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**21<sup>ST</sup> SESSION OF THE AFRICAN COMMITTEE  
OF EXPERTS ON THE RIGHTS & WELFARE OF  
THE CHILD (ACERWC)  
15 - 19 APRIL 2013  
ADDIS ABABA (ETHIOPIA)**

**ACERWC//RPT (XXI)  
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**REPORT**

**REPORT OF THE 21ST SESSION OF THE AFRICAN  
COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON THE RIGHTS AND  
WELFARE OF THE CHILD (ACERWC)**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The 21<sup>st</sup> Ordinary Session of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) was held at the African Union Commission Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 15 to 19 April 2013.

**II. PARTICIPATION**

2. The Meeting was attended by all the eleven Members of the ACERWC, the AUC Representatives, officials from the Government of Burkina Faso, UNICEF Liaison Office to the AU and UNECA, United Nations Commission for Human Rights (UNHCR) , International Labor Organization ILO, OHCHR, Plan International, Save the Children, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) ChildFund International, The African Child Policy Forum (ACPF), African Movement of Working Children and Youth (AMWCY), COBUFADE-Burkina Faso, the Inter African Committee, Wings Education and Media, GIZ, the Inner City Mission for Children, National Children Advisory Board on Violence Against Children (VAC), Ghana, National Children Advisory Board on Violence Against Children (VAC), Sierra Leone, CRADLE for Child Rights, Kenya/National Youth Council, Uganda, Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment and, and International Social Services.

**ITEM 1: OPENING CEREMONY**

3. Two statements were made during the opening ceremony.

**Statement by the Commissioner for Social Affairs, African Union Commission**

4. H.E .Dr Mustapha Sidiki Kaloko began his remarks by welcoming delegates to the 21st Session of the African Committee on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) and in particular, representatives of Burkina Faso, who were due to present a report on the country's implementation of the Charter. He implored all stakeholders to work concertedly to ensure that children's issues were given prominence in the post 2015 Development Agenda. Dr Kaloko observed that the MDGs have had relative success as witnessed by declines in child mortality, increase in primary school enrolment, rising political interest, but decried gross inequalities, inadequate social services and basic amenities for most of the continent's children.

5. The Commissioner chronicled programmes by the African Union Commission to address issues related to rights and welfare of children as encapsulated in MDGs.

These included the Cost of Hunger study, the Campaign for Accelerated Reduction in Maternal Mortality in Africa, and finalization of a report on the State of Africa's Children.

6. He applauded the ACERWC for its choice of theme for 2013 celebrations of the Day of the African Child (June 16) which relates to Harmful Social and Cultural Practices which violate the rights of many children in Africa especially girls. Dr Kaloko challenged the Committee to find another appropriate theme for 2014. Finally, he thanked all partners for their support to the Committee.

### **Opening Statement by the Chairperson of the ACERWC**

7. The Chairperson of the Committee Dr Benyam Dawit Mezmur applauded the allocation, by the African Union, of an autonomous budget to the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in 2013. He briefed delegates on activities by the ACERWC from November 2012 to April 2013. These included advocacy for ratification of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, participation at the January 2013 AU Summit and other conferences, increased collaboration with AU Organs and Departments, and activities undertaken in collaboration with Partners.

8. The Chairperson congratulated Swaziland for its recent ratification of the African Children's Charter, as well as South Sudan for signing it in January 2013. Dr Mezmur hoped 2014 would witness a universal ratification of the Charter by all African Union Member States. The ACERWC had, during the January 2013 AU Summit, held bilateral discussions with Member States yet to sign and ratify the Charter. The Committee was also proactively collaborating with UNICEF to get State Parties to submit their Report on the implementation of the Charter. To this end, the Committee expected to receive a number of State Party Reports and encouraged Civil Society Organisations to monitor the developments and prepare corresponding complimentary reports.

9. The ACERWC planned to revive its collaboration with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Chairperson concluded his remarks by thanking the Secretariat of the Committee, State Parties and partners.

### **ITEM 2: CONSULTATION AMONG COMMITTEE MEMBERS (CLOSED SESSION)**

10. The Committee was informed that the Civil Society Organizations Forum did not take place and therefore decided to delete the agenda item on presentation of the Forum's recommendations. The Committee was also informed that the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa had not confirmed its presentation, which is

scheduled on the day of the Post-2015 general discussion on children. The Committee decided to maintain this item on the agenda, while awaiting confirmation.

### **ITEM 3: PROCEDURAL MATTERS**

#### **A. Adoption of the Agenda and Program of Work**

11. The Agenda and Program of Work were adopted as amended.

#### **B. Organisation of work**

12. The Committee agreed to conduct its deliberations in open and closed sessions according to the Agenda.

### **ITEM 4: BRIEF PRESENTATIONS BY PARTNERS**

13. Various Partners made statements on their work as it relates to that of the Committee

14. The UNICEF Representative Akila Aggoune noted that weak or unstable economies in Africa have had a negative impact on the provision of resources to child education, child health, child protection, among other areas. She highlighted the launch by UNICEF and WHO of a report on, "Integrated Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Pneumonia and Diarrhea" that will ensure up to two million children are saved every year from pneumonia and diarrhea deaths. She noted that African leaders committed in January 2013 to develop and implement activities to end preventable deaths among children under five years of age by 2035, and reduce Under Five Mortality Rate to below 20/1,000 live births.

15. A follow up to the request made by the Committee on the submission of Initial State Party Reports, the UNICEF Representative indicated that there was progress. UNICEF will launch a publication on the Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) during the Day of the African Child, as well as another publication on progress in the implementation of child nutrition, to be launched in April 2013. The UNICEF representative indicated that UNICEF will support two key events during the commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the OAU/AU, and include a High Level Panel on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics and the Children-Youth Forum.

16. Mr. Moussa Harouna Sambo of the African Movement of Working Children and Youth (AMWCY), in his presentation, outlined the objectives of the Movement, which are to improve living and working conditions for children. Based on these, working children and youth (AMWCY) have identified twelve (12) rights that they intend to

materialize through grassroots action. The AMWCY is present in 24 African countries and its members are children and young workers, with children comprising 71% and girls 53%. On 16 June 2013, the 311 AMWCY member associations of the AMWCY will organize a major conference on the theme and each association is preparing for the 16 June event and the results will be shared.

