

It is my pleasure to support the members of the Youth Interview Series Planning Committee, with Cairo Eubanks and Rinor Jani as Co-hosts for the work that they have done to make this first edition of the Youth Interview Series possible.

It is our intention to have this program serve as a vehicle to connect local and global communities to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and objectives. This is instrumental in creating a sustainable future for all where no one is left behind.

Thanks for tuning in. Enjoy! Now over to our Co-host, Cairo!

[00:03:58] Thank you so much, Hawa. I would also like to welcome Rinor Jani of Pathways to Peace to speak briefly when I shared this idea and concept with him. Rinor was immediately on board and helped to progress this initiative to where it is now. Rinor, you have the floor.

[00:04:18] “Hello Everyone! Thank you, Cairo for opening up the floor. It has been an honor to work with you on Storytelling With A Purpose so far. I was kindly asked to co-lead this new initiative to give other youth and young professionals an opportunity to share more about their impactful work and inspire others to make a difference in local and global communities. I’m really looking forward to seeing youth across the world share more about their impactful and life changing work. Ms. Aya Chebbi, it is a true honor to meet you and have you join us for our first interview series launch. I’ve been greatly inspired by your relentless work with African youth across the continent and Diaspora. With infinite gratitude, we are so grateful to have you join us today. I would like to share two quotes by Nelson Mandela:

“As we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.”

“What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead.”

Thank you again and I kindly give the floor back to Cairo.”

[00:05:43] Thank you so much. We are starting our interview series with monthly interviews with incredible guests like Aya! Our ultimate goal is to have a combination of monthly interviews and audio submissions from community members and students just like you who are passionate about taking action and want to share your story to inspire others! Today, we are featuring the story of an action storyteller named Aya Chebbi. Miss Aya Chebbi is a multi award-winning Pan African feminist. She rose to prominence as a voice for democracy and shot to global fame as a political blogger during the 2010-2011 Tunisia's revolution. She served as the first-ever African Youth Special Envoy on Youth and the youngest diplomat at the African Union Commission Chair Persons Cabinet. In her role, she met and advocated for over 30 heads of state and governments and to over 160 global leaders on the youth agenda in Africa and the Diaspora, which resulted in policy changes, continentally and globally, and an increase in youth appointments nationally. She has mobilized youth through the Silencing the Guns campaign, which is the African Union's largest youth campaign and main platform on youth peace and security agenda and her role. She has also widely mobilized young women, resulting in the first of its

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kind Africa Young Women's Manifesto. She has curated the internationally acclaimed concept of intergenerational leadership and engaged millions of young people during the COVID-19 pandemic documented in the Africa Youth League policy paper. It is truly a pleasure to have you on our podcast and to be our first interviewee.

[00:07:38] Thank you both so much. And what a generous introduction, and congratulations on this initiative! I mean, when I saw it's youth-led. I couldn't help but accept to come on board and just join you for this exciting conversation. So thank you.

[00:07:55] ... doing now, and just ... is the story behind you becoming the African Union Youth Envoy, and how did this position of role change your life?

[00:08:17] Well, I mean the position was not created when I started my activism, so it really came as something I think natural to me [and] the next step in what I [have been] doing [over] the past decade. I started activism during Tunisia's Revolution in 2010-2011, as you said at the start. From there, I started to travel across the continent and support youth-led movements. And I think especially for me as someone who comes from Tunisia and North Africa, which is usually disconnected from the continent, it was a long journey, right? It was a long journey to [truly] rally young people around a pan-African vision or a new pan-African vision. [This was] from this North African young woman who really believes that if we unite as a continent, we can really do miracles. And I think that really established a big constituency for me on the African continent. So when the call for the Youth Envoy came out, I thought, OK, this is a great platform to use and actually do something within the system. I think most young people are great at mobilization, great at organizing, great at campaigning, but usually [they are] out of the system. So we are not in the political society, in social entrepreneurship, and other fields. But when you can [look at] existing structures [and] inter-governmental spaces, we're not there yet. And I think it was more of it [was] a personal challenge to me. I felt that I needed to challenge the status quo, trying to change it. And I think as a young [leader] to be meeting the needs of youth rights, then I need to be when I think

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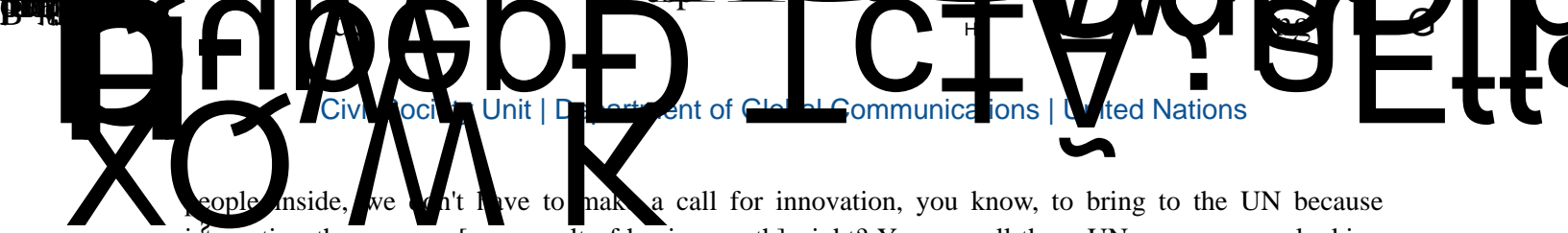
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to say. And [we have to evaluate the way that] we host spaces. [It's traditionally] very much top-down, became very much about written speeches. "You have two minutes. And this is it." No, don't box young people; let them express themselves because then [our presence] becomes a show. We're not running a show here. It's a dialogue. [If] we really want partnerships for the goal, we really need honest, intergenerational dialogues. And these dialogues shouldn't be restricted to this UN-ish way of doing things or an AU-ish way of doing things, or NGO-ish way of doing things. No, we need to have honest conversations, [open] the floor for young people to take a seat. [These are] some of the things that I'm

~~being reported on through the UN, SW, and the [open] RFP~~

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people inside, we don't have to make a call for innovation, you know, to bring to the UN because innovation then comes [as a result of having youth], right? You see, all these UN programs are looking [for ideas] and something to really make a transformation. But if we make the UN full of change-makers inside, then we don't need to look outside for transformation. I think the UN has a lot to do [internally to] achieve and deliver its mission outside, because the UN is here to really deliver a peaceful, just, and equal world, right? But if [within the UN] young people feel excluded...we just came out of [the] Generation Equality Forum in Paris. And if you listen to the young people who [have been] part of the process for the past two years, they still feel excluded. They still feel they're not listened to. They still feel that they are stuck in a box. Their demands are not in the final negotiations. They're not sitting in those closed rooms.

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