



REPORT

I. INTRODUCTION

The 9th Meeting of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child was held at the AU Conference Centre in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 29th to 31st May 2007.

II. ATTENDANCE

2. The meeting was attended by 9 Members of the African Committee as well as representatives from the following UN Agencies, NGOs and other Organisations dealing with children issues: UNICEF, WHO, ILO, UNAIDS, ICRC, WFP, IOM, ANPPCAN – Africa Regional Office – Nairobi, ANPPCAN-Ethiopia Chapter, Save the Children-Sweden-Nairobi, The African Child Policy Forum, The Institute for Security Studies – Ethiopia, CONAFE-Senegal, Forum on Street Children-Ethiopia, PLAN International –West Africa Regional Office, PLAN Ethiopia, Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund-South Africa; National Prosecuting Authority – Sexual Offences & Community Affairs (SOCA)-South Africa; Community Law Centre, University of Western Cape –South Africa; World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts – Nairobi; Centre for Conflict Resolution – South Africa.

III. OPENING CEREMONY

3. The official opening session was chaired by the AU Commissioner for Social Affairs.

i) Opening Remarks by the AU Commissioner for Social Affairs

4. In her opening remarks, Adv. Bience P. Gawanas, Commissioner for Social Affairs welcomed all participants. She noted that the ninth meeting of the Committee, would among others, discuss issues related to the rights, survival, protection and development of Africa’s children. She pointed out that although a number of commitments were made to children over the years, they have not been implemented. Thus African children were still faced with numerous challenges and remained vulnerable to the prevailing situation on the continent. She thanked all partners for supporting the work of the Committee and asserted that, within the short period of its existence, the Committee has managed to set up a strong base and adopted a number of important documents to enable it

function effectively. She then briefed the meeting about the preparations underway for the convening of the Second Pan- African Forum on Children to assess the implementation of the Plan of Action on Children. She indicated that a questionnaire has been sent out to all AU Member States to that effect and called on partners to follow-up the matter and ensure that the questionnaire is duly filled and sent back to the AU Commission.

5. Referring to the programme of the meeting, the Commissioner welcomed the initiative taken by the Committee to have an interactive session with the partners. She highlighted that the Committee had a lot to learn from the experience of partners especially in the consideration of State Party reports and requested them to provide the Committee with all the guidance it might require in this regard.

6. In conclusion, the Commissioner underscored the limited capacity of the African Committee to operate effectively due to the lack of a full-fledged Secretariat. She reiterated that the recruitment of the Secretary of the Committee was taking too long and proposed that until the establishment of a Secretariat, the Committee might consider to hold only one session per year. Finally, she assured the Committee members that, in spite of the difficult situation, the AU Commission would continue to fully support the Committee in achieving its goals. She then wished the meeting successful deliberation.

ii) Statement by the Chairperson of the Committee

7. In his statement, the Chairperson of the Committee welcomed the Committee members as well as the partners to Addis Ababa and thanked the AU Commission for convening the meeting. He then gave an overview on the situation of children on the continent. He highlighted that the lack of good governance, poverty, conflicts, HIV/AIDS, lack of peace and security and violence of human rights were having negative impacts on the lives of children in Africa.

8. He then briefed the meeting on activities undertaken by the Committee members during the inter-session as well as the meetings in which they participated. He highlighted that those missions afforded an opportunity to Committee Members to promote the rights and protection of children as well as make the Committee known. He then dwelt on the importance of the Committee to have a full-fledged Secretariat to enable it operate meaningfully. He noted that, because of the lack of a Secretariat, it has been difficult for the Committee to implement its recommendations and carry out the activities according to its work plan. However, he added that in spite of those difficulties the Committee was determined to carry out its mandate fully.

9. Finally, he recognized the important role the partners could play in the implementation of the activities of the Committee. He referred to the scheduled interactive session with partners and called on them to provide the Committee with any complementary information on the implementation of the Charter by

Member States. He thanked the Commissioner for Social Affairs as well as the Staff of the Department for their commitment and support to the Committee and declared the meeting open.

iv) **Consultation among Committee Members**

10. After the opening ceremony, Members of the Committee held a closed consultative meeting to discuss some procedural and administrative issues. The Committee considered the Agenda and Programme of Work and added an item on the Compatibility of the functions of two Committee Members recruited to other posts. It was explained that two Committee Members have joined other positions and there was need therefore to see how this would affect their membership within the Committee in conformity with Rule 11 of the Rules of Procedure of the Committee. The Agenda and Programme of Work were amended accordingly.

