

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA P. O. Box 3243 Telephone +251115- 517700 Fax : +251115- 517844
Website : www.africa-union.org

**EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
Twelfth Ordinary Session
25 – 29 January 2008
Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA**

EX.CL/380 (XII)

**REPORT OF THE SECOND PAN-AFRICAN
FORUM ON CHILDREN:
MID-TERM REVIEW - 29 OCTOBER - 2 NOVEMBER 2007 - CAIRO, EGYPT**

INTRODUCTION

It will be recalled that the First Pan-African Forum on the Future of Children held in Cairo, Egypt in May 2001 adopted the Declaration and Plan of Action on Children which constitute the African Common Position for Children – Africa Fit for Children. The African Common Position was Africa's contribution to the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children held in May 2002. The basic principles upon which the Africa Fit for Children is based, include recognition of the challenges facing the Continent's children and youth, commitments made to improve their lives and well-being, and the need for ensuring their survival, protection, development and participation. The Declaration and Plan of Action of Africa Fit for Children provide guidelines for attaining a set of realistic and achievable goals.

The Declaration puts emphasis on, among others: reducing Non-AIDS-related child mortality rates; reducing Mother-to-Child transmission of HIV; promotion of exclusive breastfeeding of babies up to six months; eradication of Poliomyelitis by 2005; protection of children in armed conflicts; and protection of children against violence, neglect, abuse, exploitation and trafficking.

The Plan of Action identifies the following priority areas and provides guidelines for their inclusion in National Plans of Action: the overall framework for the implementation of the Plan of Action; Enhancing the life chances of children; Overcoming HIV/AIDS; Realising the right to education; Realising the right to protection; and Participation of children and youth. The Plan also provides a mechanism for monitoring and called for actions at different levels and urged for true partnership, high level commitments and accountability. In the Plan of Action the AU Commission was called upon to "conduct a mid-term review of the progress achieved in the implementation of the Plan of Action in the year 2006". This request was reiterated in Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.75 (V) adopted by the Heads of State and Government in Sirte in 2005.

In implementation of the above mandate the AU Commission convened the Second Pan-African Forum on Children: Mid-Term Review in Cairo, Egypt from 29 October to 2 November 2007. The main objective of the Forum was to review and assess progress made by Member States in implementing commitments made in the Declaration and Plan of Action of Africa Fit for Children; identify gaps and constraints; recognize best practices; and chart the way forward. The Forum was also meant to develop Africa's common position to the United Nations General Assembly Commemorative High-level Plenary Meeting to be held in December 2007.

In preparation for the Forum the AU Commission sent out a questionnaire based on the priorities spelt out in the Plan of Action to all Member States. The replies to the questionnaire were consolidated into a report which was considered by the Forum. In order to take into consideration children's views, children's consultations were conducted at national level in many countries and a report on the outcome of the consultations was also considered by the Forum.

The Forum was held under the patronage of the First Lady of Egypt, Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak and was attended by Ministers and Experts from AU Member States, as well as Representatives from UN Agencies, NGOs, Civil Society

Organisations and other International and Regional Organisations dealing with children issues.

The main outcome of the Forum was a Call for Accelerated Action on the Implementation of the Plan of Action Towards Africa Fit for Children (2008-2012). The Call was Africa's contribution to the UN General Assembly High-level Plenary Meeting held in New York in December 2007.

The Reports of the Experts and Ministerial Meetings as well as the Call for Accelerated Action are being submitted for endorsement by the Executive Council.

EX.CL/380 (XII)
Annex I

REPORT OF THE MINISTERS' MEETING

AFRICAN UNION
الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE
UNIÃO AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA P. O. Box 3243 Telephone +251115- 517700 Fax : +251115- 517844
Website : www.africa-union.org

**SECOND PAN-AFRICAN FORUM ON CHILDREN:
MID-TERM REVIEW
29 OCTOBER – 2 NOVEMBER 2007
CAIRO, EGYPT**

PANAF/FORUM/CHD/MIN/RPT (II)

REPORT OF THE MINISTERS' MEETING

REPORT OF THE MINISTERS' MEETING

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Ministers' Meeting of the Second Pan-African Forum on Children: Mid-Term Review was held at the Madinat Nasr International Conference Center, Cairo, Egypt from 1-2 November 2007. The Theme of the Conference was *"Review of Progress and Call for Accelerated Action Towards Achieving the African Common Position on Africa Fit for Children"*. The objective of the Forum was to review the status of implementation of the 2001 commitments, identify related challenges and obstacles and adopt strategies to promote the welfare of Africa's children more effectively between now and 2012.

