



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



ACHPR
African Commission on
Human & Peoples' Rights

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PRESS STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Joint letter issued by the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Regarding the Upcoming Reading of the Child Rights Act 2024 in the Republic of Sierra Leone

19 MAY, 2025

The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC/the Committee) and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa (SRRWA) of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) have jointly issued a follow-up letter to the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone regarding the upcoming reading of the Child Rights Act 2024.

This follow-up comes in reference to the Committee's previous Urgent Appeal sent on 24 October 2024, expressing concern over parliamentary discussions on the removal of a provision explicitly prohibiting Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) from the first reading. The Committee and the SRRWA reaffirm that the exclusion of such a provision would constitute a serious gap in the child protection framework, making specific reference to the obligations of State Parties under Article 21(1) of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC/the Charter) and Article 5 of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights on Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol).

The joint letter further underscores that the final version of the Child Rights Act 2024 should be grounded in the four guiding principles of the Charter:

- The best interests of the child as a primary consideration in all legislative decisions;

- Non-discrimination, ensuring equal protection for all children regardless of gender or cultural background;
- Survival and development, affirming the child's inherent right to life and well-being; and
- Child participation, recognising the right of children to express their views freely and for those views to be given due weight.

The Committee and the SRRWA reiterate the need to retain the explicit and enforceable prohibition of FGM, ensuring that legislative measures are geared towards strengthening the child protection system and overall fulfilment of obligations of Sierra Leone under the ACRWC, the Maputo Protocol, and other international instruments.

The Committee and the ACHPR remain available to support the Government of Sierra Leone in ensuring the enactment of a robust Child Rights Act that reflects the spirit of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and protects all children from harmful practices.

For more information:

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Notes to Editors:

The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) is a body of the African Union responsible for monitoring the implementation of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), as well as promoting and protecting children's rights in Africa. Following the entry into force of the Charter on 29 November 1999, the Committee was established in July 2001 in accordance with Article 32 of the Charter. To date, the Charter has been ratified by 51 of the 55 Member States of the African Union. The Committee's mandate is derived from Articles 32 to 45 of the Charter and includes, among other responsibilities, conducting research and studies on issues related to children's rights.