

STATEMENT OF THE AFRICAN COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON THE RIGHTS AND WELFARE OF THE CHILD FOR THE 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM TO END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE 2025

The Special Rapporteur on Child Marriage and Other Harmful Practices, Hon. Hermine Kembo Takam Gatsing, and the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Children, Hon. Aver Gavar, of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, join the global community for the 16 Days of Activism to End Gender Based Violence (25 November-10 December 2025) under this year's theme, 'UNiTE to End Digital Violence against All Women and Girls'.

The Committee notes the increasing significance of digital technologies in the lives of children across African Union Member States, forming part of the educational and developmental environments in which children grow and actively participate. The Committee, however, is concerned by the rise of technology-facilitated gender-based violence, which includes cyberstalking, doxing, non-consensual sharing of intimate images, and other forms of online harassment on the basis of gender. Across the continent, evidence shows that girls and young women are disproportionately affected, reflecting and reproducing entrenched gender inequalities both online and offline.

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child places binding obligations on States Parties to safeguard the protection of their privacy (Article 10), to protect children from abuse and torture (Article 16), from harmful social and cultural practices (Article 21), and sexual exploitation (Article 27) including online child sexual exploitation and abuse (OCSEA), guided by the principles of non-discrimination, survival and development, the best interests of the child, and child participation.

The Committee has taken steps to situate children's rights within the evolving digital landscape, including through the 2019 Day of General Discussion on OCSEA; the adoption of General Comment No. 7 on Article 27 (Sexual Exploitation) which also addresses OCSEA; Resolution 17/2022 of the ACERWC Working Group on Children's Rights and Business on the protection and promotion of children's rights in the digital sphere in Africa; the 2022 Day of General Discussion on children's rights in the digital world; and the 2023 Day of the African Child on the rights of the child in the digital environment.

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On the Occasion of the 16 Days of Activism to End GBV and in line with this year's theme, the Committee calls upon all AU Member States to:

- i. Enact legislation that addresses all forms of technology-facilitated gender-based violence and ensure that relevant authorities have the capacity to prevent, investigate, and prosecute such violations effectively.
- ii. Establish oversight mechanisms across relevant ministries to hold technology and social media companies to account for protecting children online, including the provision of child-friendly reporting procedures.
- iii. Integrate digital literacy and online safety within school curricula and community programs to equip children, parents, and caregivers with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate digital environments safely.
- iv. Adopt a multisectoral approach and strengthen collaboration among government, National Human Rights Institutions, Regional Economic Communities, child-led and/or child-focused organisations, civil society organisations, and survivors' networks, to collectively advance progress toward ending technology-facilitated gender-based violence.
- v. Allocate adequate and sustained resources for prevention, protection, and response measures for children affected by digital forms of violence.

Done in Maseru, Kingdom of Lesotho
27 November 2025