2. It will be recalled that the First Pan-African Forum on the Future of Children was held in Cairo, Egypt, under the patronage of H.E. Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, First Lady of Egypt. The Declaration and Plan of Action of Africa Fit for Children were adopted for implementation at country level. The Declaration and Plan of Action also served as basis of Africa's Common Position to the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children held in New York in 2002, which adopted the Declaration on *"World Fit for Children"*.

1. ATTENDANCE

1. The Ministers' Meeting was attended by delegates from the following AU Member States: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Equatorial, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, the Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

2. The following United Nations Agencies, Inter-Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations and cooperating partners, AU Organs and Non African countries were also represented: UNICEF, UNAIDS, UNHCR, African Diaspora Foundation, ICRC, IMOCEF, IOM, Institution for Security Studies (ISS), ANPPCAN, National Council for Child & Motherhood (NCCM), CONAFE, Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, Lacto Misr - Egypt, ACERWC, China Embassy in Egypt, African Child Policy Forum, Plan International, Forum on Street Children (FSCE), Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa, Save the Children (Representing the Alliance), Holy See Hague Conference on Private International Law, Christian Children's Fund, WFP, World Association of Girl Guides & Girl Scouts, ECPAT International, Action Professional Association for the People (Ethiopia), NEPAD Programme, African Union for the Blind(AFUB); Comite de Liaison Des Organisations Sociales de Defense des droits de l'Enfant (CLOSE) ; Uganda Child Rights NGO Network, Coalition Nationale Associations et ONG en Faveur de l'enfant – Senegal.

2. OPENING CEREMONY

5. The Opening Ceremony was chaired by Amb. Mouchira Khattab, and was honoured with the presence of H.E. Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, First Lady of Egypt and

Patron of the Forum. The Opening Ceremony was addressed by the following Personalities and dignitaries:

(i) Welcome by Host Government (Egypt, Amb. Mouchira Khattab, Secretary General of the National Council of Childhood and Motherhood(NCCM))

6. Amb. Mouchira Khattab welcomed all the delegates to Egypt and to the Pan-African Forum. She recalled the First Pan-African Forum on Children that was hosted in Cairo, Egypt in May 2001, under the Patronage of First Lady of Egypt. Amb. Khattab then introduced the Guest of Honour and again Patron of the Second Pan-African Forum on Children, H.E. Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak. She outlined, among others, the achievements of Her Excellency in promoting the rights of the child in Egypt, Middle East and Africa. As President and Founder of NCCM, Mrs. Mubarak has also launched a campaign for elimination of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

(ii) Key Note Address by the Guest of Honour, H.E. Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, First Lady of Egypt

7. In her keynote address, H.E. Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, First Lady of Egypt, Chairperson of the Technical and Advisory Committee, National Council For Childhood and Motherhood, and Guest of Honour commenced her speech by extending warm greetings and welcoming guests in Egypt, The Heart of Africa. She then recalled the First Pan-African Forum, which was held in May 2001 in Cairo, Egypt, and whose deliberations culminated in the adoption of the Declaration and the Plan of Action of "*Africa Fit for Children*", which reflected a united African stance vis-à-vis children issues. She further recalled the responsibility assigned to her by the then Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Summit to convey the African Common Position to the UN General Assembly's Special Session on Children, 2002, and the opinions and demands of the Children of Africa, who participated in the Cairo meeting, to the same meeting. On this note, she stated that the African Leaders and Presidents expressed a strong political will to put children issues as priority in their national plans and added that the African participation contributed to the formulation of the UN document in New York under the title : *World Fit for Children*.

8. H.E. Mrs. Mubarak, indicated that the current meeting was to review and evaluate progress achieved by countries with respect to the implementation of the commitments and promises made with regard to children issues in Africa as contained in the 2001 Declaration and Plan of Action of "*Africa Fit for Children*". She pointed out that the meeting was an occasion to share success stories and challenges, in order to chart the way forward for building a better today and tomorrow for children on the continent.

