

**Talking Points**  
**Ambassador Amr Aljowaily**  
**Director, Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO)**  
**African Union Commission**  
**on “Advancing the AU Theme of the Year through a Child-Rights Lens”**  
**Before the Symposium on the 35th Anniversary**  
**of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC)\*\***

**Virtual, 28 November 2025**

**Please check against delivery**

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**Hon Chairperson of the ACERWC, Mme Hon. Sabrina Gahar**  
**Hon. Pitso Lesaoana, Minister of Gender, Youth, and Social Development, Kingdom of Lesotho,**  
**H.E. Amb. Amma A. Twum-Amoah, Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development African Union Commission (Virtual)**  
**Honorable Members of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child,**  
**H.E. Amb. Ntsiuoa SEKETE, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Lesotho to Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and Permanent Representative to the AU**  
**H.E. Miguel Bembe, Ambassador of the Republic of Angola to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia & Permanent Representative to the AU, Chairperson of the Permanent Representatives Committee of the AU**  
**Mme. Siza Magangoe, Deputy Director General, on behalf of the Minister of Social Development**  
**Distinguished representatives of Regional Economic Communities, National Human Rights Institutions, civil society and child-led organisations,**  
**Children Representatives from the continent of Africa**  
**Dear colleagues,**

Allow me to begin by conveying warm greetings on behalf of the Citizens and Diaspora Directorate of the African Union Commission and to commend the esteemed African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) ably chaired by Hon. Sabrina Gahar, as well as its Secretariat capably led by Dr. Ayalew Getachew Assefa, for convening this timely symposium to mark 35 years of our continent's own, visionary instrument for children: the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Of particular appreciation is dedicating the keynote address to 2025 AU Theme of the Year. This anniversary is not only a moment of celebration; it is a moment of reflection. It invites us to look honestly at how far we have come in realizing the promise of the Charter, and how much further we must go to ensure that every child in Africa can enjoy a life of dignity, opportunity and justice.

**The AU Theme of the Year through the eyes of a child**

In February last year, our Heads of State and Government adopted Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.884(XXXVII), designating 2025 as the African Union Theme of the Year: **"Justice for Africans and People of African Descent through Reparations."** This decision

builds on a deeper trajectory not only of AU Assembly pronouncements, but also on its predecessor the Organization of African Unity, on reparatory justice, restitution of cultural resources and accountability for historical and contemporary wrongs.

Too often, discussions on reparations are framed in macro-economic, diplomatic or legal terms alone. Yet, if justice for Africans and people of African descent is to be meaningful and sustainable, it must be experienced first and foremost by Africa's children. The child who grows up in a community still scarred by the legacies of transatlantic enslavement, colonial dispossession, apartheid and structural racism understands reparations not as an abstract legal category, but as the difference between exclusion and belonging; between inter-generational poverty and inter-generational opportunity.

I recall that *Assembly/AU/Dec.884(XXXVII)*, *Para 6 reiterates* the need to combat **systemic racism**, as an essential step for promoting **human rights, dignity, and healing** of Africans and people of African descent. In this context, we may view the Theme of the Year through a child-rights lens therefore transforms our agenda. It asks dismantle discriminatory structures that continue to affect children of African descent, on the continent and in the diaspora?

### **Viewing the ACRWC at 35 as Africa's child-rights vision for justice and reparations**

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child is a testimony that Africa needed a child-rights framework that speaks directly to its own historical and socio-cultural realities. It complements the UN Conventions but addressing issues through a an African continental perspective.

By establishing the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child as its treaty body, the Charter did more than set standards; it created a continental accountability mechanism that also undertakes advocacy with stakeholders.

These important functions of standards setting, accountability and advocacy make up an institutional architecture that is one of the continent's strongest assets for aligning with the Theme of the Year on justice and reparations for Africans and people of African descent with a view to reaching concrete child-rights outcomes.

### **Justice and reparations as a child-rights imperative**

The AU Assembly's decision on the Theme of the Year 2025 is part of a broader continuum of continental commitments on reparations for the trans-Atlantic slave trade, colonialism, apartheid and related historical injustices. From a child-rights perspective, reparations can be understood in the following interconnected dimensions:

**\*\*Restorative justice for children and communities\*\*** affected by the continuing repercussions of the colonial era.