17. The Representative of United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) Mr Vidar Ekehaug recalled that during the last session, the Committee agreed to start the development of a General Comment on Article 6 and that UNHCR welcomed this initiative and is ready to support the Committee and to provide any information needed, particularly with regard to the right to acquire a nationality. There are varying interpretations as to what constitutes birth registration and some countries in Africa do not issue a birth certificate free of charge. There is also a need to delink the birth registration process from the process of acquisition of nationality, as the fear of opening the door to nationality is impeding birth registration for non-nationals in some cases. UNHCR expressed appreciation for the successful Committee mission to Kenya to follow up on the implementation of its decisions on the case of the Nubian children and said they were available to meet on any issues following the mission that may be useful to UNHCR as the holder of the Mandate for the prevention of statelessness.

18. The Representative of African Child Policy Forum (ACPF) Dr Olivia Yambi informed that the Organization considers the Committee as one of its most important partners and its programs and initiatives are deliberately designed to provide the evidence-based policy work that can contribute to the Committee's work. She affirmed ACPF commitment to further strengthen its partnership with the Committee and work to ensure Africa's children at the center of the post-2015 development agenda. The Committee she emphasized, has a significant role in placing children at the centre of the Post-2015 Agenda and the proposal to dedicate significant discussion on this is a demonstration of their commitment Other upcoming products of ACPF in 2013 that she mentioned are: The launch of The Africa Report on Child Wellbeing 2013, The Africa Report on Violence against Children, and a Report on Children with Disabilities

19. The Representative of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights congratulated the Chair of the Committee for being elected in the UNCRC and said that this was a good opportunity to strengthen collaboration between the two Committees. The UN Human Rights Office has developed a Road Map to strengthen the cooperation between the African Commission on Human and People's Rights and the UN Special Procedure Mechanism and also has a collaboration of work with the African Court on Human and People's Rights. ASG Suminovic, Director of Program UN Human Rights Office New York has discussed with the Chair of the ACERWC in areas of cooperation between the two Institutions that would include a

joint campaign on the ratification and implementation of regional and international instruments on the rights of the child.

20. The Representative of Save the Children, Ms. Ruth Koshal acknowledged the strides made by the AU towards establishing mechanism that protect and promote the rights of children in the Continent and hence called upon the ACERWC to convene a high level meeting leading up to the 50th anniversary to evaluate the situation of children's rights in Africa ,to analyze obstacles that impede their enjoyment and to reflect on challenges that could become major obstacles to the implementation of the Charter. On the theme of the DAC 2014, she called upon the ACERWC to focus on Article 9 of the ACRWC: Parental Care and Protection and on the MDGs she said that there was a critical need to discuss a more sustainable and equitable approach to child development, protection, survival and participation.

21. The Representative of Plan International Mr Chikezie Anyanwu said their work in Africa is guided by a vision for an Africa where children's rights and potential are fully realised and in spite of the challenges, live their lives full of opportunities and the mission is to achieve lasting improvements in the quality of life of marginalised children in Africa through a process that unites people across cultures and adds meaning and value to their lives. He recalled issues affecting children that Plan International has championed through programs, campaigns and advocacy; that include: 'Universal Birth Registration' (UBR) campaign, 'Learn Without Fear' and 'Because I Am A Girl' He commended the continent for being the only sub-continent with its own Child Rights Treaty . He said Plan was appreciative of the ACERWC continued collaboration urging the Committee to use the opportunity of the election of its Chairperson to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to improve further the relationship between the ACERWC and UNCRC especially with regards to joint consideration of State Party Reports

22. The Representative of Child Fund Ms Tenagne Mekonnen informed that the organization is dedicated to helping Children in need. She said that they are working with the Committee and other Partners to celebrate the Day of the African Child. They will bring in children from the Countries that they have offices on the ground to come and raise their voices. She retariatated that they were looking forward to work with the Committee

23. The Representative of ILO Ms Cynthia Samuel-Olonjuwon highlighted some developments relating to ILO's work on child labour. These include Child labour elimination, especially the worst forms, which remains a priority for the ILO in Africa. She also informed that ILO has established a virtual Child Labour Resource Centre based in the ILO Regional Office in Addis Ababa. This will support Member States to develop and implement child labour policies and programmes based on international norms and global promising practice and that ILO is pleased to note the identification of child labour eradication as one of the child rights and welfare issues reflected in

the Outcome Document of the Regional Consultations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

24. The Representative of the Inter-African Committee (IAC) Dr. Morissanda Kouyate informed participants that his organization operates in 29 African countries and its mandate is to combat traditional practices that are harmful to the health of women and children, as well as to promote positive practices. In 2010, his organization engaged a process seeking the adoption of a declaration to prohibit female genital mutilations (FGMs). That declaration was finally adopted on 20 December by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and he is requesting the Committee to support its implementation.

25. The Representative of the ICRC, Mr. Vincent Ochilet, recalled the ICRC's mission which is to protect and assist the the victims of armed conflicts and other other situations of violence. He also recalled the collaborative effort with the Committee, which resulted in a training session for the Committee members in November 2012 on the protection of children under International humanitarian law (IHL). The ICRC also provided the Committee with data on its activities in favour of children affected by armed conflicts and other situations of violence carried out during 2012 in Africa. The ICRC plans to organise another session on the protection of children under IHL to the Committee members in 2013.

26. The Representative of Wings Media and Education, Mr Anteneh Belay informed the meeting that his Organization, in collaboration with the Department of Social Affairs and other Partners, were organizing celebration for the Day of the African Child schedule to take place on 14th June 2013. He recalled that they had celebrated the Day of the African Child 2012 which was very engaging.

27. The Chairperson of the ACERWC thanked all the Partners for their contribution and looked forward to their participation in the discussion on the children on post 2015 development Agenda.

#### **ITEM 5: PRESENTATION ON IMPLEMENTING GUIDELINES FOR THE ALTERNATIVE CARE OF CHILDREN**

28. In the presentation on the implementing Guidelines for the Alternative Care of children the presenters Mrs Mia Dambach from International Social Service (ISS), Mr Georges Nyakora from SOS Village International and Ms Clare Feinstein from Save the Children, explained that, since the approval of the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children at the UNGeneral Assembly in November 2009, the continuing challenge has been their implementation. The challenges included

- how to develop comprehensive strategies with limited resources,
- how to effectively engage key stakeholders and importantly,

-how to ensure the child and his or her family are able to truly participate in the decision making process.