9. Her Excellency, informed the meeting that she had followed with keen interest the deliberations of the Experts Meeting and lauded national efforts, especially in the areas of poverty alleviation, education development, improvement in health services, etc.. In particular she referred to progress made in addressing HIV/AIDS , combating River Blindness disease and Malaria, children vaccination and development of child friendly public policies. She noted that such achievements were indicators of the continent's commitment towards the issues of child development.

10. Her Excellency however indicated that despite the achievements made by some countries, the situation of children in some African countries remains critical due to economic, social and political problems. She underscored that there was still a lot to be done in order to ensure and establish African children's rights in all areas.

11. As a roadmap to achieving the common aspirations and vision for the present and future of the African Child, H.E. Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, emphasized the need to expedite efforts on consensus areas; formulate plans and harmonize laws and legislation in a manner that would guarantee enjoyment of all children of their comprehensive rights without any discrimination; guarantee that the Ministries of Childhood and National Councils concerned with children affairs acquire adequate financial and human resources as well as the necessary empowerment to entitle them to undertake their obligations; encourage the private sector and the civil society to address their social responsibilities.

12. Her Excellency, also highlighted additional areas for activating Strategies and Plans of Actions, including the allocation of resources to four specific areas, namely: the Right of Children to Live, The Rights to Development and Education, The Right to Participate, The Right of the Child to Protection. She stated that a large number of children are victims of conflicts and are dramatically deprived of their rights, and pointed out link between the UN Secretary General's Study on Violence Against Children and children victims of armed conflicts. She also drew attention to the problems of trafficking and sexual exploitation of children which were major topics at the Athens and Paris meetings held last year and the beginning of this year respectively . To this end, she indicated that Egypt has established The National Committee for Combating Violence Against Children and allocated necessary funds for the implementation of its plan, and therefore emphasized the need for a more effective collaborative action.

13. H.E. Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, noted that the "Accelerated Call for Action" should provide the basis to reiterate and confirm Africa's commitment to put the rights and welfare of the African Child on top of the priorities, bearing in mind both national and collective international responsibility. She therefore urged the international community to fulfil its reiterated commitments towards African children and called on it to shoulder its responsibilities to reinforce its International Partnership for Development Programme as well as implement the recommendations of the International Conference on Sustainable Development and "Globalization with Human Face" to secure benefits for all.

14. The First Lady concluded by calling for a New International Social Contract that is based on principles of justice, equity and peace. She expressed optimism about the future and indicated that, based on faith, sincere efforts and collaboration with all partners in development Africa would achieve its objective.

(iii) Statement by H.E. Mr. Moody Awori, Vice President of the Republic of Kenya

15. H.E. Mr. Moody Awori begun with greetings from the government and children of Kenya, noting the importance and historical significance of the Second Pan-African Forum on Children. He affirmed Kenya's commitment to children, demonstrated by Kenya's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in

1990, ratification of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in 2000, and timely submission of reports.

16. H.E. Mr. Awori then proceeded to briefly enumerate some of Kenya's efforts, with the following highlights:

- Provision of financial support to households fostering vulnerable children; free medical care for expectant mothers and children under 5 years; and mainstreaming MCH in all health facilities;
- Free ARVs in public hospitals and enactment of the HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Act which prohibits discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS;
- Free and compulsory primary education and increased education budget of US\$1.6 billion;
- A national law setting the minimum age for recruitment into police and armed forces at 18 years;
- Youth enterprise fund of US\$ 15 million to facilitate business start ups and expansion for young people

17. In conclusion, H.E. Mr. Awori emphasized the importance of children as Africa's future, and reiterated the need to ensure a better future for them by working together towards attainment of the noble aspirations of the African Common Position for a World Fit for Children.

(iv) Statement by Adv. B. Gawanas, Commissioner for Social Affairs

18. H.E. Adv. Bience Gawanas acknowledged the distinguished panelists, H.E. First Lady of Egypt, Vice President and Minister in charge of Children of Kenya, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, Chief Executive Officer of Plan International, and the Youth Representative. She especially thanked H.E. First Lady of Egypt for being patron of the Forum and for her personal interest in promoting children's issues. In addition, Commissioner Gawanas thanked the Government of Egypt, the National Council of Children and Motherhood for hosting the Forum and for the hospitality accorded to the delegates. She also extended greetings of the Chairperson of the AU Commission. She further acknowledged contributions by UNICEF and other partners to the convening of the Forum, expressing her hope for their continued support.

