In 2016, then-UNV Executive Coordinator Richard Dictus (left) and Ambassador Dr Kipyego Cheluget, Assistant Secretary General (Programmes) of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (right) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to establish the COMESA Youth Volunteer Scheme.

COMESA Council adopts Youth Internship and Volunteer Programme developed in collaboration with UNV

During the 38th meeting of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Council of Ministers adopted the Youth Internship and Volunteer Programme developed by the Gender and Social Affairs Division of COMESA and the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme. The programme seeks to increase youth employability in the 21 COMESA member states in East and Southern Africa through the provision of practical skills and facilitation of networks.
According to World Bank data, half of Sub-Saharan Africa’s population is under 25 years of age and each year until 2035, there will be half a million more 15-year-olds than the year before.

While Africa’s youth bulge could present an opportunity for innovation and economic growth for the continent, many countries still struggle to provide sufficient perspectives for their youth. Youth unemployment continues to be a challenge for Sub-Sahara Africa with rates being as high as 60 per cent in some countries.

To tackle these challenges, UNV and COMESA have jointly developed the Youth Internship and Volunteer Programme, which will be piloted for three years in four countries (Comoros, Egypt, Ethiopia and Zambia) before being replicated in other member states.

“Graduates from tertiary institutions in the COMESA region are now expected to be absorbed into employment much faster following the adoption of a Youth Internship Volunteer Programme. --COMESA

The programme aims to deploy up to 9,600 interns and young volunteers to instill practical skills and competencies and increase employability. The programme will further provide job opportunities through the facilitation of networks.

The adoption of the Youth Internship and Volunteer Programme is a unique opportunity to harness the demographic dividend and empower the continent’s youthful population and advance their contribution towards economic development.

UNV continues to support development partners in establishing innovative volunteer schemes and programmes for development, social cohesion and support of peace processes.

UNV is pursuing the integration of volunteerism across policy, legislation and programming. In East and Southern Africa alone, UNV is working with governments and regional organizations on 14 national or regional volunteer programmes and schemes.

• youth • volunteerism • Egypt • Ethiopia • Comoros • COMESA

Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth, SDG 10: Reduced inequalities, SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals