



## STATEMENT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES OF THE AFRICAN COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON THE RIGHTS AND WELFARE OF THE CHILD ON THE OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

### *‘Ensuring the participation of children with disabilities’*

The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC/Committee) proudly joins the global community in commemorating the International Day of Persons with Disabilities with a theme ‘Amplifying the leadership of persons with disabilities for an inclusive and sustainable future’. This day serves as a vital reminder of our shared responsibility to uphold the rights, dignity, and inclusion of children with disabilities in Africa, and particularly on the importance of their participation in decision making processes to nurture their leadership role in the future.

Children with disabilities have equal rights to participate fully in all matters affecting their lives. Participation and inclusion are central tenets of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa. Despite notable progress in the recognition and realization of the rights of children with disabilities, significant barriers still persist excluding many children with disabilities from decision-making processes at home, in schools, within communities, and at national levels.

The Committee emphasizes that meaningful participation transcends mere presence or being heard; it is about empowering children with disabilities to express their views freely, ensuring their perspectives are respected and factored into decisions shaping their lives. Achieving this requires proactive measures to address the underlying causes of their exclusion, which are primarily attributable to systemic discrimination, stigma, and inaccessible environments that hinder the involvement and development of children with disabilities. Moreover, the Committee notes that the inaccessibility of education and information in a disability friendly format further undermines the meaningful and informed participation of children with disabilities. Even when children with disabilities



access education, they are not given the opportunity to participate and contribute in the learning process.

On this important occasion, the Committee calls upon Member States of the African Union to:

- Enact laws and policies that explicitly guarantee the participation of children with disabilities in decision-making processes consistent with the ACRWC
- Establish child-friendly, inclusive, and accessible platforms and mechanisms that enable children with disabilities to express their opinions at all levels of decision-making
- Guarantee the representation of children with disabilities in child participation platforms such as child parliaments, clubs, and other similar platforms
- Ensure the accessibility of information in formats suitable for children with all types of disabilities to empower them to engage effectively in matters affecting their lives
- Increase awareness raising efforts and discourage discriminatory attitudes by sensitizing communities, teachers, government officials and other stakeholders on the importance of the participation of children with disabilities
- Undertake the necessary measures to facilitate the active community participation of children with disabilities, including in the context of play, recreation, and cultural and religious activities
- Enhance access to education for children with disabilities by providing reasonable accommodation and support, ensuring their active involvement in the learning process, training specialized teachers, and supplying accessible learning materials
- **Strengthen and update disaggregated data on children with disabilities by age, gender, type of disability, and other status to inform** targeted interventions to support their participation based on their needs and evolving capacities.

The Committee further calls upon regional and international partners, civil society organizations, the private sector, and the media to join efforts in promoting the participation of children with disabilities. Their voices must not only be heard but also acted upon to build an inclusive society where every child can thrive and contribute meaningfully.



**ACERWC**  
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The Committee firmly believes that fostering leadership of persons with disabilities can be realized by investing in children with disabilities today as they are the future that can achieve the leadership of persons with disabilities which we are aspiring for.

On this International Day of Persons with Disabilities, let us reaffirm our commitment to Safeguarding the rights of children with disabilities, and ensuring their active and meaningful participation in building an Africa fit for all its children.

**Done in Maseru, Kingdom of Lesotho**

**3 December, 2024.**

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**Note to Editors:**

The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) ACERWC is an African Union Organ mandated to monitor the implementation of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) as well as promote and protect children's rights in Africa. Following the entry into force of the on November 29, 1999, the Committee was established in July 2001, in accordance with Article 32 of the Charter. To date, the Charter has been ratified by 51 of 55 Member States of the African Union. The mandate of the Committee is derived from Articles 32-45 of the Charter and provides among others to undertake research and studies on children's rights issues.