29. To address the challenges, a handbook titled “Moving Forward” was developed and launched at the Human Rights Council in Geneva in March 2013. It’s presentation at the ACERWC’s 21st session was aimed at acquainting professionals in African with the new resource. ISS hoped to engage the Committee on the way forward to enhance protection of the rights of children deprived of family care or at the risk of being so. At the end the presenters made the following recommendations:

- ACERWC to promote the guidelines and also monitor their implementation by including them in State Party reporting
- DSA to include compliance to these Guidelines in the Strategic Plan 2014-2019.

30. After the presentation the discussions focused on the following: Neglected children, child headed households, effects of maternal absence, the participation of children on the process of the Guidelines and, mothers who don’t want to keep their children being allowed to leave them in designated areas. They also raised concerns on corporal punishment, teenage mothers, children living in conflict areas, lost children and disabled children among others.

31. In response the presenters informed that most of the issues raised were in the Guidelines, children were heavily involved in developing the Guidelines hence participation is emphasized but in the Best Interest of the Child. They reiterated that the Key Principles in the Guidelines are: Principle of Necessity and Principle of Suitability hence much needs to be done to strengthen the family. They also suggested that it would be important for the Guidelines to be launched across the region so that the key actors would be made aware and then affect National Policy on Child Protection. On teenage mothers, the Guidelines encourage them to continue with their education.

32. The Committee Members agreed that the way forward was to study the document intensively and later plan how to incorporate it into the State Party Reporting system while looking at ways in which it interlinks with other documents e.g. the ACPF Guidelines on Inter Country Adoption. The Chairperson encouraged ISS to consider applying for Observer Status.

## **ITEM 6: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ON CHILDHOOD**

33. Mrs. Félicité Muhimpundu, member of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, made a presentation on early childhood emotional development: an analyzer of respect for the rights and welfare of the child and adult. In her presentation, she explained that *“the child, due to the needs of his physical and mental development, requires particular care with regard to health, physical,*

*mental, moral and social development, and requires legal protection in conditions of freedom, dignity and security.”* (Preamble of the ACERWC). Unfortunately, comments gleaned from several reports from Member States, as well as agencies of the United Nations and the African Union, it is obvious that many African children aged between 0 and 6 years greatly yearn for care and attention, suffer abuse or psychological brutality, both within their families and in various institutions that host them for social or educational reasons. Conclusions by child development experts indicate this situation often has repercussions that are felt throughout childhood and up to adulthood.

34. These children, who grow up in a state of anxiety and emotional insecurity, become fertile ground, as shown by several studies, for many social maladjustments which cause them to drop out of school, develop neurosis, psychosomatic disorders and certain psychoses. Hence, the recommendation to States and Partners to make early childhood issues a priority, otherwise the neglect of children’s needs and rights to protection and education will become a very serious threat to peace and the development of our societies.

35. After the presentation, the discussion focused on caring for children with overlooked or neglected mental illnesses, on bad mothers who may be compared to mothers who t abandon their children, as well as on the link between the weaning and social attachment, the anguish of the eighth month in child development and on physical development of children from single-parent families.

36. The Presenter answered all questions and recommended to Member States and employers of breastfeeding mothers to grant the latter sufficient time to feed their children and provide them the emotional security they need. It is also desirable that fathers are given the opportunity to play their role in relation to their children.

## **ITEM 7: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ON THE DRAFT ACERWC MEDIA COMMUNICATION PLAN**

37. **The Consultant Mr Amos Zikusooka**, presented the draft ACERWC Media and Communication Plan (2013-2017) .He emphasized that this plan operationalizes key communication roles and functions of the Committee as well as communication outputs and objectives in the ACERWC Plan of Action (2010-2014). The plan he said will help the Committee undertake planned and strategic communication activities to increase its visibility within and outside the AU, establish a Media Relations Initiative to liaise with the media in promoting child rights and welfare, define clear communication roles and responsibilities for Committee members and promote partnerships with key stakeholders such as the various AU organs,

Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Member States, children and the media in the promotion of child rights and welfare in Africa.

38. Underlying this plan is the supposition that communication plays a central role in fulfilling the mandate of the Committee. Popularizing and raising the profile of the Committee, promoting the implementation of the Charter among Member States, gathering and disseminating information on child rights and welfare, media relations and engagement as well as enhancing the participation of various stakeholders, among others, are all parts of the dynamic communications function within the Committee.

39. After the presentation, the discussions highlighted the following points:

- The draft Communication Strategy was sent to all Committee members for their inputs and to the AU Directorate of Information and Communication (DIC) for a professional view on the plan;
- The ACCP Coordinator pointed out that in 2012; the project had a budget of USD 45, 000 for the implementation of the ACERWC Plan of Action (2010-2014). This budget is intended for production of communication materials, awareness raising and updating of the ACERWC website. She mentioned that the allocation needed to be expended in 2013 and time was short, hence it is important for the ACERWC to finalize the Communication strategy;
- The Committee adopted the Communication plan subject to inputs from DIC.

40. In conclusion, the Committee agreed to have a discussion on the Communication plan as an agenda item at the next Session of the Committee on in order to discuss progress made and challengers faced that need to be addressed and any lessons learnt.

## **ITEM 8: DISCUSSION ON THE ACCP PROJECT**

41. The Project Coordinator of the African Children's Charter Project (ACCP), Ms. Beatrice Arionget, briefed the Committee Members on the activities undertaken to-date as well as plans for 2013. She presented the project's budget summary per partner (2011-2014) and highlighted activities successfully implemented and those that were pending. Other Partners in the project pointed out activities planned for 2013 and the intervention of each partner. She expressed her concern at the delay in the implementation of some activities such as the harmonization of the Committee Rules of procedure.

42. In the ensuing discussion, it was noted that the AUC was currently finalizing guidelines on Rules of Procedure for AU Organs, which would inevitably impact on

the Committee's Rules of Procedure. It was therefore considered prudent for the ACERWC to await finalization of the AU guidelines.

