



ACERWC

African Committee of Experts on
the Rights and Welfare of the Child

STATEMENT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES ON INTERNATIONAL ALBINISM AWARENESS DAY

13 June 2024,

The Working Group on Children with Disabilities in Africa of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (the Committee) joins the global community on this 13th day of June 2024 to commemorate the 10th International Albinism Awareness Day, celebrated under the theme ‘A decade of collective progress’. Reflecting on a decade of advocacy and action, significant milestones have been achieved under the Committee and broader African Union (AU) umbrella.

As the primary continental body on children’s rights, the Committee is cognizant of the unique challenges that children with albinism face in the full enjoyment of their rights under the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. The Committee has undertaken various activities, including the adoption of Agenda 2040, with Aspiration 7 dedicated to ending harmful practices, highlighting the ritual killing and maiming of persons with albinism among others.

In 2020, the Committee established the Working Group on Children with Disabilities with the mandate to set standards and develop strategies to ensure the inclusion of children with disabilities in various aspects, as well as engage in sensitization activities to combat negative stigmas, emphasizing the importance

of a rights-based approach. Through Resolution No. 19/2022, the Working Group addresses the critical need for improved healthcare access and protective measures, such as sunscreen and hats, for children with albinism while also highlighting the social and cultural prejudices that perpetuate violence against these children.

The Committee continues to advocate for stronger stakeholder actions, as exemplified by the recent Day of General Discussion (DGD) on the solutions to challenges faced by children with albinism, held during the 43rd Ordinary Session from 15 to 25 April 2024 in Maseru, Lesotho. The DGD focused on the lived experiences of children with albinism, identifying practical solutions to ensure they fully enjoy their rights, and emphasizing the need for increased stakeholder action and support.

At the broader African Union level, notable initiatives include:

- 2016: Resolution 349 of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) on the attacks on persons with albinism in Malawi
- 2017: Resolution 373 of the ACHPR on the Regional Action Plan on Albinism in Africa 2017-2021
- 2018: Adoption of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa (Africa Disability Protocol) which acknowledges the specific challenges faced by persons with albinism
- 2021: AU Plan of Action to End Attacks and Other Human Rights Violations Targeting Persons with Albinism in Africa (2021-2031) (AU Plan of Action)
- 2022: Pan African Parliament Guidelines on the Elimination of Harmful Practices Related to Accusations of Witchcraft and Ritual Attacks

At the national level, some countries have strived to provide greater protection for persons and children with albinism, including through constitutional provisions, Children's Acts, Persons with Disability Acts, Witchcraft Suppression Acts and Penal Codes, among others. Some have gone a step further and developed national action plans for persons with albinism to ensure better access to education, healthcare, psychosocial and other services.

Despite progress, the Committee is deeply concerned about the ongoing prevalence of harmful practices in Africa targeting these children, such as ritual killings and maiming. Furthermore, there remains a notable absence or inadequacy of measures aimed at enhancing the quality of life for children with albinism, including the lack of accessible and affordable medical care tailored to their needs on an equitable basis with other children in their respective communities and the limited availability and accessibility of appropriate protective gear, such as sunscreen and hats.

In commemorating International Albinism Awareness Day, the Working Group on Children with Disabilities reaffirms its commitment to promoting and protecting the rights and welfare of children with albinism in Africa. The Working Group calls on AU Member States, National Human Rights Institutions, Organizations of Persons with Disabilities, Non-Governmental and Civil Society Organizations, and all other relevant stakeholders to:

- Urge Member States to ratify the Africa Disability Protocol and implement the AU Plan of Action (2021-2031)
- Consolidate national data systems to gather reliable, disaggregated data on witchcraft accusations and ritual attacks against children with albinism and include relevant data in State Party reporting
- Foster the full participation and integration of children with albinism into all aspects of society, including education, healthcare, and social services.

- Enhance access to quality healthcare and education for children with albinism by providing reasonable accommodations such as protective gear—including sunscreen, hats, and glasses—and adapting classroom settings with larger fonts and accessible information to address visual impairments
- Implement targeted awareness-raising initiatives to educate communities and institutions about albinism, dispelling myths and reducing stigma and discrimination
- Strengthen intersectoral collaboration and capacity building among stakeholders to ensure a holistic and harmonized approach to addressing the challenges faced by children with albinism
- Support efforts to prosecute perpetrators of attacks against children with albinism and provide psychosocial support to victims and survivors and their families.

Done in Maseru, Kingdom of Lesotho

13 June 2024