IV. **PROCEDURAL MATTERS**

Agenda Item 2: Adoption of the Agenda and Programme of Work

11. The Agenda and Programme of Work were adopted as amended. The Agenda is annexed to the Report.

V. **PROCEEDINGS OF DELIBERATIONS**

Agenda Item 3: Briefing on Preparations for the Second Pan-African Forum on the Declaration and Plan of Action on Children – Mid-Term Review Meeting

12. The Representative of the AU Commission gave an overview on preparations for the Second Pan-African Forum on the Declaration and Plan of Action on Children – Mid-Term Review Meeting. She recalled the process which led to the adoption of the African Common Position on Children – **Africa Fit for Children** - which was also Africa's contribution to the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children in 2002. She noted that the objectives of the Second Pan-African Forum on Children would be to: assess progress made by Member States in implementing the Plan of Action; review and adopt the Child Survival Roadmap; review and adopt a Call for Accelerated Action for Child Survival, Protection, Development and Participation which will constitute Africa's contribution to the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children in December 2007; forge partnership with development partners and CSOs; and chart the way forward for 2012 (Cairo + 10). She added that the Forum would also provide an opportunity to popularize the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, share experiences on the implementation of the Plan of Action on Children; and develop strategies for the implementation of the Plan of

Action to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings especially Women and Children as it relates to children.

13. With regard to preparations for the Forum, she highlighted that a questionnaire was developed and after the input by Committee members it was finalised and has been sent to Member States. She added that regional consultations were also envisaged and that the modalities for conducting such consultations were being worked out. She noted that the Committee Members had an important role to play in: ensuring that the questionnaire is duly filled in by Member States and returned to the AU Commission; and in identifying organisations that can participate in the regional consultations.

14. In the debate that followed, participants thanked the AU Commission for the presentation. It was highlighted that there was need to have clear indications on how the regional consultations would be conducted and work out the time frame for holding them. It was also recommended that the Call for Accelerated Action for Child Survival, Protection, Development and Participation should constitute Africa's contribution to the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children in December 2007.

Agenda Item 4: Overview on Participation Rights of Children – UNICEF

15. In his presentation, the Representative of UNICEF defined child participation as referred to in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. He then dwelt on the importance of child participation and indicated the benefits it provides to the child. He underscored the eight levels of child participation and the space needed for child participation. He added that participation should be meaningful as it affords children an opportunity to express their views and be involved in decisions or take action. He then referred to child participation in the African context and to Article 31 of the African Charter on the responsibilities and duties of the child towards his/her family and the society. The Presenter then highlighted the need to promote child participation in order to make children more visible and avoid them from being exploited and abused. In conclusion, he emphasized that children's participation was a right and that children were free to express their views. Consequently, children should not be pressurized or be prevented from expressing their opinion. They should be allowed to exercise their rights to participation within the family, at school and in the community at large.

16. In the debate that ensued, the following matters were raised:

- a) UNICEF were thanked for the presentation;
- b) It was felt that the presentation should have focused more on the African Charter;
- c) Child participation was an important issue which has been neglected for too long;
- d) Establishment of children's parliament should be encouraged;

- e) UNICEF should work in partnership with other NGOs to educate the community on the ACRWC and to have a common code of conduct for the development of children;
- f) It was necessary to document methodologies and modalities for ensuring child participation among different programmes in Africa. This would be a good tool for making comparisons and identifying commonalities and best practices.
- g) Children should be given the necessary space to participate freely in matters concerning them;
- h) There was need to develop guidelines on child participation in order to educate Governments, NGOs and other organisations dealing with children on how to involve children and ensure their participation.

Agenda Item 5: Brief presentations by Partners

17. The representatives from the following UN Agencies, IGOs NGOs, and Organisations made presentations: Save the Children – Sweden, Centre for Conflict Resolution, CONAFE, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, African Child Policy Forum, Plan International, ILO-IPEC, ICRC, IOM, UNICEF, National Prosecuting Authority – Sexual Offences & Community Affairs (SOCA), ANPPCAN-Ethiopia, ANPPCAN Africa Regional Office, the Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund, Forum on Street Children, and the Community Law Centre.

