



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

**45<sup>th</sup> ORDINARY SESSION OF THE AFRICAN  
COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON THE RIGHTS AND  
WELFARE OF THE CHILD (ACERWC)  
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**SESSION REPORT**



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## INTRODUCTION

1. The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC/Committee) held its 45<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session from 07-11 April 2025. During the Session, the Committee held an advocacy session with Central African Republic on the submission of its initial report, launched its studies on Implementation of the Decisions and Recommendations of the ACERWC and Climate Change and Children’s Rights in Africa: A Continental Overview. The Committee also held various panel discussions including a panel focusing on the follow-up of the First Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children, among others. Moreover, the Committee held hearings on Communications, considered pending Communications, and various documents.

## ATTENDANCE

2. The 45<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session was attended by Members of the Committee, the Deputy Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho, the Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs, and Social Development, the Representatives of AU Organs namely the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, the African Court on Human and Peoples Rights, and the Pan African Parliament, Representatives of Member States, Representatives of the African Union Commission, Children’s Representatives, Civil Society Organizations, Network of African National Human Rights Institutions and National Human Rights Institutions, Representatives of UN Agencies and Mechanisms, UN Affiliated Organizations, as well as international, regional and local nongovernmental organizations.

3. The Members of the Committee who attended the Session for the entire duration are:

- I. Hon Wilson De Almeida Adão- Chairperson
- II. Hon Aver Gavar- Vice Chairperson
- III. Hon Anne Musiwa- Rapporteur
- IV. Hon Hermine Kembo Takam Gatsing
- V. Hon Robert Doya Nanima
- VI. Hon Aboubekrine El Jera
- VII. Hon Poloko Nuggert Ntshwarang
- VIII. Hon Ghislain Roch Estan
- IX. Hon Joseph Sunday Sinnah

5. The List of Member States who participated in the Session are: Peoples' Democratic Republic of Algeria, Republic of Botswana, Republic of Burundi, Republic of Chad, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kingdom of Eswatini, Republic of Kenya, Kingdom of Lesotho, Republic of Malawi, Republic of Mozambique, Federal Democratic Republic of Nigeria, Republic of Tunisia, Republic of Senegal, Republic of South Africa, Republic of Uganda, Republic of Zambia, and Republic of Zimbabwe.

## **ITEM 1: Procedural Matters and Organisation of work**

6. Prior to the opening ceremony of its 45th Ordinary Session, the ACERWC convened to consider some preliminary procedural matters. After including an agenda item for the adoption of decisions regarding the theme of one Special Rapporteur, the Committee adopted the agenda of the Session. The Committee also assigned Members to evaluate applications for Observer Status and Affiliate Status.

## **ITEM 2: OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY**

Remarks by children's Representatives: ITUMELENG TENGTEG, Child Representative from Lesotho

7. Itumeleng Tengteng, a 14-year-old from SOS Children's Village in Quthing, Lesotho, spoke on behalf of children in Lesotho and across Africa. She thanked the Committee for monitoring efforts to protect children's rights but also highlighted ongoing violations including child marriage, human trafficking, and violence. Itumeleng stressed that children deserve to live in peace and be protected, not violated, and called for collective action beyond government efforts. She also drew attention to the impact of poverty on children's education and wellbeing and urged greater support for children with disabilities to ensure equal opportunities for all.

Remarks by CSO Forum Representative – Mrs FELISTUS MOTIMEDI-GAZANGENI

8. Ms Felistus Motimedi-Gazangeni, representing the Civil Society Organizations (CSO) Forum delivered a collective statement representing child-focused CSOs in the Continent. She acknowledged and commended the Committee's commitment to child participation, child-led decision-making, and ongoing efforts to uphold the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Ms Felistus also emphasized the critical need to safeguard civic

space for CSOs working in children’s rights. While celebrating strides made in advocating for child protection—especially in conflict zones like Sudan and the DRC—she raised serious concerns on the shrinking civic space, inadequate funding, insufficient data use in policymaking, the increasing threat of online exploitation, and systemic barriers facing marginalized groups, especially adolescent girls. The statement called for the inclusion of grassroots child rights practitioners in Committee processes and reiterated the CSO Forum’s commitment to advancing justice, education, and dignity for every child across Africa.

*Remarks by the Executive Director of the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI), Mr Gilbert Sebihogo,*

9. Mr. Gilbert Sebihogo, Executive Director of NANHRI, reaffirmed the network’s commitment to promoting children’s rights across Africa. He raised concern over rising violations in conflict-affected regions, including child recruitment, abductions, and sexual violence, urging stronger protection efforts. He also emphasized the impact of climate change on children, where school disruptions have increased vulnerability to child labor and child marriage. He also welcomed the Committee’s upcoming General Comment on education and called for inclusive, resilient systems that prioritize children. Mr. Sebihogo applauded the Committee’s work on harmful practices and climate change, encouraging child-sensitive policies and planning. Finally, he highlighted the key role of NHRIs in implementing the Committee’s decisions and reaffirmed NANHRI’s readiness to collaborate in ensuring the full realization of children’s rights under the African Charter.

*Remarks by the Dr LAILA OMAR GAD: UNICEF Representative to the AU and UNECA*

10. Dr. Laila Omar Gad, Representative of the UNICEF Office to the African Union and UNECA, in her remarks, congratulated the Committee as it marks both the session and the 35th anniversary of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Acknowledging the significant progress in promoting child rights across the continent, she emphasized the urgent need to address worsening challenges, which increase children’s vulnerability and undermine essential services such as education, health, nutrition, and protection. Dr. Gad stressed that without adequate and sustainable public investment, even the strongest legal frameworks cannot achieve meaningful impact and called on Member States to prioritize increased and equitable financing for child-focused services, improve accountability mechanisms, and fast-track ratification and reporting under the Charter. She also urged the Committee to proactively address emerging issues such as climate change, among others. Dr. Gad concluded by reaffirming UNICEF’s

strong and ongoing commitment to working in partnership with the Committee and the African Union to ensure that every child in Africa is protected, empowered, and able to thrive.

Remarks by Hon. Commissioner LITHA MUSYIMI-OGANA on behalf of Hon. REMY NGOY LUMBU: Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights

11. Speaking on behalf of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, Hon. Dr. Litha Musyimi-Ogana reaffirmed the Commission’s commitment to advancing the rights and welfare of African children. She commended the ACERWC for its leadership and emphasized the urgent need for stronger joint efforts to protect children from the devastating impacts of hunger, conflict, exploitation, and climate-related crises. Highlighting continued violations—especially in countries facing conflict like Sudan and DRC—she called for full implementation of protective legal frameworks, including the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Despite progress in setting legal standards, many challenges persist, such as harmful traditional practices, entrenched social norms, and inadequate enforcement. Dr. Musyimi-Ogana underscored the need for all African states to ratify and implement the Charter, ensuring children’s rights are translated into concrete policies and outcomes. She urged states and stakeholders to use the Joint General Comments on ending child marriage and FGM, and to fulfill commitments under Agenda 2063. She concluded with a call to collaborative action, affirming the Commission’s dedication to support the Committee in building an Africa where every child thrives in dignity, protection, and opportunity.

Remarks by Hon Lady Justice IMANI DAUD ABOUD: President of the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights

12. Hon. Lady Justice Imani Daud Aboud, President of the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights delivered a message of solidarity commending the Committee’s vital work in protecting children’s rights. She highlighted the strong collaboration between the African Court, the African Commission, and the Committee, citing joint initiatives such as meetings, legal staff exchanges, and joint responses to AU reforms. Justice Aboud recalled a recent case on Tanzania’s school policy for pregnant girls, where the Court referred to the Committee’s jurisdiction, demonstrating mutual respect and cooperation. She urged Member States to strengthen children’s rights protection by acceding to the Court’s Protocol and depositing the Article 34(6) declaration. Welcoming the Committee’s studies on implementation and climate change, she emphasized the importance of unified efforts to amplify children’s voices and advance their rights. As her term concludes, she

expressed confidence in the Committee's continued leadership, affirming that Africa's future depends on the protection of its children.

Remarks by Hon Dr ASHEBIR WOLDEGIORGIS GAYO 2nd Vice President of the Pan African Parliament

13. Hon. Ashebir Woldegiorgis Gayo, Vice President of the Pan African Parliament (PAP) in his remarks recognised the issue of violence against children on the continent, ranging from physical and emotional abuse to neglect, child labour, exploitation, trafficking and slavery and how it negatively impacts on children. He expressed concern for the statistics and the urgent necessity to address violence against children as it creates a cycle of harm that affects future generations. Vice President Gayo, reaffirmed the PAP's commitment to advocating for children's rights, working to harmonise continental legal frameworks, and holding Member States accountable to ensure that they meet their obligations at the national, regional and continental level. Emphasis was made on the importance of collaborations between the Parliament and the Committee to achieve progress in children's rights protection, in particular girls from early marriage and Female Genital Mutilation. Vice President Gayo stated the call to view children's rights issues not just as a human rights issue but that of development to the need to move into a more transformative leadership approach to overcome these challenges. He concluded his remarks with a reminder that the duty to protect every African child is a joint duty that requires urgency and determination.

Children's Performance by HLOMPHO MOKHOSE

14. A boy child representative, Hlompho Mokhose, from Lesotho performed a poem in English and Sesotho on the rights and responsibility of the African child.

*Remarks by H.E. Ambassador AMMA TWUM-AMOA: Commissioner, Health, Humanitarian Affairs, and Social Development*

15. Her Excellency Ambassador Amma Twum-Amoah, Commissioner of Health, Humanitarian Affairs, and Social Development commended the work of the Committee in the implementation of the ACRWC and its collaboration with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights among others. Her Excellency commended Member States that have adopted and domesticated the Charter. H.E. Amb. Amma expressed concern over harmful practices and substance use which require early intervention and accessible

support services such as health care, education, basic services as structural determinants for children's welfare. She went on to celebrate the adoption of the Protocol to the African Charter on the Right to Nationality and the Eradication of Statelessness by the Executive Council of the African Union as a pivotal moment for children born in displacement without legal identity. In closing, her Excellency called on all stakeholders to ensure that African children not only survive but thrive.

Remarks by Hon. Wilson De ALMEIDA ADÃO: Chairperson of the ACERWC

16. Hon. Wilson De Almedia Adao made his welcoming remarks and expressed gratitude to the Government of Lesotho for hosting the session and contributions made by partners in supporting the Committee. He delved into the Committee's intercession activities of convening the four Working Groups, the retreat to validate the Committee's new Strategic Plan, and the session's agenda to launch two reports on climate Change and the Implementation of Decisions of the Committee. Additionally, there will be several panel discussions and presentations on children and conflict, sustainable financing, and harmful practices. Hon. Wilson reflected on the work the Committee will be engaged in that relates to the AU and DAC theme on reparations and child planning and budgeting, and the 35th anniversary of the Charter. In closing, he called on all stakeholders to turn commitments into action, urged Member States to report on their obligations and CSOs to amplify the voices of children on issues that affect their welfare.