43. At the end of the discussion, Ms. Arionget outlined critical activities which the Committee should consider in the short-term. These included the collaboration between the ACERWC and the African Commission on Human and People's Rights as well as Regional Economic Communities. She also requested the Committee to designate focal persons for each of the project activities bearing in mind that there will soon be new members.

#### **ITEM 9: INPUTS ON THE GENERAL COMMENTS ON ARTICLE 30 OF THE CHARTER**

44. The Committee examined the draft document on General Comments on Article 30 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. After discussion, the Committee adopted the document with the understanding that amendments will be taken into account. The Secretariat was requested to send a reminder email to all members who wish to make final amendments to submit same within a week. The Chairperson of the Committee and Mr. Clement volunteered to finalize the General Comments which will be later submitted for approval to the African Union Commission on International Law.

#### **ITEM 10: CONSIDERATION OF STATE PARTY REPORTS: BURKINA FASO REPORT**

45. Burkina Faso's second and third combined periodic report on the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child was presented by Mr. Adjima Gbangou, Secretary General of the Ministry of Social Action and National Solidarity (MASSN). He gave a brief overview of the reporting process, which involved all stakeholders. He then listed the legislative and administrative measures for child protection which are in place or under way, notably the adoption, on 26 June 2012, of a national action plan to combat the worst forms of child labor and the draft child protection code which should be considered during this first half of 2013. Concerning birth registration, it can be seen that a national civil status strategy coupled with a five-year action plan (2012-2016) has been developed. It focuses on five (5) areas, with one devoted especially to strengthening the production of vital statistics. This has helped to raise the birth registration rate from 63.7% in 2006 to 92% in 2010. In the field of basic health and welfare, the efforts made have helped to reduce morbidity, maternal and child mortality rates through improved health coverage and the development of innovative strategies.

46. Concerning education, recreational and cultural activities, the partnerships that were established for the purpose of infrastructure building have increased

opportunities for provision of preschool education, whose rate was 2.7% in 2009-2010. At the primary level, the effective implementation of the Ten-Year Basic Education Development Plan (PDDEB) has improved indicators, raising the national gross primary enrolment ratio from 43.4% in 2001 to 79.6% in 2011/2012, along with enhanced gender parity. On the whole, according to the Head of the Burkina Faso Delegation, the expansion of educational opportunities has been accompanied by improvement in quality and better performance in examinations.

47. In relation to actions to make exclusive breastfeeding effective, we note the implementation of several strategies including consideration of breastfeeding in the documents of most of the programs and strategies related to the infant and young children, the review of the Labor code in 1992 allow more time to feeding lactating women (1 hour 30 minutes), the constitution of support groups for breastfeeding and social mobilization for breastfeeding. Which helped to increase the exclusive breastfeeding rate of 16.1% (EDS 2003) to 25% (EDS 2010).

48. However, enormous challenges still hinder the achievement of certain goals the State had set for the purpose of promoting and protecting children's rights, notably insufficient financial resources, ineffective implementation of certain child protection instruments and inadequate support structures for disadvantaged children.

49. After the presentations, Committee members raised a number of issues relating, among others, to child labor, particularly in cotton plantations and small-scale mining, to implementing the law prohibiting corporal punishment, to eliminating female genital mutilations, to forced and early marriages, to child begging, to confining children in conflict with the law in separate quarters from adults, to imprisoning mothers with their children, to childcare facilities and their supervision, to mechanisms to cater for and register children of Malian refugees in Burkina Faso, to making the right to education effective and to promoting maternal breastfeeding.

50. In responding to the Committee, the Delegation of Burkina Faso said that the government is working with Partners in implementing the Charter. Efforts are being made to combat harmful traditional practices, notably female genital mutilation whose prevalence has declined sharply. Also, Burkina Faso's Penal Code penalizes all those who are actively or passively involved in the practice of FGM (Article 308), in forced marriages (Article 371) and in begging (Article 244). Concerning the confinement of children in adult quarters or of mothers with their children, the situation is being resolved with the adoption of the national justice policy. Similarly, there is a personalization of the sentence for this category of citizens seeking justice and the confinement decision is made as a last resort. Regarding the supervision of foster homes for children, this is conducted monthly under the supervision of the President of the *Tribunal de Grande Instance* (high court) and any facilities that fail to meet the standards are shut down.

51. On the situation of children of Malian refugees, the implementation of the Multi-risk Contingency Plan and with the support of partners, it has been possible to provide adequate care to the children and their families. In the field of education, efforts made have improved the various indicators. Indeed, government primary schools are free and equipped with canteens. Special measures are taken to promote the education of girls, notably payment of contributions by the State on behalf of their parents and the provision of dry rations for their families. Finally, the Delegation informed the participants that Burkina Faso has adopted and is implementing a National Strategy for the Modernization of the Civil Status Registry in a bid to implement the right to a name and nationality.

52. At the end of the session, the Chairperson thanked the Delegation for responding to questions and addressing issues raised by the Committee. He also congratulated Burkina Faso, which is the only State Party that has submitted its 2nd and 3rd reports on the implementation of the Charter, and said that Burkina Faso will be receiving the Committee's recommendations.

#### **ITEM 11: DISCUSSION AND ADOPTION OF THE THEME FOR DAY OF THE AFRICAN CHILD 2014**

53. The Chairperson outlined the basic criteria of the consideration of the theme of DAC. Thereafter the Committee decided to choose on the theme proposed by children during their consultation. After intense deliberations, the Committee adopted the following theme: "**Child friendly, quality, free and compulsory Education for all Children in Africa**"

#### **ITEM 12: BRIEF ON THE MISSIONS & MEETINGS ATTENDED BY COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

54. Advocacy Missions for the ratification of the Charter in DRC: The Committee delegation had a successful mission to DRC and met with relevant Government Authorities, UN Agencies and CSOs who informed the Committee delegation that DRC had ratified the Charter but the ratification instruments had not yet been submitted to the AUC. A follow up has to be made for the submission of the ratification documents.

55. Follow up on the Implementation of Concluding Observations in Burkina Faso and Togo: The Committee undertook visits to Burkina Faso and Togo to follow up on the implementation of concluding observations made after these State Parties had presented their report on the implementation of the Charter. The States presented to

the Committee delegation the activities and measures they had taken for the implementation of the Charter.