19. The Commissioner reminded delegates of the significance and the outcome of the First Pan-African Forum, also held in Cairo in 2001. This outcome, she said, was an African Common Position - Africa Fit for Children, which was Africa's key input to the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children in May 2002.

20. Observing the rich diversity of delegations, Commissioner Gawanas especially appealed to the Forum's collective will and renewed commitments to addressing the challenges faced by African children and to finding solutions for them. As such she articulated the objectives of the Forum, which included assessing gaps and progress made since 2001. She also drew the Ministers' attention to documents analyzed by the Experts in preparation for the Ministerial meeting.

21. While acknowledging the promises made in 2001, as well as the continuing challenges faced by children, Commissioner Gawanas called on all delegations, to collectively assess both as adults and parents, whether enough had been done for African's children. She went further to say that achievement of children's rights and promotion of their welfare would be particularly unattainable in the face of poverty, inequality, social injustice, conflict, desperation and destitution, disregard of the girl child, child mortality, non-participation, exploitation, abuse, violence and lack of access to school, health, care, growth, development, nutrition and shelter.

22. She advocated fervently for the advancing of children's rights and welfare and commended those governments, individuals and organizations which had prioritized and committed themselves to children's issues. Mentioning continental instruments that exist for guaranteeing children's rights, she highlighted the importance of action, coordination, collaboration, and resourcing for an Africa Fit for Children. This, she asserted, would ensure positive impacts on the lives of African children.

23. Her hope after Cairo, included the launch of an AU-led campaign for the ratification of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child by all AU Member States by 2008. She however strongly urged Member States to go beyond ratification by effectively enacting or amending appropriate laws and child friendly policies.

24. Commissioner Gawanas pledged the commitment and leadership of the AU Commission to Member States, the African Committee and all organizations in popularizing the Charter and in realizing the priority actions of the Call for Accelerated Action. Lastly, she resolved to pay due attention to the Call made by children that *"No more Resolutions Without Solutions"*.

(v) Statement by Mr. Kul Gautum, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF

25. Mr. Kul Gautum, the Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF conveyed to participants the greetings of Ms. Ann Veneman, the UNICEF Executive Director. He noted that the African Common Position on Children – Africa Fit for Children had a tremendous impact during the UN General Assembly's Special Session on Children in May 2002 when the Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Fit for Children was adopted. He recalled that during the World Summit for Children in 1990 African leaders committed themselves to give every child a better future. Furthermore, after the Special Session on Children many African countries prepared specific plans of action for children and incorporated the goals spelt out in the World Fit for Children in their national development plans and policies. He commended the African Union for placing children high on its agenda and convening the Second Pan-African Forum on Children to advance the protection and rights of children on the continent.

26. Mr. Gautum highlighted the long standing partnership between UNICEF and Africa in fighting the cause of African children. He highlighted that poverty, malnutrition, diseases, and lack of education were some of the major challenges confronting children in Africa. However a number of initiatives had been undertaken through partnership and solidarity to accelerate poverty reduction. He noted that in order for Africa to benefit from the international solidarity, African leaders needed to hold themselves accountable and redouble their efforts to achieve the MDGs, uphold

democracy, human rights and good governance through the African Peer Review Mechanism. He expressed satisfaction to the fact that 24 countries have joined the process of self and peer review. This, he said, has impacted positively on children as social services and support for children have increased in those countries.

27. However, Mr. Gautum underscored that there was still a lot more to be done as many countries still give priority to conflicts and military weapons in their budgets. He pointed out that the world cannot develop in peace, dignity and prosperity if the situation of children in Africa do not improve and Africa does not meet the MDGs by 2015. In this regard, he commended efforts deployed by the First Lady of Egypt in meeting the goals of Africa Fit for Children and the Millennium Development Goals.

28. In conclusion, Mr. Gautum recalled that, in recent years, Africa has had a prominent place in international development fora, such as the UN General Assembly, the G-8 Summit and TICAD. He referred to the TICAD IV and G-8 Summit to be held in Japan in 2008 and expressed the hope that the Call for Accelerated Action towards an Africa Fit for Children would be presented at those meetings. He then congratulated all delegates for their inspiring input in the Call for Accelerated Action which will be presented to the High Level Commemorative Session of the UN General Assembly in December. He called on everyone to continue to press the case for making Africa a place fit for children.

