

Event Concept Note

33rd Ordinary Session of the African Union High Level Side Event on Children Affected by Armed Conflicts

Theme: Stop the War on Children: Dividend of Silencing the Guns

DATE AND TIME: February 10 /2019, 07:00-09.30am

LOCATION: Sheraton Hotel, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

*Co-Sponsored by the AU Commission, Governments of Nigeria, Uganda, Norway
and Save the Children*

1. BACKGROUND

Some parts of Africa have continued to experience frequent and protracted conflicts and crisis situations. All of these have devastating effects on children. In Africa, children continue to suffer the 6 Grave Violations during armed conflict. These violations are recruitment and use by armed groups, killing and maiming, sexual exploitation, attacks on schools and hospitals, abduction, and denial of humanitarian access.

An AU report on the impact of conflict and crises on children conducted in 2016 by the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child revealed the incidence of violations against as a continuous problem. Again a Save the Children's War on Children Report, 2019 indicates that 1 out of 5 children in Africa are living in conflict zones and the continent hosts 6 out of 10 most dangerous places for children to live. Though the severity of each grave violation varies from country to country, the overall incidence of any grave violation in any country is condemnable.

Moving beyond normative frameworks to action

Without doubt, there are a number of UN Resolutions, AU Summit and Peace and Security Council (PSC) policy decisions and frameworks, are in place for protecting CAAC in Africa. In the last 4 years, for example, the AU Summit adopted more than 2 decisions whilst the PSC recorded a commendable 6 or more decisions on the subject matter. These Resolutions, decisions, and initiatives complement the legal framework protecting children in armed conflict: including the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child; the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on Children in Armed Conflict; and the Geneva Conventions and their two Additional Protocols.

The impunity with which these violations are perpetrated against poor and defenseless children point to a general lack of political will and commitment in dealing with the perpetrators of these heinous crimes; there is war on children on the African continent

In addition, decisions and strategic priority on the Safe Schools Declaration by the Specialized Technical Committee on Education Science and Technology (STC-EST2) and the Continental Education Strategy (CESA 16-25); as well as the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on CAAC by the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and

Welfare of the Child(ACERWC), the establishment of an informal Group of Friends of CAAC, and the newly established Inter Agency on CAAC are all unprecedented policy actions by the AU in working towards protecting CAAC in Africa.

The prevalence of these abuses of children during armed conflict despite the commendable policy progress made on the issue at the AU level and the existence of legal frameworks meant to address the issue is worrisome.

2. Justification for the High- Level Dialogue on CAAC accountability at the AU Summit, 2020

Firstly, knowing that the incidence of CAAC violations have not abated in proportion to the number of existing policy frameworks at the AU level in respect of the pandemic of the 6 grave violations, the need for deliberate actions to implement and be held accountable for the violations is arguably the most logical next steps to take by the Pan Africa policy making body.

Secondly, the timeliness of this event is underscored by the occasion of taking stock of both AU themes of *silencing the guns by 2020* and the 2019 AU's Annual theme on *finding durable solutions for forced displacements*, and the impact on children, in particular children affected by armed conflict and other humanitarian situations.

Again, this event, coming after an AU Summit decision in 2018 on protecting education from attacks and military use and ensuring a mechanism for reporting on the impact of humanitarian situations on the education for girls and women, the opportunity to showcase good practices on protecting CAAC, including protecting education is a timely one for lobbying for institutionalizing reporting mechanisms on CAAC at both AU Summit and PSC levels.

In addition, this event expected to be co-hosted by the Governments of Nigeria and Uganda, whose AU Ambassadors co-convene the Group of Friends of CAAC, provides the opportunity to galvanize support for the Group and its activities.

3. Objectives

The overall objective of the High-Level Dialogue is

Towards strengthening the protection of children from the 6 Grave violations during armed conflict in Africa.

Specific objectives include,

- a) To remind AU Member States of their commitments on protecting children affected by armed conflict in Africa
- b) To showcase good practices from AU Member States on the protection of children affected by armed conflict
- c) To galvanize commitment and action to prevent, protect and address the 6 Grave Violations against children in situations of armed conflict

4. Expected outcomes

- i) The AU Summit adopts a decision on the roadmap for *silencing the guns* to include monitoring and evaluation indicators on the 6 Grave Violations and mechanisms for reporting on them by the AU Commission
- ii) Increased political support and commitment for CAAC in the African Peace and Security Architecture of the AU

- iii) The AU Summit adopts a decision reiterating their commitment for the appointment of the Special Envoy on CAAC at the AU.
- iv) A Communiqué /Press Release by the Head of States and Governments on the outcome of the High Level Dialogue on CAAC

5. Event structure:

Opening/Welcome Remarks: H.E President Sahle-Work Zewde, President of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia

a) **Key Remarks:** The Presidents of Nigeria, Uganda, CEO of Save the Children, Prime Minister of Norway, AU Chairperson and a Child affected by armed conflict

b) **Panel:** Human Resources Science and Technology, 2018 Peace Laureate, Ministers of Education, Defence and Gender as well as a Representative of the Swedish Government

c) **Interactive session:** other participants with targeted questions to provide insights, reflections, questions and answers

6. Participants

Head of States and Governments, AU Ministers , AU leadership and Partners

7. Timeframe

10th February, 2020 at 07.00-09.30 am

