



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
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Centre for Human Rights
Faculty of Law

STATEMENT

STATEMENT OF THE CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA AT THE 31ST ORDINARY SESSION OF THE AFRICAN COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON THE RIGHTS AND WELFARE OF THE CHILD

Bamako, Mali, 24 April 2018

Honourable Chairperson and members of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, I thank you for this opportunity to address you on the occasion of the 31st Ordinary Session of this honourable Committee. The Centre for Human Rights conveys its gratitude to the Committee for granting our application for observer status during the 30th Ordinary Session in Khartoum, Sudan in December 2017. We are pleased that granting us observer status will further facilitate our engagement with the Committee for the promotion and protection of children's rights on the continent, especially through the full, effective and efficient implementation of the provisions of African Children's Charter.

The Centre for Human Rights plays a dual role as an academic department of the Faculty of Law of the University of Pretoria and an NGO. This hybrid role enables us to combine education, academic research, advocacy and litigation to create awareness about human rights and improvement of the human rights of marginalised persons, including children. In this regard, the Centre for Human Rights in collaboration with Centre for Child Law of the University of Pretoria and the Dullah Omar Institute of the University of Western Cape present a weeklong short course on children's rights in Africa every year in July. We are proud that the second deputy Chairperson of the Committee (Prof Benyam Mezmur) teaches on this course and we invite members of the civil society organisations who work on children's right to participate in this course and other similar courses we present on various human rights themes.

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The Centre has also been involved in bringing communications before the Committee to vindicate the rights of affected communities. Of particular note is the case involving the recruitment of child soldiers in Northern Uganda and Talibé children's case concerning child begging in Senegal. We commend the Committee for holding an implementation hearing at the 29th Ordinary Session in Lesotho last year. We urge the government of Senegal to hasten the implementation of the decision and the Committee to continue following up with the government on the status of implementation, to ensure that the affected children are afforded the remedies ordered by the Committee.

The Centre is proud to have coordinated the research that led to the drafting and adoption of the Joint General Comment on ending child marriage in Africa. We congratulate the Committee and the Commission for this singular feat of adopting the first Joint General Comment on this important issue. We urge the Committee to ensure that the General Comment is well disseminated to governments and civil society so that the needed attention will be brought to the issue. We also urge state parties to take their obligation under the African Children's Charter to protect children against child marriage seriously and ensure that the scourge of child marriage does not endanger children's rights and wellbeing.

The Centre is particularly concerned about the situation of children in conflict situations in South Sudan, the Kasai region of DRC, North Eastern Nigeria and other conflict situations across the continent. We commend the Committee for conducting the 'continental study on the impact of conflict and crises in Africa' in 2016 and engaging African Union institutions and other relevant stakeholders on the issue. We also commend the Committee for including the issue of children in conflict and crisis situations as one of the aspirations of Agenda 2040. The Centre urges the Committee to continue collaborating with relevant organs of the African Union, UN Agencies and other relevant stakeholders to ensure that the rights of these children are protected and relevant relief supplies made available to them.

The Centre is also concerned about the situation of children accused of witchcraft in Ghana, Nigeria and other member states. We urge the Committee to continue utilising the relevant channels to engage with the authorities of these countries to comply with their obligations under the African Children's Charter to protect the rights of these children. The Centre, together with one of our partners is in the process of submitting a communication to the Committee to seek redress for some of the affected children.

Thank you!

(Statement delivered on behalf of the Centre for Human Rights by Mr Michael Nyarko, Litigation Coordinator, Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria.)

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