

Call for Short Stories for the Decade of Action Initiative

Deadline extended to 28 February 2021

The Decade of Action Short Stories initiative is a platform established by the Economic Commission for Africa for young African creatives to re-imagine the Sustainable Development Goals through stories written in English (in phase 1). We are seeking stories written by African Youths born in Africa or with either of the two parents as African. At the time of submission, the writer should be above 15 years of age and below 35 years of age.

Themes: Stories are expected to be grounded on African perspectives, present or possible realities and futures as seen through the challenges of our times: climate change, environment, migration, health, technologies and innovation in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. They should capture the imagination around major challenges confronting the African continent: eradication of poverty and reduction of inequalities; climate action for a healthy planet and achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Though primarily published online, all shortlisted entries will be published in a special, *Decade of Action Anthology of Short Stories* publication to be launched at the next African Forum for Sustainable Development in March 2021.

Guidelines:

- **Genre: We invite you to explore** imaginative narratives culled from the following genres: *Afrofuturism, Science Fiction, Action Adventure, Fantasy, Speculative fiction, suspense, YA, historical fiction, mystery/crime and literary fiction*. *We will not accept erotica or chic lit*. Submissions in comic book form or graphic novel are welcome.
- **Language: English**
- **Number of words:** Written short stories should not exceed 3000 words.
- **Number of entries:** We will not accept more than one entry per submission.
- All submissions must be the original work of the author. We welcome translations, so do let us know if your work is translated from another language. Stories that are published elsewhere (online or print form) are welcome but do let us know so that we can explore publishing permissions. If you plan to submit to multiple outlets, please let us know.
- **Where to Submit: Introduce yourself and attach your submission to: eca-info@un.org** with the subject: **Submission for the Decade of Action Short Stories**
- **Keep it Simple.** Short stories should be in double space and in 12 font Times Roman and not more than 3000 words.
- **Deadline extended to 28 February 2021**

Acknowledgement: We will acknowledge selected authors **and invite them to participate in a workshop to enhance their submissions. The best 3 stories will be awarded.**

About the SDG Africa Short Stories Initiative

On 1 January 2016, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — adopted by world leaders in September 2015 at an historic UN Summit — officially came into force. Over the next fifteen years, with these new Goals that universally apply to all, countries will mobilize efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind. The SDGs build on the success of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and aim to go further to end all forms of poverty. The new Goals are unique in that they call for action by all countries, poor, rich and middle-income to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. They recognize that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and addresses a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection.

Then came COVID-19..

The year 2020 has forced countries to revise expectations due to the onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic that continues to devastate economies and threatens to destroy progress made in the implementation of the SDGs. The pandemic has exposed a range of vulnerabilities and social inequalities through job loss (ILO, 2020), while WFP predicts massive food shortages resulting from months of disruptions in the agricultural sector and supply chains. In responding to the pandemic, African countries have focused on tackling the health emergency and providing rescue measures and economic stimulus packages to protect livelihoods and trigger economic recovery.

Efforts to build back better seek to safeguard the SDGs in the long term, entrench resilience to withstand future shocks and move towards reduced impact of carbon emissions through transitioning to low-carbon.

In the ongoing debates, discussions and policy pronouncements, young people seek to engage through a variety of spaces and mechanisms. The creative sector offers them a space to contribute meaningfully and articulate their concerns, expectations and hopes on what it means to build back better.

The Economic Commission for Africa is playing its part in ramping up engagement and effort to meet the objectives of the **SDG Decade of Action**, with particular attention on three major challenges confronting the continent: **eradication of poverty and reduction of inequality; climate action for a healthy planet and achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.**

The SDGs story-telling project is also aligned with aspiration 5 of Agenda 2063 and among other issues, taps into “**Africa’s rich heritage and culture to ensure that the creative arts are major contributors to Africa’s growth and transformation..**”

This initiative is shaped by the following expectations:

- Contributing to awareness of SDGs in daily living in language that is creative and unusual among African youth

- Introducing diversity within existing SDG content that is curated for the Continent by African youth.
- Creating a platform for young African creative writers to inform, exchange and contribute to the COVID/SDGs discourse through creative forms of expression.

For more about the Economic Commission for Africa, go to www.uneca.org or follow us on twitter @ECA_Official