Remarks by Hon. PITSO LESAOANA: Minister of Gender, Youth, and Social Development, Kingdom of Lesotho

17. Hon. Pitso Lesaoana, Minister of Gender, Youth, and Social Development in his welcoming remarks expressed gratitude and pride in hosting the Committee's secretariat and the Government willingness to continue supporting the work of the Committee in their capacity as the custodians of children's protection and welfare in Lesotho. He stated that the Session has been a reminder for the profound collective responsibility as stakeholders in the obligation to fulfilling children's rights. In closing, he remarked that the Government, in collaboration with partners, commits to continue to put more effort in child protection and welfare, and invited the Hon. Deputy Prime Minister to give her opening remarks.

## Opening statement by Hon. Justice NTHOMENG MAJARA: Deputy Prime Minister and Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs of the Kingdom of Lesotho

18. The Deputy Prime Minister, Hon. Nthomeng Majara, in her statement recalled that in the past children were excluded in discussions that have an impact on their lives, but this has changed because of efforts of stakeholders such as the Committee on the importance of children's inclusion and participation. Hon Majara celebrated Lesotho's ratification of the ACRWC and said that this was a commitment to protect and respect the rights and welfare of Basotho children. Hon. Majara expressed her concern over the recent statistics on violence against children in Lesotho ranging from child marriage, trafficking, sexual violence and murder of young children, despite having made a pledge at the Bagota Convention to end violence against children. She submitted that Lesotho has developed a combat and response plan on ending violence against children which is currently being implemented but due to the scourge of the violence, there is a need for supplementary efforts. Hon. Majara remarked on the DAC theme on Planning and Budgeting for children and reiterated the necessity to prioritise investing in children's rights and needs by Governments. Speaking on the 35th Anniversary of the Charter celebration, she stated that the ACRWC has created a platform for Member States to share good practices, and that it is the collective duty to all to children who have the right to live in peace. In conclusion, Hon. Majara wished the participants of the Session a fruitful deliberation and declared it officially opened.

## Swearing In ceremony of the newly elected member of the Committee

19. Hon. Joseph Sunday Sinnah was sworn in as new Members of the Committee for a term until February 2026.

### **ITEM 3: Remarks by Member States**

20. The following Member States namely, Republic of Burundi, Republic of Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kingdom of Eswatini, Republic of Kenya, Republic of Mozambique, and Republic of Nigeria made their remarks. The Member States gave brief progress reports on the initiatives taken to implement the provisions of the Charter while highlighting the increase in challenges faced by children as a result of the ongoing conflicts and climate change. The Member States also made recommendations on how the Committee and Member States can collaborate to protect the rights of children in Africa.

## **ITEM 4: Remark by NHRIs with Affiliate Status**

21. The following National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) with affiliate status namely, Ivory Coast and Cameroon delivered brief remarks. The NHRIs made remarks on the progress made in the implementation of the Charter and the protection of children's rights. The NHRIs also highlighted the challenges that were still being faced, particularly regarding children in conflict, Sexual and Reproductive Health education, teen pregnancy, FGM and child marriage. They concluded with recommendations to the Committee and Member States that include intensive sensitization of parents on SRHR, child participation, and capacity building.

## **ITEM 5: Recommendations of the CSO Forum**

22. The CSO Forum reiterated its commitment to supporting the ACERWC in its mandate to protect the rights and welfare of children. The CSO Forum voiced its concerns with regards to issues including the humanitarian crises in Sudan, shrinking civic space and funding, lack of evidence-based policies, pregnant adolescent girls and violence against children.

23. Based on these issues, the CSO Forum made recommendations which include collaboration between the government and civil society to develop a reparations policy for children affected by conflict, encourage Observer Status by at least one CSO from each AU Member State, creation of a fund for children affected by climate change and reform of Early Childhood Development. Other recommendations included enhanced child participation, expedition of laws banning FGM, collaboration between the Governments, CSOs and the private sector, protection of children in the digital space, development of indicators to monitor adolescent reproductive health under the chapter, increase of resources to enhance service delivery to children investment in data systems.

24. Further to this, a child representative presented the outcome statement from Children's Forum which was held on the 29th of March 2025 organized by the CSO Forum. The statement highlighted the vision of the Children's Forum, the issues and challenges faced by children which included, child marriage, discrimination against children with disabilities, climate change and lack of child participation in decision making. The Children's Forum made recommendation such as the provision of education for all children including pregnant teenagers, development of policies to end child marriage, creation of safe spaces for children, climate action, laws protecting children in the digital world and ensures access to health care for all children.

## **ITEM 6: Remarks by SheLeads Project at the Pan African level- ECPAT**

25. Ms Nancy Barasa, representative of SheLeads Pan-African Board, introduced the project's work which is to increase the participation of girls and women in decision making and the transformation of gender norms. The project runs from 2021 to 2025 with particular focus in Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Liberia with ECPAT International, Plan International, AU Liaison Office, FEMNET, TDH and DCI as collaborators who have create space for girls and young women to participate. The project is said to address issues associated with Online Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OSEA) and Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV). These include, normalized online violence, limited digital literacy and awareness, cultural and social stigma, weak legal frameworks and system failure ad reporting.

26. To address these issues, several recommendations were made. These are: strengthening of legal protection mechanism, investment in education, enhancement of reporting mechanisms and for ACERWC to spearhead the implementation and monitoring of these recommendations.

## **ITEM 7: Remarks by Organizations with Observer Status**

27. Civil Society Organizations with Observer Status before the Committee made remarks on their undertakings, challenges faced and recommendations. The CSOs who made remarks include the African Child Policy Forum (ACPF), Save the Children International, Plan International, World Vision International, SOS Children's Village, Institute for Human Rights and Development (IHRDA), Equality Now, Center for Reproductive Rights, Graca Machel Trust, LUMOS Foundation, Child Helpline International, Amnesty International, Centre for Child Law, FAWE, Human Rights Watch, REPSSI, AfriChild Centre, Center for Human Rights, Center for Reproductive Rights, Child Fund, Uganda Child Rights NGOs Network, Winford Center for Children and Women, Terre des hommes (TDH), Zimbabwe National Council for the Rights and Welfare of the Child, Hope and Homes for children and. The following recommendations were made to the Committee during the remarks:

- Fast-track the adoption of the General Comment on Children Without Parental Care.
- Develop of policy recommendations for minimum quality standards for all alternative childcare options in Africa, on deinstitutionalisation of children without parental care and transitioning framework.
- Encourage Member States to adopt integrated interventions to combat violence against children in the context preventing family separation and mainstream positive parenting in care reform efforts,



- Urge the Republic of Guinea to ensure access to justice, immediate and long-term psychosocial and medical support for child victims of unlawful force, undertake independent investigations of the child killings and injuries from excessive force, ensure reparation, and prevent future violations.
- Urge for the opening of schools, for locally led peace processes prioritizing children, humanitarian access and civilian protection
- Encourage active participation of children and adolescent girls in all areas including in climate policy.
- Urge Member States to review, update, and enact mental health laws and policies with strong accountability for implementation and resource allocation.
- Consider formation of a Working group on child and adolescent mental health, a Working Group or Special Rapporteur on Child Budgeting and Working Group on Child Hunger and Nutrition.
- Develop a framework on the right to education for pregnant girls and adolescent mothers.
- Encourage States to accelerate efforts to end Female Genital Mutilation, child marriage, and sexual violence including online violence including by strengthening of political commitment, enforcing laws, and prioritizing survivor-focused Policies.
- Encourage the Signing and Ratification of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights Relating to the Specific Aspects of the Right to a Nationality and the Eradication of Statelessness in Africa (the Nationality Protocol)
- Encourage States Parties to use the Guidelines on Ending Violence against Children in Africa when developing their national policies and strategies to end VAC.

## **ITEM 8: Remarks by Development Partners**

28. Dr. Tobias Thiel, the Director of the GIZ Delegation to the African Union, started by highlighting the long-standing and trusted cooperation between GIZ African Union (funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development) and the Committee, which spans over a decade. He congratulated the Committee on its excellent recent progress.

29. He stated that the cooperation, particularly through the AWARE project (Promotion of Human Rights and Women's Empowerment in Africa), has been instrumental in strengthening ACERWC's institutional and programmatic capacities towards achieving an "Africa Fit for Children". A specific focus of the joint efforts is addressing the unique challenges and needs of girls, ensuring their rights are prioritized in policies and practices to promote their well-being and equality.

30. The cooperation between GIZ and ACERWC specifically focuses on strengthening the Communications Procedure, including the implementation of Committee's Decisions, and promoting the rights of girls through initiatives that build a strong eco-system for girls' rights. He reaffirmed GIZ's strong commitment to supporting ACERWC's institutional and programmatic efforts, particularly those aimed at advancing the rights of girls in Africa, including access to reparatory justice within the context of the AU theme of the year for 2025.

31. Dr. Thiel concluded by calling for deliberate efforts to address the issues affecting all girls, including girls with disabilities, and reiterated GIZ's continued commitment to supporting the Committee's work. He wished the participants fruitful deliberations leading to tangible outcomes for girls on the continent.

## **ITEM 9: Panel discussion on the Launch of the Study on Implementation of Decisions and Recommendations of the ACERWC**

32. The Panel Discussion was opened and moderated by Hon. Robert Nanima the Chairperson of the ACERWC Working Group on Implementation of Decisions. Hon. Robert appreciated the various stakeholders present stating that non-implementation or partial implementation of decisions is increasingly becoming one of the most pressing challenges the ACERWC faces and that it is not unique to the Committee, as similar challenges are experienced by other regional human rights bodies. He informed that the aim of the Panel discussion in addition to the launch of the Study, is to discuss actionable solutions to the challenges.

[Presentation on the ACERWC Study on the Implementation of the decision: key findings and recommendations](#)

33. Ms. Aouatef Mahjoub, Legal Researcher at the ACERWC Secretariat provided a general overview of the Study, and detailed the background, scope, methodology, key findings and recommendations of the Study. In her presentation she indicated that the Study represents a significant milestone in the Committee's efforts to identify the challenges and opportunities for improved implementation of its decisions and recommendations. She further indicated that the findings outlined in this study highlights key areas for strengthening the Committee's approaches to ensuring that these decisions and recommendations translate into real, meaningful changes for children on the ground.