(vi) Message from The Most Reverend Archbishop Desmond Tutu

29. In his recorded message, which was presented at the meeting, Archbishop Desmond Tutu welcomed participants to the meeting and expressed gratitude for the convening of the Pan- African Forum on Children. He stated that children are the future engineers, architects, pilots and nurses of tomorrow. He therefore underscored the need to protect children and focus on promoting their rights because many of them suffer from hunger, preventable diseases, conflict situations, exploitation, serving as child soldiers while a large number dying before they turn five.

30. Archbishop Tutu commended the African Union for its efforts in organizing the Forum. He indicated that life without childhood has dire consequences on development. He reminded the Forum of the many Resolutions that are adopted but do not get implemented. Therefore he urged participants not to wait for more reports and conferences, but to act now!

31. He concluded the message by stating that Africa has the responsibility to resolve conflicts and put countries and children first. He stressed the need to act urgently to address children issues without wasting time. He urged participants to take back the outcome of the meeting to their countries for necessary implementation.

(vii) Statement by Mr. Tom Miller, Chief Executive Officer, Plan International

32. After thanking the First Lady of Egypt, Her Excellency Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak and the dignitaries, Mr. Miller expressed his gratitude to the African Union Commission for giving him and his organization the opportunity to take part in this important international meeting.

33. He said that for the past seventy years, his organization had concerned itself with the goal of ensuring a world where all children could attain to their fullest potential. Today, he said, an objective self-evaluation had been achieved, which was a step forward.

34. He, however, observed that much still remained to be done, because many barriers prevented children from gaining access to the services and facilities they needed for their well-being. He backed his statement with the words of a young activist, Ms Linda Yohanes.

35. Mr. Miller pointed out that planning should be made with development partners. He drew attention to the difficulties of integrating child soldiers in the society, access to schooling by disabled children and shortage of specialized teachers. He also expressed the concern of children regarding the fact that new legislation on the protection of the rights of the child was not being implemented.

36. After pointing out that young people accounted for 60% of the African population, he recommended that in order to achieve "an Africa fit for children", it would be necessary to:

- invest adequate resources, harness the expertise, and make a real commitment to change;
- harness the dynamism and vibrancy of African youth.

37. He concluded by reiterating Plan International's goals in the next five years.

(viii) Statement by Ms. Linda Yohanes the Youth Representative

38. On behalf of the youth, Ms Linda Yohanes thanked the African Union and the Experts. She said that this day was devoted to African youth, pointing out that adolescents who were neither considered as children nor adults were a vulnerable fringe group and should therefore receive special attention so as to ensure that they grow up to be healthy adults. She added that adolescents needed to take part in the drafting of charters and resolutions that concerned them but had never done so and knew nothing of the contents of such charters and resolutions.

39. She emphasized that there should be less talk and more action. A solution should be found to this state of affairs and children and young people could help find the solution if given the chance to show what they were capable of. For instance, children could also ask why all the high-sounding resolutions remained unimplemented. She concluded her statement by quoting a proverb that showed the importance of the youth.

IV. Agenda Item 2: PROCEDURAL MATTERS

(a) Election of the Bureau

40. After due consultations, the following Bureau was elected:-

Chairperson:	Egypt	(Northern Region)
1 st Vice Chairperson:	South Africa	(Southern Region)
2 nd Vice Chairperson:	Gabon	(Central Region)
3 rd Vice Chairperson:	Ghana	(Western Region)
Rapporteur:	Mauritius	(Eastern Region)

(b) Adoption of Agenda

41. The Meeting adopted the Provisional agenda as presented.

(c) Organization of Work

42. The Meeting adopted the following working hours:

Morning:	09.00 hrs - 13.00 hrs
Afternoon:	14.30 hrs - 18.00 hrs

V. Agenda Item 3:

a) Testimony on Child Blindness by Ms. Elly Macha, Executive Director of African Union of the Blind (AFUB)

43. Ms. Elly Macha, Executive Director of African Union of the Blind (AFUB) expressed pleasure for the opportunity to address the Member States of the AU and Civil Society Organizations, on behalf of the African Union of the Blind (AFUB). She introduced AFUB as a continent wide umbrella of NGOs, national organizations of the blind and visually impaired persons in Africa as established 20 years ago in Tunisia by the then Organisation of African Unity (OAU), with the aim of “an African continent where the blind and visually impaired persons can enjoy equal rights, social inclusion and full participation in development”. She further informed the Conference that AFUB contributes to this desired state by strengthening its membership, creating a purpose among them through capacity building and advocacy, in partnership with governments, international agencies and other stake-holders. The AFUB is also meant to encourage and support programs on the prevention of blindness.