18. All the partners briefed the meeting on the different activities they were carrying out to ensure the promotion of the rights and welfare of children on the continent . They all appreciated the work being done by the Committee in spite of the difficult situation under which it was operating. They committed to continue to support and promote the work of the Committee.

19. The Chairperson thanked the partners and appreciated their interest in the Committee. He noted that the Committee was ready to cooperate with them in the common endeavour to fight the cause of children. He requested them to submit their presentations in writing to enable the Committee know more about their organizations.

Agenda Item 6: Plan of Action of the Committee (2005-2009) and Resource Mobilisation

20. In presenting this item, the Representative of the AU Commission recalled that the Committee had adopted its Plan of Action during its 7th Session and it had requested the AU Commission to work out the budget for the various activities. She noted that the document has been prepared taking into consideration the concern raised by the Committee Members that the budget should include all activities and indicate clearly the amount to be contributed by the AU Commission. She highlighted that in the document a column has been

added to show the amount the AU Commission would contribute to on each activity.

21. In considering the document, it was recalled that the budget for the Plan of Action had been presented to the previous meetings and had been adopted in principle. The AU Commission was only requested to indicate the amount which it would contribute in relation to the various activities. It was also underlined that the budget of the plan of action should be tied to resource mobilization. The Chairperson of the Committee informed the Committee members that the budget would be discussed with some of the partners, namely, UNICEF, Plan International and Save the Children – Sweden on Thursday, 31 May 2007 to exchange views on how the partners could assist the Committee in implementing some of its activities. In this regard, it was proposed that the Committee should come up with a list of priority to facilitate the discussion with the partners.

22. After a lengthy debate, it was agreed that the list of priority to be presented to the partners should include:

- a) The establishment of the Secretariat;
- b) Consideration of the State Party Reports;
- c) Lobbying mission for the ratification of the ACRWC;
- d) Popularisation of the ACRWC;
- e) Follow up mechanism for the implementation of activities at continental level

Agenda Item 7: Status of implementation of the recommendations of the 8th Meeting of the ACERWC

23. The Representative of the AU Commission presented the report by highlighting the main recommendations taken on each of the item discussed by the 8th Session of the Committee and the action taken to implement them.

24. In the debate that followed, the following issues were raised:

- a) On the lobbying missions, it was agreed that the AU Commission should send a reminder to the Member States concerned. It was also proposed that UNICEF could be requested to assist in liaising with the Governments at the country level in order to expedite the missions;
- b) Following the communication received from Tunisia, the Committee decided that the Members would visit the Central African Republic instead.
- c) the Committee should expedite the process for the consideration of the State Party reports.
- d) If violence against children cannot be included on the Accra Summit Agenda in July 2007, the item should be put on the Agenda of the following Summit.

- e) The partners should be requested to assist in recruiting temporary personnel for the Secretariat of the Committee.

Agenda Item 8: Consideration of the draft framework for the list of issues for the consideration of State Parties Reports

25. In presenting the report, the Chairperson of the Committee indicated that he has developed the draft framework to facilitate the task of the Committee Members in considering the State Party reports. He stated that the document was divided into three sections, namely: the General country data or context; the Observations on the Status of implementation of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child; and Drawing up a list of questions. He then highlighted the salient points under each section.

26. In the debate that followed, Committee Members thanked the Chairperson for his initiative to elaborate the framework. It was however recalled that Prof. Ebigbo had circulated a similar but more elaborative document on the same issue during the last meeting and that the two documents complemented each other. It was therefore decided that Mme Diakhate and Prof. Ebigbo would look at the two documents and come up with one comprehensive framework.

Agenda Item 9: Compatibility of the Functions of two Committee Members recruited to other posts

27. The Chairperson of the Committee informed the members that Mme Diakhate has been appointed Judge to the Court of Justice of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA). Similarly, Mrs. Dawlat Hassan has sent a message to say that she would not attend the meeting because she has been appointed Adviser to the Minister of Agriculture and International Relations. He referred to Article 11.2 and 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Committee and stated that the Committee should consider whether the posts taken by the two Committee Members were incompatible with their functions in the Committee and if they should continue to be on the Committee.

