

## **Communique on the 44<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, Maseru, Lesotho 02-12 October 2024**

1. The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child finalized its 44<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session which was held in Maseru, Lesotho, on 02-12 October 2024.
2. The Session was attended by Representatives of children, Representatives of Member States, Representatives of the African Union Commission, and AU Organs, Representatives of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), Representatives of UN Organs and Agencies, and Representatives of Civil Society Organizations.
3. The Opening Ceremony of the Session had remarks from:
  - Representatives of children, Kali Posholi, a child representative from Lesotho and Agot Alier Garang a child representative from South Sudan
  - Representative of the CSO forum, Mr. Benedict Omillo;
  - Representative of the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI), Mr. Foluso Adegalu, on behalf of Mr. Gilbert Sebihogo, Executive Director;
  - Representative of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Hon. Aïssatou Moulaye, Member of UNCRC
  - The Regional Representative for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to the African Union, Mr. Marcel Clement Akpovo,
  - Vice-Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), Hon. Janet Ramatoulie Sallah-Njie
  - President of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, Hon. Lady Justice Imani D. Aboud
  - Chairperson of the PRC Sub-Committee on Human Rights, Democracy, and Governance, H.E. Ambassador Natalina Edward Mou
  - Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development, H.E. Amb, Minata SAMATE CESSOUMA,
  - Chairperson of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, Hon Wilson De Almeida Adao
  - Minister of Gender, Youth, and Social Development of the Kingdom of Lesotho, Hon. Pitso Lesaoana

The Session was officially opened by Her Majesty Queen Masenate Mohato Seeiso, the Queen of the Kingdom of Lesotho.

4. During its seating of the 44<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session, the Committee conducted various activities and adopted decisions as highlighted below:

- 4.1. The Committee held a Child Rights Forum on the African Children's Charter on 03-04 October 2024 where various panel discussions on various themes were held including on States' Cooperation with the Monitoring Mandate of the Committee, School Retention, Child Rights Structures in NHRIs, Violence Against Children, Socio-Economic Vulnerabilities of Children with Disabilities, Child Rights Based Approach to Climate Action with a focus on Adaptation, National Mechanisms for Reporting and Follow-up, and Safeguarding Children's Rights in the Informal Sector.
- 4.2. The Committee held a Workshop with Regional Economic Communities and CSOs on its Guidelines on Ending Violence Against Children in Africa on 05 October 2024.
- 4.3. The Committee considered the following State Party Reports:
  - The First Periodic Report of the Republic of Namibia
  - The First Periodic Report of the Republic of Zambia
- 4.4. The Committee held implementation hearing on its Decision on Communication No 0012/Com/01/2019 submitted by Legal and Human Rights Centre, Centre for Reproductive Rights Vs the United Republic of Tanzania with the representatives of both parties.
- 4.5. The Committee held hearing on Communication No: 0017/Com/001/2021 submitted by Child Rights and Rehabilitation Network, Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa and Center for Human Rights (On Behalf of Children Affected by Witchcraft Accusations in Nigeria) against the Federal Republic of Nigeria in the presence of both parties.
- 4.6. The Committee considered and issued rulings on the way forward on the following Communications:
  - i. 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
  - ii. 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;

- iii. 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; and
- iv. 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.

- 4.7. The Committee noted that the parties to Communication No: 0022/Com/004/2022 submitted by institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA) against the Republic of Burundi agreed to amicably settle the matter hence, the Committee decided to finalize the matter in line with its Guidelines.
- 4.8. The Committee decided to undertake an on-sight investigation to the Federal Republic of Nigeria in the context of Communication No: 0017/Com/001/2021 submitted by Child Rights and Rehabilitation Network, Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa and Center for Human Rights (On Behalf of Children Affected by Witchcraft Accusations in Nigeria) against the Federal Republic of Nigeria in 2025 before reaching at a decision on the merits.
- 4.9. The Committee decided to develop a policy statement for the African Day for Food and Nutrition on 30 October 2024 , jointly through its Working Group on Climate Change and Children's Rights and Special Rapporteur on Health.
- 4.10. The Committee adopted as amended the Resolution on National Mechanisms for Implementation, Reporting, and Follow-up (NMIRFs) through its Working Group on Implementation of Decisions.
- 4.11. The Committee decided to issue letter of urgent appeal on the conflict situation in the Republic of The Sudan.
- 4.12. The Committee considered and decided on applications for observer status from:
- Hope and Homes for Children in Rwanda,
  - Ogedegede Community Development Foundation in Nigeria, and
  - The Winford Center for Children and Women in Nigeria.
- 4.18. The Committee decided to revise its State Party Reporting Guidelines and procedures to introduce targeted/simplified reporting for Periodic State Party reports whereby State Parties will report based on list of issues. The Committee decided for the Secretariat to develop a comprehensive written proposal during its upcoming 45<sup>th</sup> Session for further deliberation.
- 4.19. The Committee decided to revise its rules regarding the membership and attendance of external experts of its Working Groups. The Committee requested

the Secretariat to develop a proposal on the regular attendance of external experts and decided to deliberate on the matter further in the upcoming Session.

- 4.20. The Committee decided and launched the regional and gender rotation for election of its chairperson which will take place in 2025 and decided to begin by the region that has never held the office.
- 4.21. The Committee decided to adopt Guidelines on the nature, format, content, and consideration of intersession activity reports by Members of the Committee and tasked the Secretariat to draft the guidelines and submit for consideration the Committee's 45<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session
- 4.22. The Committee decided to continue its efforts to develop a compendium of good practices on four thematic areas, namely Children without parental Care, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Children of imprisoned mothers and care givers, and children in conflict situation by mobilizing resources.
- 4.23. The Committee decided to develop a Continental Transitional Framework for children without parental care on a condition that funds are available.
- 4.24. The Committee decided to hold a children's forum on Article 31 during 45<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session subject to availability of resources.
- 4.25. The Committee decided to hold a panel discussion on ongoing conflicts in Africa in its upcoming Session.
- 4.26. The Committee considered the reports from Members of the Committee about the activities carried out during the intersession period.
- 4.27. The Committee decided to hold its 45<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session on 02-11 April 2025 virtually in the event where it does not secure funding to hold it in person.

**Done in Maseru, Lesotho at the 44<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session on 12 October 2024.**