44. She indicated that according to the facts available at the WHO, Africa has about 6.8 million people with visual impairment, 18% of them, children below the age of 15. She noted that the critical population of the visually impaired children faces a lot of challenges, including discrimination, negative attitudes, stereotyping, appalling poverty levels, low access to education, unemployment and other social amenities. She added that AFUB was convinced that African governments and other stakeholders could work hand in hand to reduce avoidable blindness. She articulated the steps taken by AFUB to ensure that children are freed from avoidable blindness:

- i) In the “Vision 2020”, AFUB member organizations collaborate with international organizations involved in the prevention of blindness.

- ii) AFUB works with national members in commemorating the national day of the blind, noting that the 2007 theme was "Vision for the Children".
- iii) AFUB is carrying out leadership training programs to build capacity of its member organizations, with the help of development partners, and thus sending a strong message geared to preventing and treating avoidable/reversible causes of blindness.
- iv) Encouraging and advising member organizations to work closely with governments/NGOs concerned with combating blindness.
- v) AFUB is involved in activities of the International Council on Education for people with visual impairment, which in 2006 launched a global campaign on education for all visually impaired children (EFA-VI), which aims at sending a substantial number of the visually impaired children (VIC) to school by 2015. She reported that the EFA-VI campaign was launched in Africa in May 2007 and encouraged AU member states to support all these initiatives.
- vi) The support of the Norwegian Association of the blind has helped build eye hospitals in Eritrea, Lesotho and Mozambique.

45. She further informed the Conference of AFUB's plans to be an active participant by: being part of the team to draft the action plan to be endorsed by the AU in 2008, mobilizing member organizations to be part of the implementation team and monitoring campaigns; endeavoring to include in its publications (AFUBNEWS), articles relating to the Pan-African Campaign to Combat Blindness; participating in research and dissemination of information relating to visual impairment; working with the AU in the monitoring and periodic reviews; increasing collaboration with development agencies; running several leadership and advocacy workshops, and focusing more on children under difficult circumstances, like those in conflict areas.

46. She concluded by calling for a concerted effort and pooling of resources to eradicate avoidable blindness on the African continent, noting that the greatest responsibility lies with national governments, which need to enact and pass responsive legislation/policies and providing the release of special votes in the national budgets.

b) Speech by H.E. Mr. Kaoru Ishikawa, Ambassador of Japan in Egypt

47. In his speech, H.E Mr. Ishikawa, the Ambassador of Japan in Egypt, thanked the African Union Commission for allowing him to make a statement during the meeting. He recalled the cooperation which exists between Africa and Japan. In particular, he referred to the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) which was launched in 1993 to promote high-level policy dialogue and international development assistance between African leaders and development partners. He called for solidarity between donors and recipient countries, among south-south and among generations. He then informed delegates about the TICAD IV meeting to be held in Japan in May 2008 during which concrete actions on health

and other sectors would be launched. He indicated that children's life should be rich in knowledge, good health and tenderness. He also added that it was important to give hope to children and realize their dream. He concluded by reiterating his gratitude to the participants for listening to him.

c) Document on Africa Fit for Children

48. The Documentary on Africa Fit for Children was prepared by UNICEF-Ethiopia in collaboration with Speak Africa Youth Media team. It provided a snapshot of some of the achievements made on the five regions of the continent in meeting the promises of Africa Fit for Children and highlighted the remaining challenges. The documentary also made reference to the indispensable obligations contained within Africa Fit for Children. These included child survival with special focus on Malaria interventions that resulted in the reduction of child morbidity and mortality rates; alternative education opportunities for out of school girls; violence against children; child participation; HIV/AIDS prevention; and child protection, in particular, specifically relating to Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting. .

