

07 – 08 December 2017|Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

## Congress Declaration

### Preamble

We, participants of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Science Congress of the Ethiopian Academy of Sciences, having deliberated on how Ethiopia can address its emerging challenge of achieving the demographic dividend, collectively issue the following Declaration of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Science Congress on Harnessing the Demographic Dividend: Ethiopia's Emerging Challenge.

- ✓ Recognizing Ethiopia's nascent demographic transition whereby the working-age population is expanding relative to the dependent population, and appreciating the concerted efforts by the Government of Ethiopia in reducing fertility and mortality rates that contributed to such a shift;
- ✓ Understanding that Ethiopia's demographic transition offers a window of opportunity as the youth joins the working-age group, which could translate into increased productivity, output and savings and therefore an accelerated economic gain for the country: the demographic dividend;
- ✓ Strongly reaffirming that a demographic transition does not guarantee a demographic dividend, but requires the design and implementation of appropriate policies that ensure adequate investment in health, quality education and skills development, gender equality and inclusive governance;
- ✓ Fully cognizant of the development strides by the Government of Ethiopia in promoting an enabling environment for a budding demographic transition, commending the remarkable leap in expanding access to education and appreciating innovative health initiatives such as Health Extension Program (HEP);
- ✓ Highlighting the need for substantive improvement in education for girls and women, greater labor force participation of women, provision of health services with adequate

attention to reproductive health;

- ✓ Noting that for Ethiopia to hasten the demographic transition and harness the demographic dividend, it must sustain and intensify the progress made so far in key sectors, while taking concrete measures to fill the gaps in access to healthcare services, quality education and skills development, gender equality, and youth employment;
- ✓ Emphasizing that while Ethiopia's shifting age-structure offers a prospect for accelerated economic growth, it could also exacerbate unemployment, environmental stress and trigger grievances among a significant portion of the population if the nation fails to address its current and emerging challenges;
- ✓ Emphasizing that maximizing Ethiopia's prospects of harnessing the demographic dividend demands a collaborative engagement from academia, the private sector, governmental and non-governmental stakeholders;
- ✓ Noting that seizing the window of opportunities and addressing Ethiopia's emerging challenges to harness the demographic dividend is not just dependent on putting in place the necessary preconditions but also the speed with which actions are taken;

Hereby, call on the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, academia, civil society and all stakeholders to play their share in addressing Ethiopia's emerging challenge of harnessing the demographic dividend.

More specifically, we:

- Recommend the expansion of healthcare infrastructure, and enhancement in quantity and quality of health professionals to realize a national healthcare system that is able to address health challenges of the current population and adapt to the changing healthcare needs of the generations to come;
- Urge the Government to sustain Ethiopia's decline in infant and child mortality through expansion of basic healthcare services to newborns, infants and children; and promotion of immunization;

- Call for a continued and effective collaboration among civil society, the private sector, non-governmental and governmental organizations in expanding equitable access to quality sexual and reproductive health services including family planning programs across all regions of Ethiopia;
- Call on stakeholders to collaborate in further raising awareness about sexual and reproductive health services and family planning programs through grassroots campaigns targeted at men and women, particularly in rural areas and disadvantaged regions;
- Urge the Government to prioritize ensuring equitable and inclusive access to quality education at all levels (including pre-schools) so as to ensure that tomorrow's youth can transition into a productive workforce;
- Recommend the enhancement of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs both in access and quality, to yield low and medium level workforce that is able to accommodate the labor needs of Ethiopia's emerging economy;
- Recommend the integration of skill-development trainings such as entrepreneurship and leadership within the education system to develop and nurture self-motivated and competent workforce able to adapt to the changing needs of the economy;
- Call on the Government of Ethiopia to ensure gender parity in school enrolment, particularly in secondary and tertiary levels, which will also serve to delay the age at marriage and first birth and enable girls to gain higher income-earning jobs in the formal and informal sectors;
- Recommend to the Government of Ethiopia to promote robust economic policies to accommodate the current unemployment and underemployment in the short term, while investing on diversifying economic sectors that will adopt to the evolving global economy to ensure sustainable employment opportunities for future workforce entrants;
- Strongly recommend the design and operationalization of employment policies that strive for gender parity in workforce participation, including decision making spheres;

- Recommend the establishment of social security schemes and pension systems inclusive of the workforce in the informal sector and women engaged in domestic work to accommodate the expanding workforce as they transition into inevitable aging;
- Call upon all stakeholders to address persistent gender inequality in Ethiopia by challenging structural factors and, social norms and behavioral attitudes that militate against full enjoyment of the economic and social rights of adolescent girls and women and deny them of the opportunity for education, autonomy and decision-making further placing them in a cycle of inequality;
- Urge the Government of Ethiopia to foster an inclusive and participatory political process with accountability and transparency in decision-making to empower the youth to make meaningful contributions and critically engage in their own affairs as active agents of change for harnessing Ethiopia's demographic dividend.

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