## Challenges and opportunities in Monitoring the implementation of decisions and recommendations of regional human rights organs: Perspectives from the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

34. Hon. Commissioner Litha Musyimi-Ogana began her intervention by appreciating the timeliness of the Study being launched, noting that its findings and recommendations are highly pertinent not only to the African Committee of Experts but also to regional human rights institutions across the continent and beyond. In illustrating the efforts of the African Commission, Hon. Com Musyimi-Ogana underscored the concrete existing measures and mechanisms established to strengthen follow-up with States Parties on the implementation of its decisions and recommendations. While observing that despite these efforts, most of its decisions and recommendations remain largely unimplemented, she noted that this is a widespread reality across human rights systems in Africa. She further called attention to several factors identified by experts, and echoed in the Study, as key barriers to effective implementation. Beyond the challenges posed by States Parties, Hon. Commissioner Musyimi-Ogana also acknowledged internal shortcomings within human rights bodies, notably the need for more effective follow-up practices. She further pointed to a general lack of awareness and limited training at the national level about the mandates, procedures, and activities of regional human rights mechanisms, weak political oversight by AU Policy Organs, limited engagement of NHRIs and CSOs), insufficient budgetary allocations, and poor coordination among human rights bodies as well as political instability, weak governance, and persistent inequalities that continue to hinder effective implementation.

35. To address these challenges, Hon. Commissioner Musyimi-Ogana drew attention to the comprehensive list of recommendations contained in the Committee's Study. In conclusion, Hon. Commissioner Musyimi-Ogana emphasized the importance of ensuring adequate budgeting to support implementation efforts and encouraged all stakeholders to leverage available institutional and political support in order to bridge the persistent gap between commitments and action.

## The role of CSOs and NGOs involved in litigation in monitoring the implementation of decisions and recommendations of the ACERWC: Perspectives from Centre for Reproductive Rights

36. Mr. Martin Onyango, Associate Director, Legal Strategies for Africa at the **Centre for Reproductive Rights** made an intervention on the center's experience and involvement in monitoring and tracking the implementation of ACERWC's decision. He began by

acknowledging that the 2022 decision on Communication 0012/Com/001/2019 is not fully implemented. As part of the implementation process, he mentioned initial steps involved engaging state actors, particularly meetings with various government ministries to ensure a shared understanding of the decision and its outcomes, alongside collaboration with CSOs to identify gaps and develop an implementation plan and coordinate actions with both state and non-state actors from a CSO perspective. He also highlighted CRR's efforts to engage children as rights holders by simplifying and disseminating the recommendations through documents and audio-visual materials, particularly targeting girls and adolescents.

37. Regarding the challenges, he outlined that since 2022 several key issues raised include lack of public awareness of the decision by concerned communities. He further noted that while policy drafts were cited as implementation, structural changes such as legal reforms and victim reparations remain unaddressed hence not translated into tangible actions. He further pointed to partial embracing of the decision as there is a preference for implementing recommendations on education, over other fundamental aspects of the decision related to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) concurrently. As a lesson learned, he stressed the importance of collaboration and acknowledged that the Government of Tanzania demonstrated its engagement by participating in consultations on implementation and participating in the formal ACERWC hearing. He applauded persistence and consistency emphasizing that even incremental progress such as a single revised policy or the reform of one school builds momentum. In his call to action, he urged CSOs to invest in long-term monitoring beyond litigation and called on the ACERWC to conduct in-country follow-up visits and publicize findings.

#### Reflection from Child representatives on the implementation of decisions of the ACERWC

38. **Princess Jasmeen Mavura**, a child representative from Tanzania, shared personal insights on the impact of ACERWC Decision on Children involved in Cases, particularly adolescent girls. She highlighted that following the decision and sustained advocacy efforts by NGOs and international organizations, teenage mothers are now able to re-enter school and continue their studies. She noted positive developments by the Government in the education system, including the integration of life skills and human rights education into the national syllabus and Re-Entry Guidelines issued in 2022 following the policy reversal. She also mentioned supportive measures such as the free child helpline (116), the "Mabinti Project", and community awareness campaigns that aim to reduce stigma and promote girls' right to education.

39. Despite notable progress, Princess Jasmeen Mavura highlighted persistent challenges particularly in rural areas where taboos hinder access to sexual and reproductive health education, and limited health infrastructure exacerbates risks. She noted the absence of structured support systems, including counseling and psychosocial services. In closing, She described the mechanisms currently supporting teenage mothers' return to school, including a two-year timeframe after childbirth during which girls can re-enroll, often preceded by counseling. Additionally, she underlined the importance of balancing academic responsibilities with parenting, and called for stronger systems to help young mothers navigate both.

#### Challenges and Opportunities in Monitoring implementation of Decisions of the African human rights organs: Perspectives from the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights

40. Dr. Micha Wiebusch, Senior Legal Officer at the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights and Acting Head of the Implementation and Compliance Monitoring Unit, emphasized the critical need for data to monitor the implementation of human rights decisions. He underscored the importance of enhanced collaboration among AU organs, CSOs, national institutions, and national courts to generate, manage, and disseminate such data effectively.

41. In emphasizing the Court's practices and mechanisms in monitoring the implementation of decisions, he highlighted the African Court political monitoring as a treaty obligation to report annually to the AU Executive Council on its activities, including compliance by States with its decisions, a process that hinges on the availability of accurate data. He further explained that the Court relies on its own decisions as the primary mechanism for obtaining such data, by requiring respondent States to submit reports within six months and every six months until full implementation is achieved. However, this obligation is often disregarded by States, resulting in significant data gaps. To address these challenges, the Court revised its Rules of Procedure in 2020 to introduce compliance hearings, although this mechanism has not yet been fully operationalized. Noting that having data is not enough and information must be translated into actionable insights using better communication tools and tailored messaging to engage various stakeholders. There is a need, he said, to repackage information and specific actions for different actors such as diplomats, parliamentarians, and national courts. Dr. Wiebusch also pointed to budgetary and resource limitations as barriers to effective follow-up. He noted that some of the measures of the Committee, Commission and Court need to be prioritized, and this requires consistency and persistency to get Governments to implement. He further called for the development of joint reporting formats to avoid "reporting fatigue" and streamline data collection to support a

coordinated approach among African human rights mechanisms and stakeholders and facilitate the development of targeted stakeholder engagement strategies. He concluded by highlighting that the State is a multi-dimensional actor, requiring the mobilization of various arms executive, judiciary, legislative along with public engagement, to drive implementation. National courts, in particular, were cited as critical actors that can enhance compliance with Human Rights' decisions.

The role of academic institutions in monitoring the implementation of decisions and recommendations of the ACERWC: Perspectives from the Centre for Human Rights

42. Prof. Nkatha Murungi, Acting Director of the Centre for Human Rights, began her intervention by emphasizing the important role of universities and institutions of higher learning in the implementation of decisions. She noted that while this role is not clearly or directly anticipated in treaties, there is a growing recognition particularly by the African Committee of the importance of data and research in supporting the implementation and monitoring of child rights. She emphasized that all General Comments by the Committee consistently highlight the need for data. Specifically, General Comment No. 5 calls on States to collaborate with appropriate research institutions to build a comprehensive understanding of implementation progress through both qualitative and quantitative studies. Prof. Murungi highlighted that universities are already contributing significantly to this field. In the case of the Centre for Human Rights (CHR), several studies have been commissioned on the implementation of the Charter, ranging from the 2024 Commentary on the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, to the 2020 study on the implementation of Concluding Observations, and the 2022 study on the implementation of the Charter across African countries, among others.

43. She stressed the need for more strategic collaboration with universities and research institutions to build a more complete picture of implementation. She concluded by reiterating that universities remain credible platforms for engagement with knowledge and that their intellectual freedom perspectives offers a valuable lens for implementation that can be leveraged by the Committee and other human rights organs to strengthen monitoring of the implementation and also enhance credibility in the engagement with States and other stakeholders.

44. Following the panel presentations, Members of the Committee, representatives of Member States, and other participants commended the Committee for the relevance of the Study and reflected on its key findings. They emphasized the need to establish specialized national mechanisms or focal points to coordinate the implementation of decisions of regional human rights bodies and highlighted the essential role of political

combined with the active involvement of CSOs and other stakeholders to ensure effective implementation at the national level. Participants also recommended going beyond a state-centric approach by engaging non-state actors responsible for violations through targeted sensitization efforts and called for the development of a model law at the African Union level to guide Member States in implementing regional decisions and to address the perception of such decisions as “foreign judgments.” The session concluded with Hon. Doya Nanima thanking participants and officially launching the ACERWC Study on the Implementation of Decisions, encouraging broad stakeholder engagement in its dissemination.

## **ITEM 10: Presentation of the Concept Note for the 35th Anniversary of the Charter**

45. Ms. Opal Sibanda, Legal Researcher at the ACERWC Secretariat, presented the Concept Note for the commemoration of the 35th Anniversary of the African Children’s Charter, under the theme *Reflect, Renew, Recommit.* She traced the Charter’s historical significance since its adoption in 1990, highlighting progress in ratification, legislative reform, and improvements in birth registration, education, and health. Ms Sibanda underscored persistent and emerging challenges, including incomplete ratification, reservations by some States, irregular reporting, harmful practices, violence against children, and heightened vulnerability in contexts such as conflict, climate change, and digital spaces.

46. Ms. Sibanda explained that the commemoration aims to take stock of the implementation of the Charter over the past 35 years, highlight key progress and gaps, and examine new and emerging threats to children’s rights. As part of the proposed commemorative activities, Ms. Sibanda informed that the activities that will be undertaken include a high-level continental conference, awareness campaigns, a child-led symposium to ensure meaningful child participation, and a call for submissions including research, case studies, and success stories, which will be compiled into a commemorative publication reflecting on 35 years of the Charter.

47. In conclusion, Ms. Sibanda proposed a series of recommendations to Member States, including the need for all remaining countries to ratify the Charter and withdraw existing reservations, the importance of undertaking national assessments on the implementation of the Charter, and the alignment of domestic laws and policies with the Charter’s provisions.

48. Following the presentation, participants welcomed the Concept Note and emphasized the need for commemoration to go beyond symbolism, serving as a platform for reflection and advocacy. They recommended clear guidelines to support national-level events, noting that not all Member States may attend the continental conference. The anniversary was seen as a chance to assess implementation gaps and strengthen advocacy at both AU and national levels. Participants proposed aligning national reflections with the Day of the African Child, leading up to the high-level conference.

49. The participants viewed the 35th anniversary as a key moment to consider the Charter's future and its relevance to emerging child rights issues. They urged the Committee to reflect on the broader scope of the Charter, including related instruments and evolving concerns such as surrogacy and assisted reproductive technologies. There was strong support for a forward-looking agenda that reaffirms commitment to the Charter while adapting to contemporary and future challenges.