VI. Agenda Item 4: CONSIDERATION OF THE REPORT OF THE EXPERTS MEETING (EXCLUDING PART ON CALL FOR ACCELERATED ACTION)

49. After considering the Report of the Experts Meeting, the Ministers adopted it with few amendments.

VII. Agenda Item 5: CONSIDERATION OF THE DRAFT CALL FOR ACCELERATED ACTION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN OF ACTION TOWARDS AFRICA FIT FOR CHILDREN (2008-2012)

50. The revised Draft Call for Accelerated Action on the Implementation of the Plan of Action Towards Africa Fit for Children (2008-2012) was considered by the Ministers and was adopted as amended.

VIII. Agenda Item 6: ROUNDTABLE SESSIONS:

i) Roundtable on Violence Against Children

Chair: Mrs. Sheila Sisulu, Deputy Executive Director of WFP

Presenters:

- Representative from Cameroon
- Representative from Chad
- Representative from Guinea
- Representative from UNICEF

51. In her introductory remarks, Mrs. Sisulu, stated that she was impressed by the wide range of issues raised in relation to the protection of children from all kinds of violence, and expressed the hope that the roundtable discussions would focus not only on violence directed towards children, but also on circumstantial violence in which children find themselves.

52. The Representative from Cameroon noted that all forms of violence against children exist in Cameroon. These include: Female Genital Mutilation, sexual violence/incest, street children resulting from poverty & deprivation, and corporal punishments, among others. She informed the meeting of measures taken to litigate these violence, which comprised: sensitization mechanisms, school and community programs against violence and a code for protection of children against violence.

53. The Representative from Chad expressed appreciation to Egypt for supporting Chadian children. She shared with the conference, the circumstances relating to the story of the attempted abduction Sudanese and Chadian children in Chad on 25th October 2007. She explained that the children were reported to have been brought from Sudan, and sheltered by a NGO called Children Rescue. However, the attempt to traffic these children, without the knowledge of the Chadian authorities, was intercepted by the Chadian Army. Although the perpetrators explained that the children were orphans it was established that many of them had parents. The Presenter noted that the behavior of the NGO to abduct African children was an insult to Africa, for Africa has always taken care of its children, including orphans. She called on all African countries to support Chad in dealing with this case.

54. The Presenter from Guinea noted that, due to social and economic problems, many times physical violence starts from within the family and spills over to the children. She added that children who grow up in violent homes also grow up to be violent, and may even end up killing their own parents. She noted that many forms of violence against children exist in Guinea, including FGM, sexual exploitation, using children as domestic workers, child trafficking, children participating in armed conflicts, and thus resorting to drugs and alcohol among others. She highlighted that measures taken to combat these violence were through: education of parents and the children about the dangers of FGM; and organized campaigns with the media and civil society organizations. She indicated that there were also efforts to create awareness of children's rights, with the support of UNHCR and Plan Guinea. It was observed that even unborn children become victims of violence, if there is violence against the expectant mothers.

55. The Presenter from Mozambique stated that to talk about violence against children, is to talk about world peace. Because children are the adults of tomorrow, they may also instigate instability. She highlighted the existing forms of violence in Mozambique, which included: sexual exploitation, FGM recently brought in by foreigners, child labour, child trafficking and house hold violence which may not be known because it happens within homes. She reiterated that Africa must commit itself to fighting poverty, for most of the violence is based on appalling social economic conditions. She noted that creating better welfare conditions, education and eradication of ignorance, and the need for communication were paramount in fighting violence against children.

56. The Representative from UNICEF informed the meeting, that the "Call for accelerated Action in the Implementation of the Plan of Action towards Africa fit for Children" supports a number of recommendations of both the 2006 UN Study on Violence against Children and the 2007 '10 Year Strategic Review of the Graca Machel Study on the impact of the armed conflicts on children. These recommendations were also reinforced by a number of action points, like the prohibition of all violence against children through legal reforms, including the

implementation of laws to stop all forms of violence against children. He noted that the 10 year Strategic review of the Graca Machel study on the impact of armed conflicts on children, revealed that the past decade has shown much progress in the development of norms and standards and programmatic guidelines to protect children and respond to their needs and rights in situations of armed conflicts. However, many gaps and challenges still remain in the application, implementation and monitoring of these positive developments. He further explained that the study recommends expanded actions in four areas, namely: achieving universal implementation of international norms and standards as a priority to end impunity, prioritizing the care and protection of children in armed conflicts, strengthening capacity and partnership, and preventing conflict and building peace.