56. Follow up on the Decision on children of Nubian Children descent to Nationality: The Committee made a visit to Kenya to follow up on the implementation of the Decision made in June 2011 on the violation of the children of Nubian descent Right to Name and Nationality. The Committee delegation met with various actors to find out the situation of children of Nubian descent. Some progress has been made but more need to be done. There after the Committee decided to urge the Government of Kenya to expand and fast track the efforts underway in view of implementing the Decision fully.

57. Follow up concerning Communication on alleged Child Rights Violation in Northern Uganda: The Committee delegation combined the follow up visit concerning Communication on alleged Child Rights Violation in Northern Uganda with the follow up on the implementation of the recommendations on the concluding observations. The decision will be communicated to the Government of the Republic of Uganda at a later date.

58. A Consultation on AU Engagement with the Secretariat of the Network of the African National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI) was held in Dakar meeting: During this meeting, which Committee was invited, a resolution was passed for collaboration between NHRI and AU Institutions and a Road map was to be developed for the collaboration.

59. Training Zambia local CSOs in engaging and participating in ACERWC Reporting mechanisms in Zambia: The Committee was involved in this training where it was agreed that the ACERWC engages more with Southern Africa Development Community and also that the Government of Zambia to be reminded to submit its report on the implementation of the Charter.

60. A member of the Committee attended an International meeting in Geneva with the UNCRC. The overall objective of the meeting was to develop concrete proposals of cooperation between UN and Regional Human Rights mechanisms in three areas of cooperation: sharing of information, joint activities and follow up to Recommendations as well as put forward strategies to effectively implement such proposals.

### **ITEM 13: INPUT ON THE DRAFT COLLABORATION PLAN BETWEEN ACERWC AND RECS**

61. The Consultant, Mr Remember Miamingi, summarised the draft collaboration Plan between the Committee and REC's, informing that he incorporated the

amendments previously suggested. After discussion the Committee adopted the collaborative Plan of Action with the following amendments:

1. The inclusion of a requirement for an analysis of the Committee's Strengths, Weaknesses, and Opportunities in its engagement with RECs.
2. The inclusion of a clear implementation plan for the collaboration. It was suggested that ACERWC members play an important role individually in strengthening the collaboration between the Committee and the REC's in their regions.

62. In conclusion it was agreed that a Committee member with additional inputs to enhance the collaborative plan should liaise with the consultant.

**ITEM 14: INTRODUCTION TO THE OBJECTIVES AND FORMAT OF THE DISCUSSION OF THE DAY OF GENERAL DISCUSSION: AFRICAN CHILDREN IN THE POST 2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA**

63. The Chairperson of the Committee informed participants that the overall objective of the discussion on African Children in the Post-2015 Development Agenda is to position children in Africa on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. To properly conduct this discussion, the Committee has decided to make presentations which will be followed by debate. Following the discussion, a one-page document will be prepared and submitted to the Department of Economic Affairs of the African Union Commission as the Committee's contribution to the African Common Position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

64. A working group has been established to provide participants with proposals for the contribution.

**ITEM 15: PRESENTATION ON THE DRAFT AFRICAN COMMON POSITION ON THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA: AUC DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS**

65. The Representative of the AUC Economic Affairs Department, Mr. Dossina Yeo started by explaining the rationale for the consultative process on the Post 2015 Development Agenda. This included promoting continent – wide awareness on the Agenda, help prioritize Africa's priorities for the Agenda, harmonize Africa's position on Rio with the position on the post 2015 and to leverage Africa's influence in shaping the Agenda. He explained how the process began in October 2011, the various consultative meetings with various stakeholders culminating with the AUC launching MDG 2012 report with a thematic focus on Post 2015 Development Agenda at AU July 2012 Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

66. Following a Decision of the Assembly (AU/DEC.423 (XIX)), the Commission in collaboration with Partners has designed consultation strategies on the Post 2015 Agenda. These strategies included meetings with the Regional blocks as well as other forums. In February 2013 the emerging findings were presented in a High Level Panel meeting. In March 2013 there was a Continent –wide consultation and also a presentation and endorsement of Africa Common Position at the Conference of Ministers of Finance and Planning.

67. He pointed out the positives and the challengers of the current MDGs and the priority areas identified during the extensive consultations were as follows:

- structural economic transformation and inclusive growth
- innovation, technological transfer and Research and Development
- human development
- financing and partnership and
- Development enablers.

68. He emphasized on the following key principles that must be taken into account:

- the Post 2015 Agenda must be demand driven and reflect emerging priorities and aspirations,
- must take into account development enablers as well as outcomes;
- Structural transformation and inclusive growth, capacity development and technological innovation and human development are critical to Africa's development,
- need to be strategic in the choice of enablers and indicators to be included in the framework
- the Agenda must reflect regional initiatives and priorities.

69. Finally, he outlined the way forward as follow:

- the endorsement of the African Common Position;
- the establishment of Committee of Heads of States and Government on the Post 2015 Development Agenda both slated for May 2013;
- the presentation of African Common Position at the UNGA in September 2013;
- And the development of goals, targets, indicators and measurements for enablers, key priorities areas and outcomes.

70. After the presentation, the participants raised various issues that they felt should be addresses in the African Common Position on the Post 2015 Development Agenda. These included the emotional vulnerability of children, the increase of a youthful population, increased exploitation of children, the quality of care and education, cultural barriers, birth registration and maintenance of a comprehensive data base.

71. In his response, the presenter said that most of these issues had been addressed in the Matrix of priority areas for the Post 2015 Development Agenda. However he acknowledges that some issues had not been taken into account in the matrix and welcomed any suggestions to be included.

72. The meeting agreed that interactions between social and economic aspects were important, strengthening of the family was critical for the development of the child, the positive side of the African Culture should be considered and the Governments should be called upon to look into internal ways of efficient management of resources.

**ITEM 16: PRESENTATION ON ‘POSITIONING CHILDREN IN THE AFRICAN COMMON POSITION ON THE POST 2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA’:  
UNICEF**

73. The Representative from UNICEF- Ms. Akila Aggoune made a presentation on ‘Positioning Children in the Global Framework and the African Common Position on Post-2015 Development Agenda’. She presented the post 2015 mechanism that has been put in place in the UN system, UN System Post–2015 Task Team was designated by the UN Secretary General in late 2011 in order to bring together various UN organizations to review strengths and weaknesses of current MDGs, outline post-2015 priorities and collaborate on a forward looking “road map” submitted to the UN Secretary-General at the beginning of June 2012. She went on to mention the formation of a High Level Panel consisting of a group of eminent persons drawn from leaders in political, academic, civil society and private sector selected by the Secretary-General to advise on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and prepare inputs for the 2013 General Assembly. She added that there have also been multi-stakeholder consultations within countries on the Post-2015 Development Agenda to ensure a transparent process and meaningful participation from government, NGOs, CSOs, among others. Ms. Aggoune outlined the processes undertaken.