### **ITEM 11 : Panel Discussion on the launch of the Study on Climate Change and Children's Rights in Africa: A Continental Overview**

50. The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), through its Working Group on Children's Rights and Climate Change, convened a panel discussion to formally launch its continental study titled "Climate Change and Children's Rights in Africa – A Continental Overview."

51. The session began with a concise presentation by Ms. Samrawit Getaneh, Legal Researcher at the ACERWC Secretariat, who unpacked the key findings and recommendations from the study. Drawing on national and regional data, stakeholder consultations, and response from questionnaires, the study provides an examination of the systemic ways in which climate change undermines children's rights under the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). The study illustrates how rising temperatures, extreme weather events, and environmental degradation directly impact children's access to food, water, education, health services, and protection mechanisms. It was noted that the existing national policies, including National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) often fail to integrate child-specific needs, and that most countries lack mechanisms for child participation in climate decision-making. The report makes a strong case for a rights-based, child-centered climate agenda, recommending that governments

institutionalize child participation, strengthen data systems, ensure targeted climate finance, and include children in resilience planning.

52. Elizabeth Matola, a child advocate from Malawi, followed with a heartfelt reflection grounded in the lived experiences of children on the frontlines of the climate crisis. She shared examples from her community in southern Malawi, where children are increasingly affected by floods and droughts, leading to food insecurity, school closures, and psychological distress. Elizabeth described how climate-induced disasters often strip children of their homes, disrupt their education, and leave them vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Particularly powerful was her message that climate change is not a distant threat, it is a lived reality for millions of children whose voices are often ignored. She called for greater recognition of children as active agents of change, not just victims, and underscored the need for climate education, mental health support, and accessible platforms for child-led advocacy.

53. Building on the personal dimension of the crisis, Dr. Hussaini Abdu, Director of Save the Children's Pan Africa Advocacy and Liaison Office, framed climate change as a child rights crisis rather than solely an environmental or development challenge. He outlined a grim reality in which climate change intensifies existing vulnerabilities, pushing more children into poverty, early marriage, school dropout, and exposure to abuse. Dr. Abdu cited research showing that 323.6 million children in Sub-Saharan Africa live in poverty and are simultaneously at high climate risk. Referencing the Born Into the Climate Crisis study, he pointed out that a child born in 2020 is expected to face twice as many wildfires, nearly three times the crop failures, and seven times the heatwaves compared to someone born in 1960. This data highlights the intergenerational injustice embedded in the climate crisis. Most critically, he underscored the need to institutionalize child participation in climate decision-making at all levels—from national policies to global platforms like UNFCCC. Dr. Abdu shared success stories from Uganda, Zambia, and Malawi, where child participation strategies and guidelines have been introduced. He issued a clear call to action: include child representatives in climate delegations, integrate their voices in policymaking, ensure safe spaces for their participation, and hold duty-bearers accountable for delivering on these commitments.

54. Following this, Retta Getachew of the African Child Policy Forum delivered a presentation on the nexus between climate change and conflict in the Sahel region. He

argued that climate change in fragile environments like the Sahel amplifies existing conflict drivers such as competition over land and water, forced migration, and food insecurity. This confluence places children at the epicenter of intersecting crises, exposed not only to environmental disasters but also to violence, recruitment into armed groups, and long-term displacement. His presentation drew attention to the ways in which climate instability fuels social unrest, exacerbating conditions that already threaten children's rights and security. Retta called for integrated approaches that align climate adaptation with peacebuilding efforts and emphasized the importance of regional frameworks and coordinated action among AU organs, RECs, and national governments. Investing in climate-resilient livelihoods and early warning systems was also recommended as a proactive strategy to reduce risk and protect vulnerable children from cascading crises.

55. In summary, the panel discussion represented a critical moment in reshaping the climate discourse on the continent to reflect a child rights perspective. The findings of the study, the testimonies from advocates, and the expert insights all pointed to a singular conclusion: children in Africa are disproportionately affected by climate change, yet their voices remain marginalized. There was consensus among all presenters as well as participants of the Session that urgent action is needed to address this gap. This includes revising national climate plans to include child-focused strategies, scaling up climate education, increasing investment in child-sensitive infrastructure, and ensuring that children are meaningfully engaged in all decision-making processes related to climate resilience and disaster preparedness. Panelists also stressed the importance of translating the study's recommendations into policy and practice at national and regional levels, and of mobilizing the political will necessary to create a more just, inclusive, and sustainable future for Africa's children.

56. Participants commended the report of the study and noted the evidence gap on the link between children's rights and climate change in Africa and recommended a wide dissemination of the report. Participants further commended the messages and stressed the need to enhance child participation in climate discussions at all levels. The panel closed with a powerful affirmation that while children are among the most vulnerable to climate change, they are also among the most determined actors calling for justice. They must be seen, heard, and supported, not only because it is their right, but because their leadership is essential to building a more climate-resilient Africa.

## **ITEM 12 : Presentation by Children’s Representatives- Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund**

57. The Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund was represented by Mr Karl Muller Chief Program Officer, Mr Anzio Jacobs, Project Specialist and Miss Tara Hendricks, Child Chairperson of the African Children’s Summit from Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund. The presentation highlighted the history, mission and objectives of the Fund, and gave an overview of the Africa Children’s Summit held on 4-7 April 2025. The representatives informed that there is a need for proper budgeting in order to ensure satisfactory participation of children in the summit. They appealed for greater footing within the AU and the Committee in order to encourage global participation in the C20 and G20 and expressed interest in obtaining observer status in the ACERWC. In conclusion, Ms Tara Hendricks presented an outcome statement with recommendation from the Summit which among others called for:

- Free and Fair Education for all.
- Better school buildings and facilities
- Provision of books, school supplies and use of technology
- More capacitation of teachers
- Stop unfair treatments and harmful traditions
- Support to families to keep children in school
- End violence against children and keep children safe
- Let children share their ideas
- Access to technology that supports, not harms children
- Promotion of physical and mental health

## **ITEM 13: Advocacy for Reporting on the Charter with Central African Republic**

58. The Panel Discussion on Advocacy for Reporting on the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) with the Central African Republic was convened under the moderation of Hon. Wilson Almeida Adão, Chairperson of the Committee. It served as a platform to highlight the progress made, challenges faced, and opportunities available to the Central African Republic (CAR) in its efforts to submit its report under the ACRWC.

59. Ms. Melvine Julia Guere, Director General of Family and Child Protection of the Central African Republic, provided a detailed reflection on the reporting process to

international and regional human rights mechanisms, with particular emphasis on the ACRWC. She recalled that the Central African Republic has ratified almost all major international and regional instruments, including the ACRWC, and it is a comprehensive and participatory process involving government institutions, the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders, such as the Human Rights Commission and relevant ministries. She outlined the report preparation as an integrated and phased process.

60. The report must also be adopted by the Council of Ministers before it is officially submitted to the treaty body. Ms. Guere informed the panel that the CAR has already submitted its report under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in February 2024, which reflects the government's commitment to human rights obligations. She concluded by reiterating that report drafting should not be seen as a bureaucratic formality but rather as a crucial process that helps assess progress, identifies challenges, and promotes constructive dialogue for the advancement of children's rights in the country.

61. Mr. Marcel Pekoua, Director of Child Protection and Social Reintegration, elaborated on the challenges and opportunities associated with the reporting process. He noted that the Central African Republic has faced significant challenges at political, security, institutional, and community levels. Politically, the country has suffered from chronic instability since ratifying the Charter in 2003, with multiple regime changes, armed conflict, and the presence of armed groups disrupting the functioning of State institutions and public services. Institutionally, he highlighted the lack of coordination among child protection actors, weak involvement of sectorial ministries, poor data collection systems, and the absence of community-based child protection networks.

62. Despite these challenges, Mr. Pekoua underlined several opportunities for progress, including the signing of a peace agreement in 2022 that enabled armed groups to engage in the DDR process, contributing to improved stability and at the institutional level, the establishment of the National Council for the Promotion and Protection of Children under the Prime Minister's leadership. He cited the deployment of administrative and child protection services across the territory, the training and redeployment of national defense and security forces, and the gradual return of displaced populations as signs of stabilization and commitment to improving child protection.

63. Ms. Meritxell Relano, UNICEF Representative in the Central African Republic, delivered remarks highlighting the significance of the country's initial reporting process

under the African Child Charter. She praised it as a historic milestone that reflects renewed political will to place children's rights at the center of national priorities. Ms. Relano stressed that children's rights must remain a priority, even during times of crisis, and highlighted the reporting process as a valuable tool for national reflection, education, and public engagement. She underscored the Charter's potential to guide national development strategies and expressed hope that the upcoming elections would reinforce child rights on the political agenda. While reaffirming UNICEF's commitment to supporting the government she presented key recommendations, including strengthening governance structures, institutionalizing child participation, allocating dedicated resources, and establishing an independent, child-sensitive monitoring mechanism—emphasizing that every child matters and their voices must contribute to peace and sustainable development.

64. Following the panel presentations, the floor was opened for interventions from participants. The questions were on the identity of the High Commissioner for Human Rights mentioned in the 2022 decree and whether it referred to a UN body or a national institution, the existence of a national child protection policy and emphasized the need for structured coordination and the inclusion of children's voices in the reporting process, the concerns about handling sensitive content and how disagreements are resolved during the drafting of reports. The other representative shared their countries' commitment to child protection through strong legal and institutional frameworks and experience in producing reports and highlighted challenges such as difficulties in data collection and the limited capacity of committee members. A proposal has been made to establish an alert system to help States meet submission deadlines and suggested assigning a special rapporteur to each country to follow up on the status of reporting.

65. Committee members also made valuable contributions encouraging the delegation to submit its initial report under the ACRWC, noting that reports submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child could be adapted for the African Charter by including relevant elements related to duties and responsibilities. Also emphasized that reporting should prioritize quality and consistency, and noted delays in submitting reports to the African Committee despite the availability of recent UPR data. He also questioned how the Central African Republic ensures a safe and inclusive consultation process during report preparation and inquired about the implementation of UNICEF's recommendations on revitalizing the children's council. The ACERWC also asked how the legislative branch is involved in the reporting process, since the reports represent the position of the State and should ideally involve all arms of government.

