

OUTCOME STATEMENT OF THE DIALOGUE FORUM ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND BUSINESS

GUIDED by the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Agenda 2040: Fostering an Africa Fit for Children, the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and the Children's Rights and Business Principles;

REAFFIRMING that every child has the right to protection from exploitation, abuse and other rights violations arising from business operations, products, services and practices;

RECOGNISING the contribution of the private sector to economic growth, employment and sustainable development in Africa, and its potential to advance children's well-being, including through improved access to education, health care and other essential services;

CONCERNED that, where safeguards, regulation and oversight are lacking, business activities may harm children through child labour, exploitation, unsafe products and services, online harms, privacy violations, environmental degradation and discrimination;

NOTING the growing commitment of businesses to respect children's rights, increasing regional and international guidance in this area, and the work of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), through its Working Group on Children's Rights and Business, including the Continental Study on Children's Rights and Business;

EMPHASISING the need for collaboration among Member States, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), businesses, civil society organisations, children and other stakeholders, and recognising children as rights-holders entitled to be informed, consulted and meaningfully involved in decisions that affect them;

We, the participants of the Dialogue Forum on Children's Rights and Business, held on 12 October 2026 in Maseru, Lesotho, make the following recommendations:

Call on the African Union Commission to:

- I. Expedite the adoption of the Draft African Union Guidelines and Principles on Business and Human Rights, with specific attention to children's rights, and

support Member States to integrate children's rights into national business and human rights frameworks;

- II. Integrate children's rights, including child rights indicators, into the implementation and monitoring of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and its Protocols, and explore the feasibility of a dedicated regional instrument on children's rights in trade and investment;
- III. Develop continental measures requiring businesses operating in Africa to conduct child rights due diligence, including age verification, across their operations, supply chains and value chains;
- IV. Promote harmonised standards for measuring and reporting business impacts on children's rights, including on child labour, education, health, safety and digital well-being, and lead continental research and data collection on these impacts; and
- V. Strengthen collaboration with the ACERWC and RECs, and lead continental capacity-building for Member States, businesses and oversight bodies.

Call on Member States of the African Union to:

- I. Strengthen national laws, policies, regulators and oversight bodies in line with the ACRWC, and mainstream children's rights across policies on business, trade, investment, labour, the environment and digital governance;
- II. Upon their adoption, domesticate and implement the AU Guidelines and Principles on Business and Human Rights, with particular attention to children's rights;
- III. Establish child-friendly mechanisms to monitor business activities, such as a Business Observatory or Monitoring Dashboard, with measurable indicators, regular reporting, safeguards for children's personal data, and referral of identified harms for investigation and remedy;
- IV. Promote corporate accountability by empowering National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) to provide accessible, child-sensitive grievance, investigation and remedy mechanisms, and by establishing business-funded remediation mechanisms for affected children;
- V. Include explicit child rights safeguards in trade, investment and commercial agreements, and integrate child rights due diligence into public procurement, state-owned enterprises and investment promotion;



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- VI. Strengthen birth registration, age-verification and data collection systems, conduct child rights impact assessments, and contribute to a continental repository of good practices and jurisprudence on business and children's rights;
- VII. Establish sustainable financing, including public-private partnerships and business contributions, to support implementation and access to remedies; and
- VIII. Institutionalise child participation mechanisms, such as child advisory panels and child-friendly feedback platforms, so that children's views inform decisions on business activities that affect them.

Call on Regional Economic Communities to:

- I. Integrate child rights safeguards into regional trade, investment, industrialisation and infrastructure policies and regional value chains;
- II. Establish regional platforms and accountability frameworks to monitor and report on business impacts on children's rights and on Member States' progress, aligned with continental and international standards;
- III. Build the capacity of Member States, businesses and NHRIs to implement children's rights standards, including through child-sensitive social protection and the exchange of good practices; and
- IV. Research emerging issues such as the digital economy, artificial intelligence, climate change, extractive industries and regional value chains, in collaboration with the ACERWC and other stakeholders.

Call on Businesses and Private Sector Actors to:

- I. Integrate children's rights into their policies, operations and practices, and designate focal points or other arrangements to oversee implementation;
- II. Undertake mandatory child rights due diligence and regular child rights impact assessments, consulting children and affected communities, to identify, prevent, mitigate and remedy adverse impacts across operations, supply chains and value chains;
- III. Implement age-verification, child safeguarding and child protection measures, supported by mandatory training for employees, contractors, suppliers and business partners, to address risks to children's health, safety, education, privacy and well-being;
- IV. Establish accessible, child-friendly grievance and remedy mechanisms, and report publicly on the measures taken; and

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- V. Share good practices, and fund and scale up initiatives that advance children's well-being, development, participation and protection.

Call on Civil Society Organisations and Development Partners to:

- I. Support awareness-raising and capacity-building for States, businesses and other stakeholders on child rights due diligence and accountability;
- II. Research, document and independently monitor business compliance with children's rights standards, highlighting emerging risks, gaps and good practices;
- III. Promote children's meaningful and inclusive participation in decisions on business activities that affect them; and
- IV. Support children's access to justice and effective remedies through judicial and non-judicial mechanisms, including child-friendly legal assistance, referral services and psychosocial support for affected children and families.

Call on the ACERWC and its Working Group on Children's Rights and Business to:

- I. Regularly analyse trends, challenges and emerging issues on business and children's rights in Africa to inform policy and advocacy;
- II. Provide sustained technical support and facilitate peer learning among Member States, RECs, businesses, civil society organisations and children, including by promoting the replication and scaling of effective practices; and
- III. Strengthen collaboration with the private sector to advance the integration of children's rights into business policies, operations, and value chains through dialogue, joint assessments, research, partnerships, capacity-building, networking, and the exchange of good practices, experiences, and lessons learned.

Adopted on 12 October 2026, in Maseru, Kingdom of Lesotho