28. The Committee exchanged views on the matter taking into consideration what was stipulated in Rule 11. 2 and 3. It also heard the views of the Representative of the AU Legal Counsel who indicated that if the Committee found that the posts taken were not incompatible with the functions of the Committee, then the Committee should take the decision as called for in Rule 11.3.

29. After the discussions, the Committee decided as follows:

- a) that the posts taken by Mrs Diakhate and Mrs Dawlat were not incompatible with their functions within the Committee;

- b) they should continue to be members of the Committee. However, they should affirm their availability to participate in the meetings and activities of the Committee;
- c) A letter should be sent to Mrs Dawlat to that effect. The letter would be drafted for the signature of the Committee Chairperson before his departure.

Agenda Item10: Frequency of Meetings of the Committee

30. The Representative of the AU Commission explained that the Commissioner for Social Affairs made the proposal that the Committee meets only once annually because a full-fledged Secretariat was not yet in place and also due to lack of human capacity, the Department of Social Affairs was finding it difficult to organize the two meetings. She also informed the Committee that a letter was sent to the Chairperson of the Committee to that effect. She emphasized that this was just a proposal and that the Committee was free to take a decision on the matter.

31. In the debate that followed, it was highlighted that:

- a) The Committee had a lot of work and was working behind schedule. In particular, it needed to consider the reports which it has received;
- b) The Committee could not change its Rules of Procedure which stipulates that the Committee should meet at least twice a year;
- c) The AU Commission should endeavour to find out urgent ways to establish the Secretariat to enable the Committee accomplish its work effectively;
- d) The AU Commission should explore the possibility of appointing temporary staff and establish the Secretariat urgently;
- e) The Committee would lose its credibility if it cannot convene its meetings and achieve its mandate.

32. The Committee rejected the proposal made by the Commissioner. However, the Committee proposed that the urgency to establish a Secretariat be raised with partners with a view to finding out if they could assist in any way. The urgent need to meet with the AU Chairperson or the Deputy Chairperson was also emphasized. In this regard, the Committee was informed that both the AU Chairperson and the Deputy Chairperson were out of Addis Ababa. A proposal was made for Members of the Committee to at least meet with the Director of Administration and Human Resource Development who could follow up the appointment of the Secretary to the Committee with the office of the Deputy Chairperson.

Agenda Item 11: Celebration of the Day of the African Child 2007 and theme for the June 2008 DAC

33. The Representative of the AU Commission informed the meeting that, pursuant to the adoption of the theme of the 2007 Day of the African Child which is “Combat Child Trafficking”, the AU Commission has communicated the theme to all Member States and partners. The joint AU-EU Plan of Action on Trafficking against Human Beings especially Women and Children, which was adopted by the AU Summit in January 2007, was also forwarded to them. She pointed out that at the AU level no specific programme was envisaged however, a message would be delivered by the AU Chairperson on the theme.

34. In the debate that followed, Committee Members were reminded that they should be involved in organizing events for DAC and continue to participate actively in the celebrations for DAC at country level.

35. With regard to the theme for June 2008 Day of the African Child, it was agreed that as recommended by the 8th Meeting of the ACERWC, the theme would be: “Right to Participation: Let Children be Seen and Heard”.

Agenda Item 12: Consultations with Partners

i) State Party Reports

36. Under this item, the Chairperson of the Committee explained that the Committee would soon have to consider State Parties reports which it has already received from Egypt, Mauritius, Kenya, Nigeria and Rwanda. In this regard, he referred to Section V of the Procedures for the consideration of State Party Reports which spells out the requirements prior to the consideration of the reports. He highlighted that the Committee would require complementary reports to enable it examine the reports meaningfully. He also noted that some of the NGOs and other Organisations already have experience in dealing with the UN Committee and in the preparation of the complementary reports. He therefore called on the partners to share their experiences with the Committee and provide it with appropriate guidance to facilitate the process of the examination of the country reports.

37. The Representative from ILO gave an overview on the process the ILO has adopted in considering the reports on the implementation of the two core Conventions on Child Labour by the ILO Experts Group.