66. In response, CAR delegation provided a comprehensive set of clarifications and comments. The delegation confirmed that the High Commissioner for Human Rights mentioned in the decree is a national institution, not affiliated with the UN system. The 2022 decree was issued to restructure the national report drafting committee and appoint new members. Regarding the child protection policy, the delegation stated that a national policy document was developed in 2017 and is currently under review to integrate clearer strategies and roles for all stakeholders, including community actors. On the issue of children's participation, it was acknowledged that in the past, structures such as junior deputies were in place to ensure child involvement. However, recurring crises and institutional disruptions weakened these mechanisms. Efforts are underway, supported by UNICEF, to revive and institutionalize such structures, including the Children's Parliament. The delegation also described the arbitration process used when sensitive issues arise in report drafting. These issues are first discussed at the national validation stage, and if consensus is not reached, they are escalated to the restricted inter-ministerial committee led by the Minister of Justice. Final decisions are made by the Council of Ministers before the report is submitted. On the involvement of the legislative arm, the delegation clarified that while the report is adopted by the Council of Ministers, parliamentary representatives are included in the drafting committee. Regarding delays in report submission, the delegation cited challenges including lack of resources, weak institutional capacity, poor archiving systems, and high turnover of government officials. They welcomed the proposal for an alert system and committed to exploring ways to adapt it to the local context. The delegation assured the Committee that the initial draft report under the ACRWC has already been prepared and is undergoing internal validation processes. They reaffirmed their commitment to submitting the report in due course.

67. The intervention was concluded with brief remarks from the UNICEF Representative, Ms. Meritxell Relano, who emphasized the need to engage youth more effectively, particularly through structures like the Children's Parliament. She confirmed UNICEF's support for the CAR government in operationalizing recommendations made during the session and expressed readiness to work with all stakeholders in strengthening the reporting process.

## **ITEM 14: Panel Discussion on Children in Conflict Situation**

68. The moderator, Hon. Commissioner Dr. Litha Musyimi-Ogana, opened the panel by emphasizing the devastating impact of conflict on children across Africa. She highlighted that children are not just bystanders but are often directly targeted facing recruitment, displacement, loss of education, and severe trauma. Drawing on recent reports, she

noted that 2024 marked one of the worst years for children affected by conflict globally. She framed the panel's purpose as an opportunity to spotlight the unique challenges faced by children in conflict zones, share practical interventions, and develop clear recommendations to enhance protection. Referencing the ACERWC study on the impact of conflict on children and the African Commission's Resolution 283 on women and children in armed conflict, she stressed the importance of actionable commitments to safeguard children's rights.

69. Hon. Robert Nanima, ACERWC Special Rapporteur on Children and Armed Conflict delivered the keynote address highlighting that one in four children in Africa live in conflict-affected areas. He outlined the range of violations children face, including recruitment, sexual violence, attacks on services, mental health challenges, child marriage, child labour, and cybercrimes. He stressed that ongoing conflicts are weakening protective systems and disproportionately harming girls. While commending national efforts such as legislation and youth involvement in peacebuilding, he expressed concern over weak enforcement, persistent violations, and impunity. He urged stronger accountability, improved implementation of legal frameworks, and sustainable child protection strategies.

70. Following the keynote address, Ketia Shabilenge, Child Representative from the DRC shared a testimony on the harsh realities faced by children in eastern DRC. She described how violence has disrupted daily life, with schools and hospitals under attack and children living in constant fear. She highlighted serious issues such as forced recruitment, use as human shields, psychological trauma, loss of education, family separation, and the collapse of essential services. Ketia called on Member States to end child exploitation by armed groups, enforce the Safe Schools Declaration, and invest in education, health, and psychosocial support. She urged stronger accountability and asked the Committee to investigate violations against children in the DRC.

71. Mr. Allan Ngari, Advocacy Director at Human Rights Watch outlined the scale and severity of violations against children in conflict zones across Africa. He reported that children are being killed, maimed, abducted, recruited into armed groups, and subjected to sexual violence, with schools and hospitals under frequent attack. He highlighted a sharp rise in violations in Sudan since April 2023, ongoing abuses in the Sahel, and persistently high levels of violence in eastern DRC, including a 2024 shelling that killed 15 children. He also highlighted that the DRC recorded the world's highest rates of sexual violence against children by armed actors in 2021 and 2022. Mr. Ngari recommended improving monitoring and reporting systems, ensuring states comply with regional and international obligations, and holding perpetrators accountable. He emphasized the need

to strengthen child protection in conflict settings and guarantee children's access to education and healthcare. He concluded by urging the Committee to take a more proactive and enforcement-focused approach in addressing the issue of children in conflict situations.

72. Ms. Rania Machlab, Head of Delegation of the ICRC to the African Union, shared reflections on effective child protection interventions in conflict settings, emphasizing the ongoing tragedy of children separated from their families due to displacement, detention, or loss of caregivers. She highlighted the ICRC's neutral role in safely evacuating civilians, including a 2023 operation in Khartoum that relocated over 280 children. She underscored that such evacuations must comply with International Humanitarian Law and prioritize the best interests of the child. She also addressed the continued targeting and military use of schools, noting that bilateral engagement with state and non-state actors has led to tangible outcomes, such as relocation of military positions and directives protecting schools. She urged all Member States to endorse and implement the Safe Schools Declaration and Paris Commitments, and called for a holistic, age-appropriate, and child-centred reintegration approach for children affected by conflict.

73. Ms. Chantal Mutamuriza, Senior Humanitarian and Education Advocacy Advisor at Save the Children International, reflected on the immense toll of armed conflict on children in Africa, drawing from testimonies that revealed fear, displacement, and the loss of education. Highlighting the imbalance between rising military spending and declining peacebuilding investment, she stressed the need to redirect resources toward sustainable development. Ms. Chantal underscored the critical role of education in emergencies, both as a protective measure and a tool for healing, peacebuilding, and gender equality. She emphasized the importance of child participation in decision-making and called for accountability through legal reform and redress for victims. Linking her reflection to the AU theme of the year on reparations, she urged action to break cycles of trauma and deliver lasting justice for affected children.

74. Following the panel discussion, participants emphasized the urgent need to address both direct and indirect impacts of conflict on children, including displacement, family separation, and trauma. They underscored the importance of fulfilling AU obligations and strengthening institutional frameworks for child protection, especially within peace support operations. Reflections called for reinforcing legal systems, adopting contingency plans, and prioritizing prevention over reaction. Key issues raised included access to healthcare, rehabilitation, and family reunification, particularly for refugee and displaced children. The importance of reintegration, especially for children without parental care,

was highlighted alongside the need for improved monitoring, child-led advocacy, and disaggregated data. Participants also stressed the need for proper budgeting for education, health, and documentation, enhanced early warning mechanisms, meaningful child participation in peacebuilding, and greater political accountability.

## **ITEM 15 : Presentation of the Thematic Report on Harmful Practices Affecting Children’s Rights in Africa**

75. The ACERWC, in collaboration with Equality Now, is developing a Thematic Report on Harmful Practices Affecting Children, focusing on FGM and Child Marriage. The Consultant, Ms Tina Power, presented the draft report.

76. Ms Tina Power started by highlighting that Harmful Practices such as FGM and child marriage violate the rights and dignity of children and that one of the most significant challenges the continent faces is how these practices are deeply entrenched in our social and cultural norm and hence beckons a reflection on the barriers on defeating harmful practices, and the resilience driving the movement on ending Harmful Practice.

77. Ms. Power informed that the background and context to the development of the report is founded on the challenges from ineffective laws and frameworks, weak institutions, stigma, and lack of support for survivors. The intention was to support the work of the Committee with evidence-based advocacy, strengthen accountability, and enhance collaboration among stakeholders working to end FGM and Child Marriage. The report examines policy, legal and normative frameworks, their effectiveness, existing gaps and challenges, and makes appropriate and relevant recommendations.

78. Ms. Power outlined that the report utilised both qualitative and quantitative methods, aiming to have a balanced regional representation of ten countries. The report states that 144 million women and girls have undergone FGM and West African countries have the highest prevalence of this practice. Additionally, the report explored the nexus of FGM and other thematic areas such as conflict, climate change and that there is a need to have an intersectional approach in FGM interventions. In closing, she made extensive recommendations to various stakeholders ranging from policy to bolstering institutions, and engagement of stakeholders.

79. In reflection Committee Members, and Participants highlighted that there is a need to consider bottom-up approaches by engaging communities, especially leveraging the influence of traditional and religious leaders. Some countries shared their best practices on using bottom-up approach. Additionally, there is a need to focus on appropriate community-level interventions and mediations and support reporting at the grassroots level. Concerns around transboundary and medicalised FGM was raised as an emerging issue.

### **ITEM 16 : Presentation by AU-HHS on the Operationalization of the AU Accountability Framework on the Elimination of Harmful Practices**

80. Hon. Hermine Kembo, Special Rapporteur on Child Marriage and Other Harmful Practices, as moderator of the discussion stated that the upcoming presentation is on Accountability Frameworks and reiterated that the mandate of the Committee fits within the scope of the framework and thus introduced the presentation on the African Union (AU) Accountability Framework on the Elimination of Harmful Practices.

81. Dr Richard Wamimbi, Child Protection Technical Advisor, Social Welfare, Drug Control and Crime Prevention Division, Department of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development at the African Union Commission (AUC) expressed gratitude to the Committee for the opportunity to share the framework. Diving into the presentation, he explained that the background and origin of the Framework is to strengthen Member States' accountability on commitments to end harmful practices (FGM and Child Marriage) by the by AU Heads of State and Government AU Decision Assembly. It clarifies the process of reporting and strengthening action in eliminating Harmful Practice, to coordinate between the Committee and the Commission mandate and process of implementation, engage Member States through reporting and monitoring, and encouraging data generation, documentation and evidence by Member States to inform policy development.

82. Structurally, the Framework intends to be operationalized through Member States, Regional economic regions (RECs) and African Union Organs. The Organs will be beneficial in disseminating reporting templates, supporting the reporting of Member States and accountability. It mandates Member States to use the data and evidence through knowledge sharing of best practices, fund programmes on ending Harmful Practices and normalize accountability, while the RECs are mandated to support Member States in developing national action plans and annual reporting on the implementation,

as well offer input to reports to the Committee and Commission. Speaking on the progress of operationalization, it was stated that an operational plan and terms of reference to establish the Taskforce of Experts to evaluate the annual implementation have been developed. Additionally, both the Committee and the Commission have guidelines on Harmful Practices, which have some gaps, but there is intention to collaborate to enhance their effectiveness.

83. Intermediary action for implementation includes working with six select Member States to develop implementation plans and collect and analyze data on Harmful Practices, appoint focal persons and monitor implementations and encourage timely reporting, establish the Taskforce, and disseminate reporting templates and developing annual reports by Member States by engaging RECs and AU organs. Discussing the role of the Committee, it was outlined that the Special Rapporteur on Harmful Practices will constitute membership of the AU Accountability Framework, and tasked to ensure operationalisation of the Framework, monitor action plans and review reports of Member States, encourage data, evidence and good practices to promote accountability and the participation of CSOs and young people in shadow reporting to the AU, as well as knowledge sharing among stakeholders.

84. In closing the discussion, Hon. Kembo applauded the Framework and its objectives, and urged that stakeholders should continue their efforts to protect children and end Harmful Practices.

