THINKPEACE ACT PEACE INITIATIVE

*Presents*

**Think Peace, Act Peace Students Conference**

**Theme: Young Researchers chatting the way for sustainable peace in Buea Municipality.**

**Pan-African University for West and Central Africa-Buea**

**Introduction.**

Think Peace, Act Peace Students Conferenceis an initiative which seeks to promote peace, social cohesion andyouth engagement in peace building by providing a platform for young people researchers to undertakean analysis of peace and social cohesion through evidence-based research as well asdevelop innovative ideas in fostering peace and social cohesion in Buea. This Conference will provide a safe space for students to build on evidence-based research and theoretical perspectives to discuss issues of peace and social cohesion within the Buea Municipality in the Southwest Region of Cameroon.

The conference will have a pre-activity which will be a call for academic paper competition for young researchers to produce articles with innovative ideas in fostering peace and social cohesion in Buea. The most innovative ideas and papers will be presented at the conference, rewarded with a cash price as well as mentorship from UNESCO and LOYOC. The Young researchers who submit papers will be supported by the organizers to create a youth think thank research group to be hosted by the Pan African University for West Africa with the support of UPEACE.

**Background**

The current state of insecurity plaguing the North West and the South-West regions of Cameroon and the threats of spillover into other neighbouring regions have warranted UNESCO and other civil society stakeholders to explore alternative methods of conflict prevention to avoid escalation. Among these solutions is the putting in place of Early Warning/Early Response Mechanisms with a key component of engaging young people to lead this process through research and community engagements.

The Buea Municipality has been identified among the pilot communities for this initiative with key actions focusing on baseline studies, training and capacity building as well as engaging young people in research and community engagements. The Youth-led Organization; Local Youth Corner Cameroon (LOYOC) has been championing this process working with other youth-led organizations as well as academic institutions. These early warning/early response mechanisms initiative has as general objective to; alert stakeholders of the potential outbreak, escalation and resurgence of violent conflict; and promoting an understanding among stakeholders of the nature and impacts of violent conflict.

* To achieve this LOYOC developed the Think Peace, Act Peace Initiative which seeks to promote peace, social cohesion as well as engage young people in undertaking evidence-based research on the context of peace and social cohesion as well as provide innovative ideas in fostering peace and social cohesion in Buea.  The Key activities for this initiative include; Engage in a 1-month evidence-based youth-led research on peace and social cohesion.
* Organise a 1-month evidence-based research competition on innovative ideas on promoting peace and social cohesion at the University of Buea.
* Organise a 1-day peace and security seminar at the Pan African Institute for West Africa in Buea.

It seeks to create an alliance of good practices for peace in Buea, the conference also seeks to find answers for;

1. What are the causes of conflict in the Buea Municipality?
2. What is the role of Civil Society, Religious and Traditional Rulers in building peace in Buea?
3. How can dialogue be used in resolving conflicts in Buea?

**Objectives of the Conference**

This Conference will provide a safe space for students to build on evidence-based research and theoretical perspectives to discuss issues of peace and security within the Buea Municipality in the Southwest Region of Cameroon.

Specifically;

* Provide an opportunity for young researchers to develop creative ideas towards fostering peace and security in Buea
* Improve the culture of evidence-based research for young people.
* Create a network of young peace building researchers in the form of a think thank
* Provide an opportunity for mentorship of young researchers by senior researchers.

**Sub-themes of Conference**

These sub-themes have been identified based on the different thematic areas young researchers are expected to write and make presentations on during the conference

1. Responding to Land disputes within the Buea Municipality
2. A way forward to curb cybercrime among youths in Buea
3. Curbing hate speech and fake news as a key tool for peace and social cohesion in Buea
4. Harnessing on the role of traditional and religious authorities for peace and social cohesion in Buea
5. What can young people do to build peace and social cohesion in the Buea Municipality

**Methodology**

The conference will receive 20 papers and will screen to select the 5 best papers for presentation. The researchers will present their papers with an opportunity to receive feedback from their peers and other senior researchers present at the conference. An action-orientated approach will be adopted for all presentations. The methodology will blend academic presentations, case studies and experiences of practitioners. The conference will host keynote speakers from senior academia, and internationally experienced peace practitioners and offer space for young researchers and actors to present their contributions in poster sessions.

**Participants The conference**

It will draw young participants (15 to 35) from academia, individual peace practitioners, regional and international organizations, civil society groups and faith-based organizations that are directly involved in peace and social cohesion in Buea. 100 participants will be mobilized including 60 young people students, 20 senior academics and 20 CSO actors and other stakeholders.

**Expected results of the conference**

* The conference will create a forum for the participants to gain a deeper understanding from young people on building peace and social cohesion within the Buea Municipality.
* Provide an opportunity for young researchers to connect with and meet mentors from among senior researchers
* Provide an opportunity for young researchers to collaborate with young practitioners towards building peace and social cohesion
* Create a platform to improve youth research and mentorship in the domain of peace and social cohesion