many years, discussions about young people have focused predominantly on their challenges. We have spoken about unemployment, irregular migration, limited opportunities, exclusion from decision-making, and vulnerability to recruitment by violent and criminal networks. While these concerns are real and demand urgent attention, they do not define the youth of Africa.

Across the continent, we are witnessing a different reality.

Young Africans are leading innovation and technological transformation. They are creating businesses, generating employment, pioneering climate solutions, strengthening civic engagement, and driving social change in their communities. They are reshaping the narrative of Africa from one of dependency to one of possibility, creativity, and resilience.

In many countries affected by conflict and instability, young people are also emerging as important actors for peace. They are facilitating dialogue within communities, countering hate speech and misinformation, supporting reconciliation efforts, and building networks that transcend ethnic, religious, and political divides. Too often these contributions receive limited recognition, despite their profound impact on the stability and cohesion of our societies.

This is why the Youth, Peace and Security agenda remains one of the most important investments the African Union has made in the future of the continent.

The adoption of the African Youth Charter in 2006 reflected a collective recognition by African leaders that young people are not simply beneficiaries of development but essential partners in shaping it. Twenty years later, that vision remains both relevant and urgent. The Charter challenged us to move beyond viewing

youth as a policy category and instead recognise them as active citizens, leaders, innovators, and agents of transformation.

The question before Africa today is therefore not whether young people have the capacity to lead.

The evidence is all around us.

The more important question is whether our institutions are evolving quickly enough to harness that leadership.

Are we creating sufficient opportunities for young people to influence public policy? Are we opening meaningful spaces for youth participation in governance, mediation, peacebuilding, and development? Are we investing in youth-led solutions with the same confidence that young Africans demonstrate every day in building them?

These are questions that every government, institution, and development partner must continually ask.

The Youth Creative Consortium demonstrates the value of youth-driven action. Youth innovation, creativity, technology, entrepreneurship, and civic engagement can contribute to social cohesion and peaceful societies. Young people are not waiting to be invited into the future; they are already shaping it. That is the prospect before the Youth Creative Consortium.

The theme of this Continental Dialogue reminds us that Africa's peace and security challenges are becoming increasingly complex. Competition over resources, climate pressures, environmental degradation, and social inequalities are creating new sources of tension across many communities. Yet these same challenges also require fresh thinking and innovative approaches, areas in which young Africans continue to excel. The solutions required for the next generation of African challenges will not come exclusively from governments or institutions. They will emerge from partnerships that actively draw upon the ingenuity, creativity, and leadership of young people.

As High Representative for Silencing the Guns, I have consistently maintained that the objective before us is not merely the absence of armed conflict. Our ambition must be the creation of societies where dignity, opportunity, justice, and inclusion are available to

all. Such societies are more resilient, more prosperous, and less vulnerable to violence.

Young people are indispensable to achieving that ambition.

They bring new perspectives to old challenges. They possess an instinctive understanding of emerging technologies. They have the capacity to connect across borders and cultures in ways unprecedented in Africa's history. Above all, they possess the energy and determination required to drive transformational change.

My message to Africa's youth today is therefore one of confidence.

Continue to lead.

Continue to innovate.

Continue to engage constructively in the affairs of your communities and your countries.

Continue to demonstrate that leadership is defined not by age, but by vision, integrity, and service.

And my message to policymakers and partners is equally clear: trust young people, invest in young people, and create the conditions that allow them to thrive.

Africa's future will not be determined by its natural resources alone. It will be determined by how successfully we unlock the potential of its people, especially its youth. It will be determined by how successful we unlock the potential of the youth, a youth who eschews corruption, a youth who put public service above personal gain, a youth that is disciplined and hardworking, a youth imbued with a culture of tolerance and democracy.

If we succeed, the dream of a peaceful, prosperous, and integrated Africa will no longer remain an aspiration. It will become a reality.

If we succeed, an Africa where justice for all is assured will no longer remain an aspiration, if we succeed, we will have a violent free Africa in which we would have Silenced the Guns. If we succeed, we would have achieved the Africa We Want.

I thank you for your attention.