## **ITEM 17 : Sustainable Financing for Child Protection in Africa- UNICEF**

85. The panel on Sustainable Financing for Child Protection in Africa, convened by the ACERWC in collaboration with UNICEF, was chaired by the ACERWC Chairperson and brought together key stakeholders to discuss strategic financing approaches.

86. Ms. Nankali Maksud, Child Protection Advisor at UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office, set the stage by stressing the urgent need for sustainable funding to translate legal commitments into tangible child protection outcomes. She highlighted a growing financing gap due to declining external support and partner withdrawals, jeopardizing critical services. While some Governments have increased social spending, child protection remains severely underfunded—often receiving as little as 0.01% of GDP—despite being both a moral obligation and economic imperative for achieving Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2040. UNICEF called for a continental benchmark for minimum child protection investment, increased domestic allocations, and efficient resource utilization. Key recommendations included investing in the social service workforce and

exploring innovative financing mechanisms, such as corporate social responsibility and regional pooled funds. The session reinforced that sustained, strategic investment is vital to safeguard Africa’s children and secure the continent’.

87. Country Best Practices in Sustainable Financing for Child Protection were shared from Zambia and Ghana, Mrs. Susan Musonda, Principal Planning Officer at the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services of the Republic of Zambia, titled “An Investment Case for a Stronger Social Service Workforce for Child Protection in Zambia.” The presentation highlighted the gravity of child protection challenges in the country, where half of all children experience violence before the age of 18, 29% of adolescent girls aged 15–19 begin childbearing, and only 14.2% of births are officially registered. In 2023, Zambia employed just 1,437 social service workers—equivalent to 17.5 workers per 100,000 children—while allocating a mere 0.11% of its national budget (ZMK179.4 million or approximately USD 66 million) to child protection and the social service workforce. To address these gaps, the Government of Zambia, with support from UNICEF, developed two investment scenarios: an 8-year systematic scale-up plan requiring ZMK5.9 billion (around USD 2.2 billion), and a more immediate 3-year “quick wins” model requiring ZMK9.9 billion (around USD 3.7 billion). The urgency of investment is underscored by the staggering cost of inaction—violence against children cost the country an estimated ZMK40.36 billion (USD 15 billion) in 2021 alone, representing 9.12% of its GDP. Strengthening the social service workforce is framed not only as a human rights imperative, but also as a strategic economic intervention critical to enhancing the effectiveness of health, education, and justice systems. The investment case positions child protection as central to national development, underscoring that financing for social services is both a moral duty and a smart economic choice.

88. Continuing the session on Country Best Practices, Mr. Prince Abrah, Director of Social Welfare at the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP) of the Republic of Ghana, joined the discussions virtually to share Ghana’s experience. Mr. Abrah, shared the country’s pressing child protection challenges, including alarming rates of abuse—with over 94% of children facing physical or psychological violence, 20,000 reported cases of online sexual exploitation, one in six children married before 18, and over 2 million engaged in child labor. He highlighted severe underfunding, with only 0.12% of government spending allocated to child protection in 2024—less than \$1 per child—and a critically understaffed social service workforce, with just 41% of positions filled and only three social workers often serving districts of 100,000 people. To address these issues, Ghana has implemented measures such as tracking child protection expenditures, reviewing district work plans, and exploring innovative financing. Mr. Abrah

called for greater domestic investment, strategic partnerships, and a continental approach to child protection, emphasizing the urgent need for improved budget execution, workforce training, and sustained action to secure a better future for children in Ghana and across Africa.

89. Dr. Joan Nyanyuki, Executive Director of the African Child Policy Forum (ACPF), presented a comprehensive analysis of the persistent underfunding of child protection systems across Member States. The presentation highlighted a concerning disparity between established legal frameworks and their implementation, with budgetary allocations remaining critically insufficient - in some cases as minimal as USD 0.05 per child annually - while administrative expenditures consume up to 70% of existing child protection budgets. This chronic underinvestment has resulted in systemic deficiencies, including acute shortages of qualified personnel and inadequate service delivery capacities. Dr. Nyanyuki proposed a two-pronged strategic approach: firstly, the establishment of continental investment benchmarks by ACERWC to guide Member States in adopting progressive, developmentally-appropriate budgeting aligned with the life-cycle approach; and secondly, the implementation of comprehensive fiscal reforms to enhance domestic resource mobilization through optimized taxation systems, strategic public-private partnerships, and the harnessing of Africa's growing philanthropic sector. The presentation emphasized that fulfilling child protection financing obligations constitutes both a binding commitment under Article 1 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and a fundamental investment in human capital development. Dr. Nyanyuki concluded with recommendations for institutional strengthening, including enhanced budgetary transparency mechanisms, meaningful child participation in fiscal processes, and rigorous anti-corruption measures, underlining the imperative for Member States to prioritize child protection financing as a matter of legal compliance, social justice, and sustainable development.

90. Ms. Adiam Zemenfes, Senior legal researcher at the Secretariat of ACERWC reflected on the DAC 2025 under the theme "Planning and Budgeting for Children's Rights: Progress since 2010". She underscored the pivotal role of sustainable and equitable financing in ensuring every child's right to quality, inclusive, and accessible education. The presenter also highlighted, despite notable policy strides—such as increased investments in cash transfer programs, school feeding initiatives, child-sensitive subsidies, and domestic revenue generation—chronic challenges persist. These include the low prioritization of child rights in national budgeting, weak regulatory frameworks, poor resource governance, corruption, high debt burdens, and the marginalization of child-focused ministries in national policy processes. The presentation calls for a fundamental shift in political will and fiscal policy, advocating for child-sensitive planning and budgeting that are aligned with human rights standards. It emphasizes the need for

legislative reforms that integrate child rights across all stages of the budget cycle—revenue mobilization, allocation, execution, and monitoring. It urges States to adopt result-based budgeting by establishing clear budget lines for education and child protection, conducting child rights impact assessments, and setting up robust data systems to track both investments and outcomes. Importantly, the presentation echoes the DAC 2025 concept note in affirming that investing in children is key to achieving Africa’s development, stability, and prosperity, and that meaningful child participation in planning and budgeting processes must be institutionalized. States are called upon to avoid regressive measures, ensure sustained increases in child-related spending, and enhance cooperation at national, regional, and global levels to meet the urgent educational needs of Africa’s children.

91. The subsequent discussion among participants focused on strategic approaches to enhance child protection budgeting, emphasizing the need to clearly delineate child protection allocations within broader child rights budgets and establish measurable benchmarks for service delivery and funding. Concerns were raised regarding insufficiently resourced local-level child protection services and the gap between national strategies and their implementation, particularly the inadequacy of social service workforce ratios critical for effective delivery. Participants stressed the importance of institutional coherence to prevent service fragmentation while maximizing existing structures. The dialogue also addressed fiscal prioritization challenges, noting how competing demands—such as defense spending—often marginalize social services, underscoring the necessity of integrated budgeting across social sectors with dedicated child-focused allocations in health, education, and protection. The upcoming global social development summit was identified as a pivotal platform to advocate for increased social investments, while the role of private sector engagement and domestic taxation reforms in financing child protection was identified for further exploration in the 2025 Day of the African Child (DAC) deliberations.

92. In conclusion, it was recognized that while child protection remains critically underfunded across Africa, increasing attention to broader social spending presents a timely opportunity for progress. Participants emphasized the need for concrete follow-up actions, including the development of a continental benchmark for minimum government investment in child protection, led by the ACERWC in collaboration with the African Union Commission. Key recommendations included enhancing the visibility of child protection funding through clearly defined budget lines and regular public reporting, progressively increasing investments in the social service workforce, and ensuring that child protection is integrated into national planning as both a moral and economic priority. Ultimately, sustained and strategic investment in child protection is essential not only for upholding

children's rights but also for advancing human capital development and inclusive growth across the continent.

## **ITEM 18 : Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) and the rights and welfare of the child- UNICEF**

93. The panel discussion had presentations from Dr. Laila Gad, UNICEF Representative to the AU and ECA; Matthew Goldie-Scot, UNICEF; Ms. Sophia Ashipala, AU Commission; Prof. Brahm Fleish, SADC and it was moderated by Hon Poloko Ntshwarang, Special Rapporteur on Education.

94. Dr. Laila Gad - UNICEF Representative to the AU and ECA began by reflecting on the follow-up actions stemming from the AU Year of Education, highlighting the urgent need to tackle learning poverty across the African continent and emphasized that foundational literacy and numeracy are pivotal in ensuring children's future opportunities. Dr. Gad recalled that the African Union's educational initiatives are in alignment with broader goals to improve access, quality, and equity in education, especially given the current challenges that limit the realization of these goals. She stressed that foundational skills lay the groundwork for lifelong learning and overall personal development.

95. Matthew Goldie-Scot - UNICEF provided a comprehensive overview of the learning crisis in Africa, focusing particularly on the concept of Learning Poverty that refers to the inability of children to read and understand a simple age-appropriate text by the age of 10. He highlighted that the learning poverty rate in sub-Saharan Africa is alarmingly high at approximately 87%, far exceeding the rate in Europe and Central Asia, which stands at just 13% and indicates a significant challenge in providing quality education. He further explained the gender disparities within learning poverty, noting that while the rates for girls (83%) and boys (86%) are relatively similar, these figures still point to a need for targeted interventions. The long-term consequences of learning poverty he informed, include poor economic outcomes, lower wages, high unemployment, and political disengagement, all of which underline the importance of prioritizing literacy and numeracy in educational policies.

96. Ms. Naila Butt, from the Department of Education, Science and Technological Innovation, African Union Commission (AUC-ESTI) - AU Commission outlined the "End Learning Poverty for All in Africa" (ELPAf) campaign, focusing on the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) and the implications of learning poverty as

a child rights issue. She emphasized that this directly infringes on a child's right to quality education, as guaranteed by the Charter. The inability to access quality education undermines children's development in cognitive, social, and emotional domains and exacerbates their vulnerability to exploitation, child labor, and early marriage. In response, the ELPF Campaign, launched in September 2024 by H.E. Professor Mohamed Belhocine, aims to mobilize resources and political will to address this crisis.

97. Key commitments of the campaign include raising awareness on the importance of FLN, promoting South-South cooperation, advocating for increased funding, and strengthening teacher training and support. The campaign also calls for the promotion of innovative solutions to overcome the challenges of learning poverty.

98. Prof. Brahm Fleisch – SADC (via Video) presented on impactful FLN interventions across Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean Islands. While there has been commendable progress in expanding access to universal primary education he noted that, a significant number of children—particularly the poorest and most vulnerable—still do not acquire basic FLN skills. Among the contributing factors are ongoing financial crises in the region and a reduction in government budget allocations to the education sector.