38. The Representative of the Senegalese National Coalition of Associations and NGOs for Children (CONAFE – Senegal) related his experience on the process of consideration of Senegal’s periodic report by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, especially in the preparation and presentation of a supplementary report. CONAFE - Senegal also participated, as

observer, in the meeting at which Senegal's report was considered. He emphasized that it was important for the Committee to develop set guidelines for use by the NGOs in preparing their reports, and underscored the importance of participation of an NGO advisory group in the preparation and submission of supplementary/alternative reports to the Committee, by civil society organizations.

39. The Representative of ANPPCAN – Ethiopia concurred with CONAFE-Senegal that the Committee needs to have clear guidelines for NGOs as well as other bodies which would be requested to submit reports.

40. The Representative of ANPPCAN Regional Office suggested that the Committee should invite NGOs with network organizations in Africa to give information on the situation of children in their Member countries.

41. The Representative of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts(WAGGGS) also gave a brief on the way her Association deals with reports. She also indicated that WAGGGS contributed to the report sent by Kenya to the UN Committee. She pointed out that the African Committee should establish an Advisory Group of NGOs to gather the additional reports.

42. The Representative of the Centre for Conflict Resolution proposed that the Committee should not only request for general report from NGOs but could also call for thematic reports on specific theme/topic.

43. In the debate that ensued, the following were highlighted:

- a) since the African Committee has not established an Advisory Group yet, it could call on any NGO or Organisation to provide complementary reports, if necessary;
- b) the Committee should have its own guidelines for the reports;
- c) it was cautioned that thematic reports could be contradictory. It was therefore necessary to have a partnership between the Governments, the CSOs and NGOs in the elaboration of the country report;
- d) it was necessary to popularize and strengthen the involvement of the NGOs at all levels in the preparation of the reports;
- e) there was need to have an audit on existing coalitions, NGOs and CSOs operating at national level;
- f) a request was made to the UN Agencies, NGOs and other partners to provide the Committee with any supplementary reports on the State Parties which have already submitted their reports in order to enable the Committee examine them meaningfully;
- g) there was need to revive the NGO group which was established following the African Child Policy Forum meeting in Addis Ababa in May 2006;
- h) The Committee could also learn from the experience of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights;

- i) The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child should be put at the same level of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and State Parties should be encouraged to report to the African Committee the same way they do to the UN Committee.

44. Finally, it was recommended that:

- a) it was important to establish a Working Group to work with the Committee and prepare for the pre-session;
- a) The Committee could obtain information from any NGO, CSO and other Organizations;
- b) It was important for the Committee to constantly remind State Parties to submit their reports.

ii) **Observer Status**

45. Replying to a question raised on the need for partners to request for observer status with the Committee, the Chairperson recalled that the Committee had already adopted its criteria for granting observer status to NGOs and Associations with the Committee. In this regard, he called on partners to submit their requests for observer status latest by May 2008. It was agreed that the document on the criteria would be distributed to all partners.

46. Finally, the Chairperson thanked all partners for their positive and pertinent contributions and added that the collaboration between the two parties would continue.

Agenda Item 13: Any Other Business

47. The following issues were raised under this item:

i) **Brief by Committee Members**

48. Committee Members reported on the different missions they undertook within the framework of the Committee. Mr. Zoungrana, the Chairperson briefed the Committee on his participation in the three meetings:

- **The Third Conference of African Ministers of Health**

49. Mr. Zoungrana briefed the meeting on his participation in the Third Conference of African Ministers of Health held in Johannesburg in April 2007, the outcome of which was the adoption of important documents such as the Health Strategy for Africa (2007-2015) and the Plan of Action on Violence Prevention in Africa. He reported that he seized that opportunity to inform participants about violence being perpetrated to children in Uganda. He also interacted with the

Ministers to promote the rights of children and ensure better health for them in Africa.

- **Regional Symposium on Harmonization of Legislation in East and Southern Regions**

50. Mr Zoungrana also reported on his active participation in the Regional Symposium on Harmonization of Legislation in Eastern and Southern Regions organised by the African Child Policy Forum in Nairobi. The meeting afforded an opportunity to know about the best practices and to promote the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. He noted that the report of the Symposium could be utilized in the consideration of the State Party reports.