74. She concluded by proposing some key recommendations particularly on children such as African Member States should accelerate progress in the implementation of current MDGs particularly those affecting children and there should be a human rights approach with children lens guide the framework and formulation of all priorities of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

75. The discussions after the presentation focused on the following key points: The importance of early childhood development as well as adequate nutrition and health of mothers during pregnancy and child protection to be clearly highlighted in the priority areas of the African Common Position for children. It was also stressed that Africa should be well-organized and speak with one voice to ensure that the Africa’s

priorities are reflected in the Post 2015 Agenda at the global level. Political leadership is crucial from Africa to have some ownership of the process and the role of children is also essential as they should be actors for their own development.

#### **ITEM 17: PANEL DISCUSSION ON THE THEME:**

76. Panel comprised African Child Policy Forum, Save the Children and Plan International. The Panel discussants each gave a presentation on the theme of the discussion. The main points that were highlighted in the presentation were as follows:

77. In the presentation by the African Child Policy Forum (ACPF), the presenter Mr. **Yehualashet Mekonnen** summarized ACPF's recent initiative which has identified and documented a number of priorities for children in Africa in the post-2015 development agenda. Together with its partners, ACPF is now seeking strategic ways to ensure that these priorities for children are reflected not only in within the Common Position on Post-2015 agenda for Africa but also in the global post-2015 development agenda.

78. The development of ACPF's Position Paper was informed largely by its extensive research and policy work undertaken by the organisation over the past decade, a contextual analysis of the situation of children in Africa, as well as the contributions from other agencies, institutions and individuals working on child rights in Africa.

79. The Position Paper proposes a Framework for Action based on four interrelated themes.

- ✓ Promoting children's survival and their development
- ✓ Protecting children against all forms of violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect
- ✓ Ensuring social inclusiveness and equality
- ✓ Enhancing and building capacities, voices and commitments for children

80. ACPF's Position Paper also places a significant amount of emphasis on strengthening accountability of the post-2015 development agenda and proposes a number of principled and practical actions that need to take place to strengthen accountability for children.

81. The Representative of Save the Children; **Ms. Petronella Mayeya** explained that the organization is focused on ensuring that the post-2015 framework clearly accounts for the needs and rights of all children. The Organization continues to advocate and campaign for the realization of children's rights, working at the global and national levels. The MDGs have provided a key framework to direct political and

financial commitments as well as technical breakthroughs for children. Save the Children's suggested post-2015 development framework champions universal and equitable development, with human rights as its guiding principle and evidence as a foundation for its approaches.

82. Human rights principles such as universality, equality and inalienability must underpin everything that is agreed.

83. Save the Children proposed a total of ten goals for the new framework, to put in place the foundations for human development:

- Goal 1: eradicate extreme poverty and reduce relative poverty through inclusive growth and decent work
- Goal 2: eradicate hunger, halve stunting, and ensure universal access to sustainable food, water and sanitation
- Goal 3: end preventable child and maternal mortality and provide basic healthcare for all
- Goal 4: ensure children everywhere receive quality education and have good learning outcomes
- Goal 5: ensure all children live a life free from all forms of violence, are protected in conflict and thrive in a safe family environment
- Goal 6: governance will be more open, accountable and inclusive
- Goal 7: establish effective global partnerships for development
- Goal 8: build disaster-resilient societies
- Goal 9: ensure a sustainable, healthy and resilient environment for all
- Goal 10: deliver sustainable energy to all

84. The Representative of Plan International, **Mr. Chikezie Anyanwu**, began his presentation by strongly recommending the merging of Post 2015 Development Goals into one single framework. He outlined elements which should be included in the new Development framework as:

- Broadening the new global development agenda from access to primary education to the successful transition to, and completion of, quality secondary education
- Making Gender equality central to the post 2015 framework
- Developing the Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) agenda to include a stronger perspective of young people/adolescents;
- Adoption of a human rights-based approach to address causes of poverty, deprivation, lack of attention to inequality and discrimination, protection, and participation;
- Importance of disaggregated data;

- Birth registration needed to be prioritised

85. According to Plan International, specific issues previously left out yet vital for poverty eradication and sustainable development were protection of children from all forms of violence and resilience to disasters, conflicts and climate change. Furthermore, principles of accountability, participation, universality and non-discrimination on practical policies and strategies by which development goals are monitored should be explicitly considered.

86. On measuring qualitative progress, Plan International felt the new framework should attempt to measure and monitor sensitive and hard-to-assess areas such as sexual violence against children and intra family violence. Mr. Anyanwu said the post-MDG framework could also include a separate pillar or goal focusing on risk reduction and resilience to disasters, conflicts and climate change. Finally, Plan International underscored the importance to involve member states, the private sector and civil society to build and sustain global consensus for the new framework.

87. After the panel presentations, the following issues were raised: the need for inclusion, in the new development framework, of issues relating to accountability to children and particularly action against all forms of violence and abuse against children including infants. Participants also wanted to know how Africa would handle critical issues which might not be incorporated in the new development agenda. It was observed that Development agencies should in future avoid working in silos and instead pool resources together to implement common goals. The meeting mandated the ACERWC Secretariat to follow up with the Department of Economic Affairs to obtain the matrix of priority areas for the Post-2015 Development Agenda and make inputs.

#### **ITEM 18: PRESENTATION BY UNECA**

88. Since the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa did not confirm, this presentation was cancelled.

#### **ITEM 19: DISCUSSIONS ON THE ACERWC INPUTS TO THE AFRICAN COMMON POSITION ON POST 2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA AND WAY FORWARD**

89. The drafting team presented the draft Recommendations on the ACERWC contribution to the African Common position on post 2015 Development Agenda. After discussions the participants agreed on the following:

**ACERWC Key Recommendations to the African Common Position on the Post  
2015 Development Agenda**

90. The Committee has benefited from the technical presentations made during its 21st session from the 15th to 19th April 2013; Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia.