99. Despite these challenges, Prof. Fleisch highlighted meaningful progress through targeted intervention programs. These include the "Catch-Up" program, based on the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach primarily targeting children in Grades 4 to 6 and the structured early grade reading program, which targets learners in the early years, typically equivalent to Grades 1 and 2. Prof. Fleisch emphasized that these evidence-based programs are becoming central to regional strategies aimed at addressing learning poverty and ensuring that all children—especially those from marginalized communities—develop the foundational skills necessary for lifelong learning and development.

100. Hon. Poloko Nuggert Ntshwarang - Special Rapporteur on Education presented on the role of the ACERWC in advancing FLN and supporting the ELPF Campaign. She emphasized that FLN are essential for children to acquire the necessary skills for meaningful participation in society. From a child rights perspective, these skills are fundamental, to enable children to fully engage in further learning and exercise their rights. Hon. Ntshwarang noted that Article 11 of the ACERWC outlines the right to free and compulsory education, and it is through FLN that children can achieve their fullest

potential. However, challenges persist in achieving these objectives, such as insufficient resources, inadequate teacher training, and the digital divide, which disproportionately affects children in rural or economically disadvantaged areas. Hon. Ntshwarang called for greater investment in education, especially in the areas of teacher training, curriculum development, and access to technology. She also emphasized that ACERWC can contribute to addressing these challenges by influencing Governments to integrate FLN into national policies and strategies.

101. During the interactive session, representatives from members states shared their national efforts in advancing FLN. These include free primary education, Governments working towards ensuring allocation of sufficient resources to uphold every child's right to education and programs aimed at integrating children with disabilities to promote inclusivity among others.

102. Partners also contributed valuable perspectives including the integration of nutrition and school feeding programs within education strategies, and advocacy for inclusive measures across all learning environments. UNICEF called for an intersectional approach to education, highlighting the need to ensure that marginalized groups have equitable and meaningful access to foundational learning. They emphasized the importance of Early Childhood Development (ECD) as a critical foundation for later learning, emphasizing that school feeding programs significantly increase children's access to education, reduce dropout rates, and improve educational outcomes. She reaffirmed that ensuring equitable access to education for all children, particularly girls, children with disabilities, and those on the move, must be a central priority for Member States.

## **ITEM 19 : Prevention of child sexual abuse and exploitation- REPSSI**

103. Hon. Aver Gavar, Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Children and Vice Chairperson of the Committee, moderated the panel discussion on the prevention of child sexual abuse and exploitation (CSEA), co-convened with the Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative (REPSSI). In her opening remarks, she emphasised the critical need for a coordinated, multisectoral approach to address child sexual exploitation and abuse. She highlighted various mechanisms and documents of the African Union and the Committee in this regard, including the AU Child Online Safety and Empowerment Policy, General Comment on Article 27 of the ACRWC on Sexual Exploitation, Study on Teenage Pregnancy, Guidelines on Ending Violence Against Children, and indeed her mandate as

the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Children, among others. She then welcomed the panellists who shared their perspectives and personal experiences, as well as the substantive information that will be shared on the psychological impacts of abuse and the legal frameworks within SADC.

104. The first panellist was Ts'episo Sello (15), a child representative from Lesotho, who provided an overview of the level of CSEA in SADC. He recognised the AU's role in protecting children through various treaties, including the ACRWC. He noted that while Member States have domesticated child protection instruments as evidenced by the availability of comprehensive laws, the implementation of these laws remains a challenge. Ts'episo highlighted the disturbing trend of rising cases of violence and abuse across the SADC which affects children's mental health and their right to live in a safe environment. He provided many examples from media which illustrate the prevalence of CSEA and concluded with a strong call to action, urging all stakeholders—including the Committee, families, communities, civil society organizations, and governments—to address the factors that expose children to sexual exploitation and abuse and effectively combat this vice.

105. Advocate Maqobose Mothobi, Women and Law in Southern Africa presented the legal and policy landscape regarding CSEA within SADC. She highlighted that various countries have made significant legal advancements by integrating international standards like the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Charter into domestic laws, with some countries establishing specific legislation targeting online crime. She provided examples of best practices from South Africa and Namibia, where Children's Commissions or Ombudsman Offices have been set up to advocate for children's rights, including efforts to align the minimum age of consent with child protection initiatives. However, gaps remain, such as inconsistent definitions of a child and the minimum age of consent, indicating a need to harmonize statutory and customary laws, particularly concerning early marriage and child consent. In conclusion, she provided key recommendations, including but not limited to using technology to empower children, launching public education and cultural change campaigns, promoting community dialogues to shift harmful norms, and strengthening cross-border monitoring for trafficking, all aimed at centring children's rights, voices, and agency while dismantling systemic barriers.

106. Following this, Ms. Chilekwa Chisanga, Regional Policy Advocacy, Communications and Partnerships Officer, REPSSI, discussed the mental health and psychosocial implications of CSEA. She emphasized that for children to achieve optimal

growth and development, they must enjoy mental health and psychosocial well-being within a nurturing and safe environment. CSEA has physical implications and also affects the mental health and psychosocial well-being of children. When victims of CSEA are portrayed as survivors, it raises the question of what context survival is considered and whether it is only physical or if it includes psychological. Ms. Chisanga further noted that children affected by CSEA often exhibit symptoms of severe anxiety, depression, self-neglect, and, in adolescents, eating disorders. Research shows that adults who were abused as children are four times more likely to develop coping mechanisms involving alcohol and substance use, addressing symptoms without understanding the root causes. In terms of integrating mental health and psychosocial support in CSEA responses, REPSSI is actively designing and implementing trauma-informed interventions targeted at survivors and perpetrators, building the capacity of law enforcement, among others. She concluded with key recommendations to Member States to continue to domesticate relevant treaties, and work with civil society on preventive initiatives.

107. Finally, Lebohang Mokatsanyane (12), a child representative from Lesotho, made a presentation on behalf of children in need of protection from CSEA describing CSEA as a serious violation of children's rights, causing deep harm. Lebohang made a plea to governments to implement strong measures to prevent, respond to, and protect children from CSEA. She called for stronger laws, improved collaboration between governments and NGOs, and the active involvement of religious and community leaders. Additionally, she stressed the importance of increasing education and awareness on CSEA, investing in emotional and social learning, and ensuring psychosocial support, especially for children with disabilities. She also highlighted the need to safeguard children in online spaces. Concluding her remarks, she reminded the participants that children are the future of all nations and urged everyone to work towards building a world where no child experiences CSEA.

108. Following the presentations, Hon. Aver opened up the floor for dialogue where Member States reflected on specific initiatives and measures in their respective countries to address CSEA.

## **ITEM 20: Follow up on the 1st Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence against Children- ACPF**

109. The Committee, in collaboration with the Africa Child Policy Forum (ACPF), UNICEF, and WHO, co-convened a high-level panel discussion to follow up on the 1st

Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children (VAC). The Session was opened by Hon. Wilson Almeida Adao, Chairperson of the ACERWC, and Dr Joan Nyanyuki, who both provided opening remarks.

### Message From the Conveners of the Bogotá Conference

110. **Dr Najat Malla M'jid, UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children**, delivered a statement through a pre-recorded video recalling that during the Bogotá Conference, they launched the Pathfinding Global Alliance on Ending VAC, a multi-stakeholder platform committed to accelerating efforts to protect children through concrete and results-oriented actions.

111. Dr M'jid submitted that the Alliance provides a marketplace for knowledge sharing, context-specific and demand-driven support, and peer accountability. Dr M'jid said the post-Bogotá conference was an opportunity to reiterate and galvanise AU Member States' commitments to end VAC, in line with the ACRWC and the UNCRC. She commended the Committee for its strong engagement in promoting and protecting children's rights, notably through interaction with various key stakeholders, including children.

112. **Ms Nankali Maksud, Senior Advisor-Child Protection, UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa**, informed that 79 million girls have been affected by sexual violence and also noted an increase in VAC. She commended the efforts made by Member States in ratifying the ACRWC and UNCRC, however, despite having laws and policies, VAC remains a problem in Africa, where millions of girls have been subjected to FGM. Further, reflecting on the recent trend of global aid being under threat, she noted that it is important to focus on the sustainability of child protection programmes as depending on foreign aid from external donors creates vulnerability in child protection systems. She emphasized that there is a need for Member States to create sustainable, nationally owned systems. In conclusion, Ms Maksud said Member States should invest in children's participation and collaborate with all stakeholders to strengthen child protection programming.

113. **Ms Binta Sako, Technical Representative, WHO Africa**, said that the conference was a milestone in protecting children's rights in Africa. She said over 70 per cent of African states attended and it brought together Governments, civil society, and youth groups on the African continent. Ms Sako reiterated that pledges made by Member States were important in creating a safe environment for children in Africa and that African Member States' health systems must be equipped to protect children and take care of

survivors of VAC. She noted that ending corporal punishment in all settings will go a long way in achieving SDGs. and WHO will continue working with the African Member States to end VAC and it was necessary to pay more attention to vulnerable groups, especially children. In conclusion, Ms Sako said all stakeholders should strengthen their collaboration against VAC and make Bogotá's commitments a reality to end VAC.

### Analysis of the Commitments Made by African Union Member States

114. **Dr Shimelis Tsegaye, Director of Programmes, ACPF**, highlighted key commitments made by Member States at the Bogotá Conference, describing it as a significant step in combating VAC. He noted that 40 Member States participated, with context-specific pledges aligned with existing guidelines. These included commitments to strengthen legal and policy frameworks, criminalise online abuse, end child marriage and corporal punishment in all settings, and expand social services to protect children. Dr Shimelis further reported that 11 Member States pledged to establish multi-sectoral or community-based coordination structures; 22 Member States committed to scaling up VAC prevention and response services; 5 to promoting family-based care for children without parental care; 14 to increasing financial allocations; and 16 to enhancing national data surveillance and case management systems. In conclusion, Dr Shimelis urged the ACERWC to continue to work closely with Member States in the monitoring and implementation of the commitments made during the Bogotá conference and emphasised the importance of cross-learning and collaboration with civil society in monitoring implementation.

### Unpacking African Union and National Accountability Mechanisms

115. **Ms Lydia Joyce Najjemba, Principal Probation and Welfare Officer/ Focal Person Ending VAC Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development Republic of Uganda**, shared Uganda's national efforts to implement the commitments made at the Bogotá Conference. Uganda pledged action in seven key areas: parent and caregiver support, safe and enabling school environments, response and support services, legal and policy frameworks, addressing online harms, and promoting safe environments. Ms. Najjemba also informed that a 25-member multi-sectoral committee has been established to guide policy, program, and budget alignment with the Bogotá pledges.