**\*\*Redistributive measures\*\*** that tackle *global* structural inequalities and assert the right to development in the form of quality education, health, nutrition, housing, social protection

and digital connectivity, particularly for children in African countries and people of African descent in historically marginalized communities.

- This Right to Development perspective should be mainstreamed in UN and other multilateral human rights platforms, with particular emphasis on Africa, her peoples and especially her children. This falls in the context Assembly/AU/Dec.884(XXXVII), Para 6, which emphasizes “the need to **recover social and economic losses** suffered by African states, societies, and diaspora communities”. It also **reiterates**, i Para 8, that **reparations and reparatory justice** are key pillars for **sustainable socio-economic development in Africa** and **parts** of the **African Diaspora**.

**\*\*Transformative narratives\*\*** so that future generations of African and Afro-descendant children grow up in societies that recognize their full humanity, protect their rights without exception and affirm their cultural heritage.

- Africa’s children and children of people of African descent deserve the pride in their culture, an essential pillar of their identity. Here, we recall that Assembly/AU/Dec.884(XXXVII), Para 9 “**underlines** the importance of **safeguarding Africa’s culture, heritage, and dignity**, supports developing a **Common African Position on Restitution of Cultural Property and Heritage**, a framework for Action to negotiate the **return of illicitly trafficked cultural property** including full restitution of **stolen African cultural, religious artefacts, bodies, and human remains**.

Justice and reparations need translate into better life chances for children—to break cycles of poverty, violence and exclusion— in order to deliver on the promise of the Theme of the Year. The ACRWC Agenda provide powerful lenses through which to evaluate whether justice and reparations initiatives are truly child-centred.

**Honourable Chairperson,**

### **Progress, gaps and emerging challenges**

Afro-descendant children in the diaspora often confront racial discrimination, xenophobia and unequal access to services, echoing historical injustices that the reparations agenda seeks to address. Joining the dots between these realities and the AU's decisions on justice and reparations is essential if the Theme of the Year is to be more than a slogan.

I wish here to refer to the second Africa–CARICOM summit, the first which convened in person at AU premises on 7 September 2025 and adopted the “Addis Ababa declaration on “transcontinental partnership in pursuit of reparatory justice for Africans and people of African descent through reparations”. This outcome is a major step forward in linking Africa the motherland to one of its largest communities of African descendants. It established as solid normative base for joint work on the issues of justice and reparations. A child’s rights perspective is also essential in this regard.

On reinforcing the ties with people of African descent, I wish to share with you that an upcoming Session of the United Nations **Permanent Forum on People of African Descent**

(UNPFPAD) will be hosted, and for the first time, at the African Union premises in Addis Ababa. This will be a unique opportunity to forge even stronger links and to further align the agendas towards justice and reparations.

### **The role of CIDO: connecting citizens, diaspora and children's rights**

As Director of the Citizens and Diaspora Directorate, it is important to underscore that children's rights are not only a matter for specialized child-protection agencies. They are at the heart of citizen engagement and diaspora policy. Jointly with ACERWC, we aim to enhance the mandate to foster participation of African citizens and people of African descent in the AU projects, while placing children —on the continent and in the diaspora— at the centre of our work.

In advancing the Theme of the Year through a child-rights lens, we would like to jointly work on:

- Ensuring that justice and reparations-related dialogues, campaigns and knowledge products integrate the perspectives, needs the voices of children and young people.
- Strengthening partnerships with and between ACERWC, diaspora networks, cultural institutions and civil society to promote narratives of dignity, resilience and rights for African and Afro-descendant children.
- Supporting Member States and RECs to build inclusive consultation processes where children and adolescents can safely contribute to the design, implementation and monitoring of reparations and justice initiatives.

In doing so, we give practical expression to the AU's vision of "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens, representing a dynamic force in the international arena," as articulated in Agenda 2063, and to the aspiration of an Africa fit for children in Agenda 2040.

### **From decisions to delivery:**

#### **Aligning the Theme of the Year with ACRWC Agenda**

**Honourable chairperson,**

The critical task before us is to translate AU Assembly and Executive Council decisions into tangible, measurable outcomes for children. Allow me to propose a few areas where this symposium could catalyse concrete action:

### **Child-centred reparations policies**

- Urge Member States and RECs, building on Assembly Decision 884(XXXVII) on the 2025 Theme, to include specific measures for children and youth in national and regional justice and reparations strategies—such as scholarships, community infrastructure, psychosocial support, and investments in child-friendly justice and protection systems.