91. The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the child (ACERWC) appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the development of an African common position on the Post 2015 development agenda.

92. As one of the primary custodian of the implementation of children's rights on the African continent, the Committee is in a particular position of leadership to share its contribution to further the children's rights agenda. The Committee regards the children's rights in the Children's Charter as being premised on the right to development.

93. The Committee therefore recommends the following points:

- The need to ensure that a human rights-based approach, which includes children's rights, guides the Africa common position ( priorities and objectives)
- The need to promote and sustain social development infrastructure in relation to education at all levels, health, and social protection services
- For the furtherance of children's rights against discrimination, in particular that the gender equality principle is to be inserted under all the priorities of the common position
- The need to strengthen meaningful child participation and accountability to children
- The need to ensure the right of every child to birth registration as key for development planning
- Ensuring measures to strengthen and preserve families, as the optimal environment for children's wellbeing, growth and development
- Establishing and strengthening child protection systems with a goal to eliminating ALL forms of physical, emotional, and psychological violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation
- The need to prevent drug addiction and alcoholism in children and to provide medical and psychological assistance to those already affected
- Ensure the visibility of children in all budgets and financial partnerships, with particular focus on efficient utilization of those resources to bring about the required results
- Maximizing efforts to promote peace and security, recognizing the devastating effects of conflict upon children

- Whilst promoting positive cultural values, ensuring that harmful practices that are prejudicial to children are not perpetuated.

94. For way forward it was agreed:

- That the Committee's Recommendations are forwarded to the Department of Economic Affairs as their proposal to the African common position on the Post 2015 development agenda
- These recommendations are forwarded to Ms Amina J. Mohammed, Special Advisor of the United Nations Secretary General on post 2015 Development Agenda;
- That the Committee will attend the next African Union Summit where the African Common position on the Post 2015 development agenda will consider and adopted,
- That the recommendations will be used to amend the matrix of Priority areas for the African Common Position in the Post 2015 Development Agenda.

#### **ITEM 20: CONSIDERATION OF COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED**

95. After the presentation by the Working Group for the Communication on the violation of the rights of Talibés children in Senegal, the Committee has decided on the admissibility and has declared the Communication admissible.

96. The Committee also took a decision on the communication on the violation of the rights of children in Northern Uganda. This decision will be published in the coming days.

97. The Committee received a new Communication, and a working group was set up to consider it.

#### **ITEM 21: CONSIDERATION OF OBSERVER STATUS APPLICATIONS**

98. Members designated to review applications for Observer Status at the Twentieth Session of the Committee presented their report. After deliberation, the Committee decided to grant observer status to:

- **Childfund** International subject to the organization forwarding to the Secretariat of the Committee all information relating to their sources of funding.
- **Retrack** subject to forwarding to the Secretariat of the Committee an updated registration certificate.

99. The Committee was concerned about the absence of reports from Organizations that had been granted Observer Status. It was thus decided to publish the list of these organizations and to send them a reminder on abiding by the

guidelines on Observer Status. It was also agreed that there is a need to review criteria for Observer Status in order not to lock out Networks.

## **ITEM 22 : DISCUSSION ON THE THEMATIC AREAS OF THE EXPERTS**

100. After lengthy discussions on the usage of the thematic areas, the following were agreed upon:

- The Committee Members to research on their thematic areas and present their findings during the Sessions. These findings would also benefit actors working in the field of children issues.
- A Committee Member in charge of the thematic area would be involved in the missions concerning his or her area
- Committee Members to be keen on their thematic areas during the consideration of State Party Reports

101. The challenge of translation of documents was raised and lack of funding for developed projects. It was agreed that the current thematic areas need to be reviewed in line with emerging issues and Committee Member can change a thematic area depending on his or her areas of interest.

## **ITEM 23: DISCUSSION ON COLLABORATION WITH THE UNCRC**

102. During the discussion, it was recalled that there had been some ongoing consultations with the Geneva Committee on collaboration. After extensive discussions the Committee agreed that the ACERWC and UNCRC reopens the discussions, updates the Action plan, mobilizes resources and implement the work plan developed between the Committee working group and the UNCRC working group.

## **ITEM 24: DISCUSSION ON FACILITATING THE SUBMISSION OF STATE PARTY REPORTS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CHARTER**

103. The Chairperson informed that four types of Notes Verbales have been sent to all Member States which have not submitted their initial report on the implementation of the Charter. In these Note Verbales, the Committee indicated its concern on the delay gave a deadline for the submission of the report and informed Governments of its intention to use other sources to consider the child rights in their respective countries and present a report to the Executive Council.

104. He also explained that he had undertaken a number of meetings with UNICEF in order to mobilize support for the reporting process. He further noted that the

Committee expects to receive more State Party Reports before the end of the year and finally requested Committee Members to lobby all State Parties for the submission of reports on the implementation of the Charter including their own countries.

105. Ms Amal El Hengari informed that Libya intends to request to withdraw the initial report and submit another one.

#### **ITEM 25: DISCUSSION ON ACERWC GUIDELINES FOR PERIODIC REPORTING**

106. The Chairperson of the Committee informed that it was crucial to develop guidelines for periodical report on the implementation of the Charter as States Parties have started to submit their periodical reports. He further informed that a Partner had been approached to support the process. Since no response has been received, the Secretariat was requested to approach other Partners.

#### **ITEM 26: DISCUSSION ON THE ACERWC NEW STRATEGIC PLAN (2015-2019)**

107. The Chairperson of the Committee informed that the current strategic plan (2010-2014) will expire next year. Therefore, it is important to begin the process of developing a new strategic plan (2015-2019). This activity will use consultants and draft TOR has been developed for this purpose. UNICEF that has supported the development of the current plan has been requested to support the new plan. The Committee also requested the Secretariat to take the necessary steps with other partners.

#### **ITEM 27: DISCUSSION ON COLLABORATION WITH VARIOUS AU ORGANS / INSTITUTIONS -COLLABORATION BETWEEN ACERWC AND ACHPR**

108. The Chairperson informed the Committee that after the last Session a letter was sent to the Chairperson of the ACHPR proposing to organize a joint workshop to formalize the collaboration between the two organs through an MOU. In the absence of a response from ACHPR, it was agreed that the Chairperson of the Committee send a reminder and use the opportunity of the next summit to discuss with the Chairperson of the ACHPR.