- **Roundtable of Experts on an African Report on Child Rights**

51. The Chairperson also participated in the Roundtable of Experts on preparation of an African Report on Child Rights organised by the African Child Policy Forum held in Lagos, Nigeria. During that meeting, he proposed the establishment of a Knowledge Centre on Children, elaboration of a Report on the rights of the child; and more collaboration between the African Committee and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

- **Regional Seminar on the Strengthening of the AU Framework for the Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflicts**

52. Mr. Sissoko briefed the meeting on his participation in the Regional Seminar on Strengthening the AU Framework for Protection of Children affected by Armed Conflicts organised by the Centre for Conflict Resolution in Johannesburg. He reported that he seized the opportunity to brief the participants on the activities of the Committee and on the need to involve the Committee in the AU peace and security process. He also had fruitful interaction with the NGOs on the sidelines of the meeting. He further informed the Committee that the Centre for Conflict Resolution has offered to train Committee Members on conflict management and resolution. One of the recommendations of the Seminar was in relation to the appointment of a focal point from the Committee to follow issues related to children and armed conflict.

53. In reaction to the presentation, Committee Members welcomed and accepted the offer made by the Centre for Conflict Resolution to train them. The Committee also nominated Mr. Sissoko as focal person to liaise with the Centre.

- **Brainstorming Session between the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Permanent Representatives' Committee**

54. Mrs. Pholo reported that she participated in the brainstorming session between the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) and the Permanent Representatives' Committee (PRC) held in Maseru in May 2007.

The objective of the Meeting was to exchange views, look at the challenges facing the ACHPR and adopt strategies to overcome them. During the meeting, the ACHPR also raised the issue of its relationship with the other organs of the AU Commission and the need to strengthen its capacity. Mrs. Pholo indicated that her participation was limited, as she was not informed of the meeting in good time.

- **Meeting on the implementation of AU Decisions related to Human Rights**

55. Mrs. Koffi informed the meeting that she participated in the meeting on implementation of AU Human Rights Decisions held in Accra in May 2007. The meeting examined the procedure adopted by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights for the conduct of its studies and its activities. It was pointed out that many Member States do not know about African legal instruments and human rights protection mechanisms. The meeting also highlighted the need for better collaboration between AU organs and the various African legal institutions and for enlisting the services of African experts.

- **The Fifth African Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect**

56. Prof. Ebigbo briefed the meeting about his participation in the Fifth African Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect organised by ANPPCAN in Kampala on the theme HIV/AIDS and Children. The Conference debated on a number of important issues related to HIV/AIDS, including the need for drugs. The negative impact of HIV/AIDS on children, the family and the society at large was also discussed at length. The outcome of the Conference was the adoption of a children's declaration.

- ii) **Item to be included in the Agenda of the next meeting of the Committee**

57. The Committee debated on the above issue and agreed to include the following items on the Agenda of its next meeting:

- a) Overview on Article 31 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. In this regard, a Consultant could be requested to prepare an overview and present it to the meeting;
- b) The best interest of the child in conformity with Article 4 of the ACRWC.

- iii) **AU Award on Children's Champions**

58. After the debate on the issue, the Committee decided that a prize for Children's Champions should be awarded every two years.

iv) Observer Status

59. It was recalled that during its last meeting the Committee adopted the criteria for granting observer status to NGOs and other organisations with the Committee. In conformity with that document which is already in force, the Committee decided that NGOs and Organisations which have been attending the Committee's meeting should regularize their status with the Committee and others, who were interested in participating in the Committee's meetings, should formally apply for observer status. It was also decided that a transition period of one year would be given to Organisations to apply, that is up to May 2008. It was agreed that the document on the Criteria would be put on the AU Webpage www.africa-union.org/child.

v) Mobilisation of Resources

60. It was recalled that during its eighth meeting the Committee made recommendations on strategies for resource mobilisation. The Committee reiterated the urgency to carry out this exercise and Committee Members were reminded that, as agreed, each member should approach his/her Head of State for assistance. It was also agreed that the core group which was established by the last meeting should continue its work and develop a plan for resource mobilisation. The AU Commission was requested to prepare the necessary documentation and follow-up on the recruitment of the Consultant which was also agreed upon during the last meeting.

