

Minister of Youth and Arts Development Dr Utumatwishima Abdallah, on June 10, 2026, said that some Africans still hold mindsets that discourage self-driven development, arguing that failures are often wrongly attributed to history or divine influence rather than personal responsibility.

He made the remarks during a stakeholder meeting held to prepare for the YouthConnekt Africa Summit, which will bring together African youth and development partners in Kigali from Nov. 25-27, 2026.

Dr. Utumatwishima said the YouthConnekt initiative was inspired by President Paul Kagame's vision of placing African youth at the center of development, and urged participants to promote a mindset of self-reliance.



*Dr. Utumatwishima*

"The idea of YouthConnekt came from the broad thinking of President Paul Kagame, who believes African youth should be at the forefront of all development we aspire to achieve," he said. "What Rwanda envisions for this eighth edition is to help young people rethink themselves and move away from the idea that someone else owes us something."

He said Africans should avoid attributing setbacks to colonial history or external forces instead of focusing on internal solutions.

"Young people, businesspeople and leaders often look at colonial history when things don't work out," he said. "Some even say God is responsible for our challenges, but that is not the case. We want youth to lead thinking across all sectors without blaming others."

YouthConnekt Africa Chief executive director Yann Gwet said this year's summit will focus on preparing young people to respond to challenges facing their generation.

"Young people are facing many challenges, and leaders need to sit together and find solutions," he said. "This is the generation called to act."

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) resident representative in Rwanda, Dr. Fatmata Lovetta Sesay said the UN supports Rwanda's initiative to prioritize African youth and will continue to partner in its implementation.

Figures show YouthConnekt Africa has created about 200,000 jobs and reached around 50 million young people since its launch in 2017 through both in-person and digital platforms.

The summit has drawn participation from 39 African countries and has previously been hosted in Rwanda, Ghana and Kenya. The 2024 edition in Kigali brought together more than 3,000 participants from 33 countries.