- Promote collaboration between ACERWC, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights and relevant AU organs to clarify how child-rights obligations intersect with justice and reparations processes.

### **Participation and accountability**

- Institutionalize child and youth participation in Theme of the Year activities at national, regional and continental levels.

Encourage Member States to reference ACERWC's when reporting on their implementation of the 2025 Theme, so that child-rights considerations are systematically embedded in follow-up and review. We highlight here that Assembly/AU/Dec.884(XXXVII), Para 6 reaffirms that accountability and reparations are fundamental for Trans-Atlantic slave trade, colonialism, genocide, and apartheid includes remedies, restitution, and reparatory justice.

### **Knowledge, data and narrative change**

- Support the production of disaggregated data and research on how colonial historical injustices in the form of structural discrimination affect children today, including children in the diaspora.
  - Here I recall that the Algiers International Conference on Crimes of Colonialism convenes from 30<sup>th</sup> of November to 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2025. This African child right perspective merits to be addressed in its deliberations and integrated in its follow up.
- Work with artists, educators, media and diaspora communities to tell stories that affirm the dignity, agency and rights of African and Afro-descendant children, countering stereotypes rooted in histories of oppression.

### **A call to recommit: Reflect, renew, recommit**

**Honourable Chairperson,**

**Allow me to conclude with a set of five (5) concrete and specific joint activities that can be jointly organized to anchor a child perspective in achieving justice for Africans and people of African descent.**

1. The upcoming **Ninth Pan African Congress** to be convened in Lomé from 8-12 December under the theme “*Renewal of Pan-Africanism and Africa’s role in the reform of multilateral institutions: mobilizing resources and reinventing itself to act*” is closely linked to the AU 2025 Theme of the Year. It is hence a forthcoming opportunity to add the lens of the child.
  - I invite ACERWC to participate and share its perspective in that august gathering.
2. The **newly established AU mechanisms, the Committee of Experts (AUCER) and the Reference Group of Legal Experts on Reparations (AULER)** are now important platforms to address issues of justice, racial healing and the restitution of cultural property, and to underline that reparatory justice is both a moral imperative and a development necessity.

- I would like to propose a virtual meeting between these two mechanisms and ACERWC focusing solely on the child perspective. This would be especially important in light of the ministerial recommendation of the EXCL in Malabo to transform the Theme of the Year into the Theme of the Decade. Hence, this meeting could be the base for launching a 10-year workplan that addresses the right of African children.
- 3. **The MoU between the AU and CARICOM on upscaling engagement with people of African Descent** signed in September 2024 is a major stride forward in that direction.
  - I would like to propose a working group on forging links between Children of the African continent and the Caribbean, led by ACERWC jointly working towards justice and reparations.
- 4. The AU participated in **UNESCO's launch of the two new encyclopedic volumes titled "African Diaspora" and "Global Africa Today,"** which are fully in line with the African Union's current priority of enhancing engagement with the continent's diaspora and with people of African descent worldwide.
  - I would like to propose a joint set of activities to bring these encyclopedias, which also include a child friendly online game to the attention and use of children of Africa and of people of African descent to further reinforce their sense of belonging, identify and pride in their culture.
- 5. The upcoming **Session of UNPFAPD to be held at AUC in Addis Ababa** is another milestone in further cementing the African agenda in, and contribution to, related UN platforms.
  - I would like to propose a session, led by ACERWC, dedicated to the African child perspective.

This celebration at 35 invites us to translate the AU Theme of the Year and relevant Assembly and EX.CL decisions into action that children can see and feel in their daily lives. If justice for Africans and people of African descent through reparations is to be more than an aspiration, it must reshape the world that today's African child inhabits. I invite us to put into immediate implementation those five (5) recommendations as a first set of steps in that direction.

Excellencies, distinguished participants, as we deliberate over these two days, let us keep at the centre of our discussions the faces and voices of children—on our continent and across our global African family. Let us ensure that when future generations look back at the ACERWC at 70, they will say that 2025 was not only the Year of Justice for Africans and People of African Descent through Reparations, but also a turning point when Africa chose, decisively, to view justice through the eyes of its children.

**I thank you.**