#### **ITEM 28: DISCUSSION ON PLANNED ACTIVITIES BETWEEN APRIL 2013 AND 22ND SESSION**

109. The Secretariat reported on the activities to be undertaken during the period between the 21st and 22nd sessions. The Committee was informed that Nigeria, Egypt and Niger had responded positively to the Committee's request for follow-up missions on the implementation of the Recommendations of the Committee and that Tunisia had also responded positively to the advocacy mission for the ratification of

the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. The requests forwarded to South Sudan, Cameroon and Senegal have not yet received responses. The advocacy mission to the DRC for the ratification of the Charter has been conducted as well as missions for follow-up of recommendations to Togo and Burkina Faso. Meanwhile, Senegal, Cameroon and Tanzania have not replied to requests for missions to follow-up recommendations.

110. The Secretariat informed the Committee that funds for these missions were not yet available, as the financing partner of the Committee budget had not yet transferred the funds.

111. A workshop is planned in Zimbabwe to train new members in a bid to familiarize them with procedures of the Committee, of the African Union Commission and of certain organs, as well as with United Nations human rights instruments, before the next session. Several Partners have announced their contributions to support the training. The Committee will use this workshop to discuss with the Republic of Zimbabwe on the submission of its report on the implementation of the Charter.

112. A workshop will also be organized in South Africa to evaluate the Day of the African Child 2012, under the auspices of Prof. Julia Sloth Nielsen, member of the Committee who has offered to host the meeting in her University.

113. After the presentation, the Secretariat was requested to continue discussions for the implementation of these activities and it is expected that most activities would take place before the departure of members whose terms are ending, so as to benefit from their expertise.

#### **ITEM 29: ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

114. The meeting was informed that the African Court on Human and People's Rights was organizing a meeting in Yaounde Cameroon on the following week and Dr Clement Mashamba the focal person for the ACfHPR was to attend.

115. Prof Julia Jane Sloth-Nielsen: 2nd Vice Chairperson and Mr Alfas Chitakunye: Rapporteur were designated focal persons for Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Child Rights activities.

116. After a discussion on the need to limit the number of pages for the Initial, periodic and also CSO Complementary reports on the implementation of the Charter.

117. The Secretariat is to research on where other Treaty bodies have limits in their reports from Member States. The Chairperson would also approach Member States for their opinion during the Summit as they are also stakeholders.

118. The Committee agreed that it was important to give feedback to Member States after missions to their Countries. The report should be specific and contain the main elements:

-who were involved, purpose of the visit, Country of visit, dates of visit, highlights and recommendations (a ten page document).

119. The Committee agreed that it was necessary for outgoing Committee Members to be receiving certificates.

120. The Committee were also informed that there was a budget to visit the Countries that had formally requested to host the Secretariat of the ACERWC.

121. The Chairperson of the Committee informed that he was following up on the Amendment of the Charter (Article 37 (1)) to allow Committee Members to renew their terms.

## **ITEM 27: ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT REPORT**

122. The report was adopted as amended.

## **ITEM 28: CLOSING CEREMONY**

123. The closing Statements were made by a Representative of the AU Commission and the Chairperson of the Committee.

124. The Secretary to the Committee Mme Mariama Cisse represented the Department of Social Affairs informed the participants that the Commissioner and Director were engaged in other duties and had present their apologies. She thanked all present for their dedication during the Session and more so during the Day of General Discussion and assured them that their inputs will be taken into account. She also thanked the four Committee Members whose term had come to an end for their contribution towards the protection and promotion of the rights and welfare of the children in Africa and promised that the Department would always call upon their expertise when need arises. On the submission of periodic reports, she greatly thanked the Government of Burkina Faso for being the only Country that has submitted two reports, thanked the rapporteur for putting in extra hours to assist in the drafting of the report. Finally she thanked the interpreters, the Secretariat and all who had made the 21st Session successful.

125. The Chairperson of the Committee Dr Benyam Dawit Mezmur, welcomed all present to the closing of the Session and said a lot had been covered during the week and included the consideration of the Burkina Faso State Party Report, presentations on the UN Alternative Care Guidelines and on the “emotional state of childhood” as well as the one day thematic discussion on the Post-2015 Development Agenda for Children in Africa which was enriching, and for various way forward will be undertaken in order to take the recommendations to the next step. He assured that the Committee will continue undertaking proactive measures to collaborate with States Parties, as well as UNICEF in the submission of reports on

the implementation of the Charter and informed that the Committee had finalized on the Communication against the Government of Uganda that has been a constant agenda item on this Committee's work for few years now. He also mentioned the working documents that had been adopted to facilitate the work and realization of the mandate of the Committee and these included the Communication Plan of the Committee and the General Comment on Article 30 which is the Committee's first.

126. On the Children's Charter Project is concerned, he informed that during the Session, the Committee had a constructive discussion with the coordinator as well as members of the consortium in relation to the status of the project as well as the issues/activities that require immediate attention and re-assured the partners that the points they have raised for immediate action will receive the urgent attention of the Committee. He also informed that he was delighted to report that the theme for the DAC 2014 is "The right to a child friendly, quality, free and compulsory education for all children in Africa. "which was the first theme that was selected based on a child participation process.

127. He said this Session had been used to discuss and concretize the planned activities between now and the 22nd Session which is envisaged for the second half of October. While thanking "old friends" of the Committee, welcoming new ones and encouraging them to be a constant presence both in the sessions, and in the general work.

128. Finally he thanked the Committee Members whose term was coming to an end in July acknowledging that they had dedicated themselves wholly to serving the interests of Children in the Continent He also informed that the Committee was following up on the Executive Council Decision to allow Committee Members to serve for more than one term. He appreciated the diversity in the Committee and said the common goal was the protection and promotion of the rights and welfare of the Child,

129. Finally on behalf of the Committee, he once again thanked the African Union, UN agencies, civil society partners, and others who continue to support the work of the Committee, colleagues for their continued and unreserved support and cooperation, Mr. Alfas, the rapporteur, the Secretariat, and the interpreters and declared the Session closed.