

**AFRICAN UNION**

**African Committee of Experts on the  
Rights and Welfare of the Child**

**الاتحاد الأفريقي**



*"An Africa Fit for Children"*

**UNION AFRICAINE**

**Comité Africain d'Experts sur les Droits et  
le Bien-être de l'Enfant**

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**ACERWC CALLS ON ALL STAKEHOLDERS TO JOIN HANDS TO UPHOLD AND  
PROTECT OF RIGHTS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN AFRICA**

On the occasion of the 2018 International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) that is being commemorated under the theme 'Empowering Persons with Disabilities and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality', the African Committee of Experts on the Right and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) joins the commemorations taking place around the world. The Committee recognizes the significance of these commemorations that seeks to promote the understanding of disability issues and to mobilize support for ensuring that the rights of Persons with Disabilities in general and those of children with disabilities in particular are upheld and protected.

The Committee recognizes the special vulnerabilities of children with disabilities, as the Ms. Goitseone Nanikie Nkwe, the Chairperson of the ACERWC states, 'the impact of disability are particularly serious for children; they are among the most stigmatized and excluded, often suffering marginalization within the family, community and school, leading to poor health and education outcomes and are mostly at higher risk of violence, abuse and exploitation. Children with disabilities often miss opportunities for realizing their full potential and this denies them active participation in educational opportunities; yet education and skills development can lead them to escape poverty' .

The Committee particularly recognizes the existence of the negative perceptions against children with disabilities. It is often perceived that children with disabilities are incapable of learning or leading a normal life, hence they are usually compartmentalized as needing institutional care or separation from mainstream socialization processes. Such children are exposed to a disabling environment which hinders majority of children

with disabilities from accessing social services such as education, health and other services.

The Committee wishes to draw the attention of all stakeholders to Article 13 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child provides that children with disabilities shall have the right to special measures of protection. In particular, the Charter prescribes that State Parties have to ensure that children with disabilities have effective access to training, preparation for employment and recreation opportunities in a manner conducive to the child achieving the fullest possible social integration, individual development and his cultural and moral development.

To this effect; the ACERWC has also developed a Strategy to enhance protection accorded to children with disabilities to ensure that their abilities are not overlooked; that their capacities are recognized and their needs given the priority they deserve. This Strategy identifies seven areas of specific concern that require urgent attention from all member states and stakeholders. These areas of concern are: the link between poverty and disability; social attitudes, stigma and discrimination; right to education; right to health; the right to be heard and to participate; violence against children with disabilities; and the Importance of statistics, research and evidence gathering.

The Committee believes that if prioritized and addressed these seven areas of concern will immensely contribute to the empowerment of children with disabilities and ensure their full inclusion in the community. Hence, the Committee calls upon all stakeholders to join hand to address these concerns.

Recognizing existing initiatives, the Ms. Nkwe states 'the newly adopted Protocol to the African Charter on the Human and Peoples Right on the Right of Persons with Disabilities which contains a specific article for the rights of children with disabilities in Africa is one of commendable initiatives. It has the potential to change the lives of African children with disabilities and thus the Chairperson of ACEWRC appeals for ratification so that the protocol can come in to force.'

In this regard, the ACERWC calls on all Member States, the African Union Commission, its Organs, partners, Disabled Peoples' Organizations (DPOs) and other stakeholders to make concerted efforts to eliminate all barriers that contribute to sustaining disabling environment that disempowers children with disabilities. We all need to work tirelessly to create an enabling environment where for full inclusion of children with disabilities and that their equality with others is assured.