116. **Ms Neliswa Cekiso, Director of Child Protection, National Department of Social Development, Ministry of Social Development, the Republic of South Africa**

shared South Africa's progress in implementing its commitments at the Bogotá Conference. The country pledged to address key themes including parent and caregiver support, safe and enabling school environments, online harms, harmful social norms, and enhancing child participation and community engagement. The Government. she informed implements the 365 Days Child Protection Programme of Action, which aligns with the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence and additionally, the Government has partnered with UNICEF to tackle sexual exploitation and online harms.

117. **Ms Nomcebo M.F. Nkomo-Nhlengetfwa, Director of the National Children Services Department, Deputy Prime Minister's Office of the Kingdom Of Eswatini,** outlined the country's national-level actions to address VAC. She noted that VAC remains a serious issue in homes, schools, and communities and emphasised the Government's commitment to addressing these concerns. She emphasized Eswatini's intention to strengthen partnerships with faith-based organisations and operationalise the Office of the Registrar of Sex Offenders as part of a broader commitment to ending VAC.

#### Reflections from Civil Society Organisations

118. **Dr Gloria Seruwagi, Research Uptake Manager, Baobab Research Program Consortium,** reflected on the organisation's contributions to ending VAC. She noted the implementation of the first-ever Humanitarian VAC and Youth Survey (HVACS) in Uganda in 2022 and Ethiopia in 2024.

119. The survey focused on refugee children facing displacement, who are often overlooked in this regard. The organisation is also collaborating with host governments, including Uganda and Ethiopia, to protect the rights of refugee children, including their SRHR, through a more unified response to VAC. Dr Seruwagi did inform that the data sets from the surveys are available on the organisation's website for easy access. She then reiterated the organisation's commitment to implementing the objective of the Bogotá Conference.

#### Way Forward and Call to Action

120. **Hon. Aver Gavar, Vice Chairperson of the ACERWC and Special Rapporteur on VAC,** acknowledged the significance of the points raised during the presentations and highlighted what the way forward in ending VAC could be. She mentioned the following recommendations that could pave the way forward including but not limited to using the commitments Member States have made during the Bogotá Conference as a way of holding them accountable since the pledges are public; Improving legislative and policy

mechanisms on VAC; Continuous and sustainable data collection; Adequate funding or ending VAC; Sustained sharing of dialogue; For Member States to devise home-grown solutions; Encourage and facilitate child participation in ending VAC; States should submit reports to the Committee to enhance monitoring and reporting; and the establishment of collaborations with regards to implementing the 2024 Guidelines on ending VAC.

### **ITEM 21: Hearing on Communication No 021, People Serving Girls at Risk and Equality Now (on behalf of Esnart Kenesi) v the Republic of Malawi**

121. The Committee held a hearing on Communication No 0021/Com/003/2022 submitted by People Serving Girls at Risk and Equality Now (on behalf of Esnart Kenesi) against the Republic of Malawi and decided to deliberate on the merits of the Communication during its 46th Ordinary Session.

### **ITEM 22 : Hearing on the Merits on Communication No 024, IHRDA v the Republic of Botswana**

122. The Committee held a hearing on Communication No 0024/Com/001/2023 submitted by the Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa and Centre for Human Rights (on behalf of ACM) against the Republic of Botswana. The hearing was held in the presence of the representatives of the Applicants and the Respondent State after which both Parties to the Communication agreed to resolve the matter through an amicable settlement under the auspices of the Committee within a period of 30 days.

### **ITEM 23 : Presentation on Budget and Projects**

123. The Committee acknowledge the progress made on the implementation of 2025 budget and considered the 2026 ACERWC planned budget activities. The Secretariat briefed the Committee on the status of the projects supported by ACCP and GIZ.

124. The Committee appreciated the update on the various projects supported by partner organisations including ACCP, GIZ and EU.

## **ITEM 24 : Consideration of pending communications**

125. The Committee decided to deliberate on the merits of Communication No: 0020/Com/002/2022 submitted by Lawyers Associated for Human Rights in Africa (on behalf of Children of Jehovah’s Witnesses) against the State of Eritrea during its 46th Ordinary Session.

## **ITEM 25: Adoption of Decisions**

### **Pending Communications**

- I. Communication No 0017/Com/001/2021 submitted by Child Rights and Rehabilitation Network, Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa and Centre for Human Rights (On Behalf of Children Affected by Witchcraft Accusations in Nigeria) against the Federal Republic of Nigeria: The Committee decided to send a reminder to the State Party regarding its request for an on-sight investigation. The Committee also decided to consider the elements of the merit during its 46<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session.
- II. Communication No:0023/Com/005/2022 IHRDA and Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria (On Behalf of Children in Nigeria) against the Federal Republic of Nigeria: The Committee decided to send a reminder to the State Party to submit its arguments on the merit and decided to consider the elements of the merit during its 46<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session.
- III. Communication No. 0019/Com/001/2022-The Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa and Mr. Solomon Joojo Cobbinah on behalf of schoolgirls living along the River Offin in the Ashanti Region against the Republic of Ghana: The Committee decided to grant the requested extension for the State Party to finalize the terms of the amicable settlement by May 2025.
- IV. Communication No 0025/Com/001/2024 African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies on behalf of Mohammed Abdulmonim Salih Vs the Republic of Sudan: The Committee decided to withhold the consideration of this Communication until things resort to peaceful and normal course in the State Party.
- V. Communication No: 0021/Com/003/2022 submitted by People Serving Girls at Risk and Equality Now (on behalf of Esnart Kenesi) against the Republic of Malawi: The Committee, after deliberating on the elements of the Merits, decided to further discuss the matter during the 46<sup>th</sup> Session.

VI. Communication No: 0020/Com/002/2022 submitted by Lawyers Associated for Human Rights in Africa (on behalf of Children of Jehovah's Witnesses) against the State of Eritrea: The Committee decided to deliberate on the merits of the Communication during the 46<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session.

### Documents of the Committee

126. The Committee adopted as amended the below documents pending the integration of its final comments by assigning its Members to some documents to assist the finalisation process:

- i. General Comment on Article 11 on the Right to Education
- ii. General Comment on Article 25 on Children Without Parental Care. The Committee assigned Hon Aboubekrine El Jera, Hon Robert Nanima and Hon Hermine Kembo Gatsing to assist the Special Rapporteur on Children without Parental Care, Hon Anne Musiwa to finalise the General Comment in 3 weeks in line with the deliberations that took place.
- iii. Monitoring Tool on Children Without Parental Care
- iv. Guidelines on Reparations
- v. Guidance Note on Reporting on the Rights and Welfare of Children with Albinism
- vi. Amendment of the Standard of Operating Procedures of Working Groups on regular attendance of external experts and the implication of constant absenteeism and non-cooperation. The Committee assigned Hon Aboubekrine El Jera to assist the finalisation of the amendment.
- vii. ACERWC's Code of Conduct for Child Safeguarding: The Committee assigned Hon Ghislain Roch Estan, Hon Anne Musiwa, and Hon Poloko Nuggert Ntshwarang to finalise the Code of Conduct.
- viii. Concept Note for the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

127. The Committee postponed the consideration of the below documents and assigned its Members to be focal persons to assist the preparation of the documents for consideration and adoption during the 46<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session:

- Guidelines on Inter-Session Activity Report: Hon Hermine Kembo Takam Gatsing is assigned as a focal person.
- Resolution on the Establishment of Working Group on Communications
- Resolution on the Establishment of the Targeted State Party Reporting Procedure: Hon Aver Gavar is assigned to serve as the focal person.

128. The Committee decided to develop a General Comment on Article 13 on Children with Disabilities pursuant to the recommendation of its Working Group on Children with Disabilities.

#### Decisions on Special Mechanisms

129. The Committee decided to terminate the Special Rapporteur on Children in Vulnerable Situations and adopted as amended a Resolution for the establishment of a Special Rapporteur on Investment and Budgeting for Children.

130. The Committee assigned its new Member, Hon Joseph Sunday Sinnah, to serve as the Special Rapporteur on Child Justice and Country Rapporteur to the Republic of Benin, Republic of Cameroon, Republic of Chad, Republic of Gabon, and Republic of Liberia.

#### Affiliate status

131. The Committee granted affiliate status to the National Human Rights Institution of Tanzania, Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance after a careful consideration of its application documents.

#### Observer status

132. The Committee granted observer status to the below organizations whose application was examined during the Session:

- African Early Childhood Network,
- African Institute for Children Studies -
- Fédération Nationale des Associations engages dans le Domaine de l'Enfance au Burundi (FENADEB)
- Nelson Mandela Children's Fund
- East African Law Society

133. The Committee also considered the applications from the below Organizations and decided to request more information as follows:

- Ahaki to submit documentations on (i) its work on child rights and (ii) its previous interaction with the Committee.
- Child's i Foundation to submit (i) its activity report (program of activities), (ii) executive organ profile, and (iii) source of finance.
- Women's Probono Initiative to provide more information on its activities on children's rights

### Other decisions

134. The Committee deliberated on the request of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights regarding the Tripartite Study on Litigation of Girl's Rights and decided to join and participate in the Study

135. The Committee adopted the decision of the Bureau to assign selected Members to work on the development of the new Strategic Plan with the Consultant and the Secretariat, namely Hon Hermine Kembo Gatsing, Hon Robert Nanima, and Hon Sabrina Gahar under the coordination of Hon Aver Gavar as supported by Hon Anne Musiwa.

### Session report

136. The Committee adopted as amended the report of its 45th Session

### Next session date and venue

137. The Committee decided to hold its 46th Ordinary Session from 26 November to 06 December 2025. Regarding the venue, the Committee deliberated on the expressions of interests it has received to host the 46th Ordinary Session and decided that such offers should be submitted through the diplomatic channels within 1–2-month time after which the Committee will work towards holding the Session in its Headquarters.

## ITEM 26 : Closing

138. Hon. Wilson Almeida Adão, Chairperson of the Committee, thanked all the Members of the Committee and the Staff of the Secretariat for the successful convening of the 45th Ordinary Session despite the challenges faced. The Chairperson highlighted the budgetary constraints and the change of the venue of the Session as some of the

challenges faced. Hon Adão highlighted the need to mobilise resource for the effective delivery of its mandate, particularly for the organisation of the 35th Anniversary of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and its 46th Ordinary Session. He also highlighted some of the successful achievements of the Bureau during its terms which will be up for election in the upcoming Session and further reaffirmed the commitment of the Bureau to deliver more in the remaining period of its term. The Chairperson also underlined that the upcoming Session will be the final Session for some Committee members who have served the Committee well, and he indicated that there will be a moment of recognition of their contribution during the 46th Ordinary Session. He thanked the interpreters for their service in making the Session interactive and inclusive. He finally declared the 45th Ordinary Session officially closed.