Remarks by the UNICEF Representative to the AU and the ECA

61. In his statement, Mr. Bjorn Ljungqvist, the UNICEF Representative to the AU and the ECA thanked the Committee for inviting him to say a few words. He emphasized that, for the UN system, the Committee represented one of the organizational frameworks for monitoring the progress of children in Africa. He noted that Africa was a continent of young people and that the right institutional set-up should be established in order to respect the rights of children and ensure their welfare and development. He then gave an overview of the prevailing situation of children in the Continent. He pointed out that, as the custodian of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the Committee had a leadership role to play in ensuring its implementation. He added that, among its priority, the Committee should ensure that all Member States ratify the African Charter and establish the necessary mechanisms at national level to ensure the implementation of its provisions. He recognized the limited capacity of the Committee and assured Committee Members that the entire UN system was willing to support and assist them in carrying out their mandate.

62. Mr. Ljungqvist then reminded the Committee about the Mid-Term Review Meeting to be held during 2007 and the leadership role it could play to ensure its success. He noted that the meeting would provide an opportunity to take stock of and assess progress made in implementing the Plan of Action on children and

report back to the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government. He indicated that considerable progress has been made in many areas related to children but a lot still remained to be done. He explained that the AU Commission as well as the entire continent had faith in the Committee and were confident that the Committee could play a meaningful role in scaling up the children's Agenda in Africa. He reiterated UNICEF's unrelenting support to the Committee and wished it all the best in carrying out its mandate.

Agenda Item 14: Adoption of the Draft Report

63. The Draft Report was adopted as amended.

Appreciation

64. Before proceeding to the closing ceremony, the Chairperson of the Committee presented gifts to the Commissioner for Social Affairs and Ms. S. Rahim in appreciation of their dedication to the work of the Committee. In the absence of the Commissioner, Dr. Gad accepted the gift on her behalf. Ms. Rahim sincerely thanked Committee Members for that laudable gesture.

Agenda Item 15: Closing

a) Dr. Laila Gad, Head of Social Welfare, Culture & Sports and Drugs and Related Crimes Control Division

65. On behalf of the AU Commission, Dr. Laila Gad, Head of Social Welfare, Culture & Sports and Drugs and Related Crimes Control Division congratulated the Committee for the successful conclusion of its meeting. She recalled the difficult situation under which the Committee was functioning and reaffirmed that the AU Commission would continue to support its activities and deploy every effort to strengthen its capacity. She thanked all partners for their participation and valuable contributions as well as their support to the Committee. She noted that the meeting has provided a forum to establish a strong partnership between the Committee and the partners and expressed the wish that that collaboration would be enhanced.

b) Mr. Jean-Baptiste Zoungrana, Chairperson of the Committee

66. In his closing remarks, the Chairperson of the Committee, Mr. Jean-Baptiste Zoungrana, thanked all partners and participants for their active participation in the meeting. He expressed concern regarding the many challenges facing children on the continent and reasserted the Committee's commitment to continue its struggle in promoting the rights and welfare of the African child.

67. He then recalled the recommendations taken by the 9th Meeting, which included, among others: the need for the AU Commission to appoint the

Secretary to the Committee and establish a Secretariat without delay; to retain the two members, who have been appointed in other posts on the Committee; to continue to hold two meetings annually; “Right to Participation: Let Children be Seen and Heard” should be the theme for the June 2008 Day of the African Child; and that the AU Award for Children’s Champions should be organized every two years. He added that the Committee also nominated Mr. Sissoko as focal person to follow up on the activities on children in conflict situation with the Centre for Conflict Resolution. Concerning the session with partners on the State Party reports, he indicated that one of the recommendations was that the Committee could obtain additional information from partners on the reports already received from Egypt, Mauritius, Kenya, Rwanda and Nigeria. He also recalled that, in conformity with the adopted criteria for observer status with the Committee, the partners who have been attending the Committee’s meetings have been requested to regularize their status and others have been called upon to forward their applications before May 2008. . He also recalled the fruitful discussions the Committee had with some partners on resource mobilisation and noted that the commitments made during that meeting would enable the Committee to move forward and implement some of its activities.

68. In conclusion, the Chairperson thanked all Committee Members for their invaluable contributions. He strongly appealed to the AU Commission to expedite the recruitment of the Secretary to the Committee as well as the establishment of the Secretariat. He thanked the Commissioner for Social Affairs as well as all the staff of the Department of Social Affairs for their continued cooperation and support. He also thanked the Interpreters and all technical staff for contributing to the success of the meeting. He wished everybody a safe journey back home and declared the meeting closed.