57. He expressed his support to the AU Call for Accelerated Actions for implementation and called for strong actions to address the issue of children involved in armed conflicts. He further expressed his support for the development of an additional protocol to the African Charter on outlawing the use of child soldiers and an end to enrolling children in armed conflicts. He concluded by emphasizing the importance of child participation, reinforcing the call from children and young people at the forum for “no more resolutions without clear solutions”.

58. In the debate that followed the presentations, the following issues were raised:

The important role and responsibility of parents in preventing all forms of violence against children was emphasized;

- i) AU Member states should take the responsibility of children who end up in other countries because they want to run away from violence. The existing good practices in handling refugee children and orphans in some countries should be shared among Member States and the Civil Society Organizations;
- ii) The capacity of women should be beefed up as women play the biggest role in bringing up children.
- iii) There was need to involve children in fighting violence against them;
- iv) Efforts should be made to stop corporal punishments at home and in schools;
- v) There was need to address psychological violence against children; formulate indicators of behavioral change interventions to be able to measure success; and conduct baseline surveys in the communities in order to formulate response systems. It was further proposed that response to child violence should be expeditious, effective and efficient, and victims should not be used as just conduits in courts;
- vi) There was need to follow up on African children who are adopted by a “clean adoption system” until maturity age.

- vii) It was proposed that institutions which can rehabilitate children who suffer from serious violence, eg. those whose body parts are cut off be established;
- viii) It was also proposed that AU Member States should pass legislation against human trafficking, with emphasis on children, and early marriages.
- ix) There was need to enhance to extend family counseling services and improve family incomes to attain minimum subsistence for families.
- x) It was highlighted that some States or Government authorities unknowingly violate the rights of children by sending expectant mothers to jail, and thus, babies are born in jail. Furthermore, sometimes children are jailed together with hard core criminals and these children come out of prisons as “hard core criminals” themselves;
- xi) It was proposed that there was need for anger management courses for parents and other stakeholders as well as the establishment of specialized agencies within the police set up to handle issues of violence against children;
- xii) It was proposed that there was need to adopt strategies to prevent baby/child abandonment; include mandatory peace curriculum in all secondary/high schools in Africa; and conduct research to identify where conflicts between national laws and traditions within communities lie.

ii) Roundtable on Budgeting and Resources for Children’s Programmes

Chair: H. E. Ms Alima Mhama, Minister for Women and Children’s Affairs of Ghana

Presenters:

- Representative from Egypt
- Representative from Kenya
- Chairperson of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
- Representative from Save the Children - Sweden

59. The Chair started out the session by stating that budgeting and resourcing for children is a multi-dimensional issue that includes human resources, skills, technical resources, planning, and communication.

60. The Secretary General of the NCCM in Egypt conveyed to participants the experience of Egypt in budget tracking from a children's rights perspective, with the goal of assessing government spending on Children. The Presenter outlined the methodology adopted for the assessment, explaining that indicators were clustered into the four areas of: Child survival, growth, development, and participation. In total twenty (20) indicators were identified. The assessment revealed that in addition to direct funding of children programmes, there was also spending on children that did

not appear on the budget. A number of Ministries were not aware that they were financing programmes related to children's rights and welfare. The presentation outlined that the Government of Egypt could improve the efficacy of policy and spending in Egypt. The presentation also highlighted the concern with targeting families who are beneficiaries of child support programmes. The Presenter concluded by noting the need to have clear legal and institutional guidelines for child rights programming.

61. In his presentation the Representative of Kenya explained the process of budgeting and resourcing for children in Kenya which was a participatory process. He indicated that various councils identify jointly the priorities related to children, and accordingly the activities to be funded. He also highlighted a number of important elements of budgeting for children, namely, the decentralization process and the awareness raising conducted in a number of Ministries with the objective of raising awareness of the priorities, needs and rights of children. Participants were also informed about the national standing committees on budgeting and trafficking which were involved in the process of developing budgets and plans of action for children's programmes. In conclusion, the Presenter highlighted that successful budgeting and resourcing for children's programmes require a number of interrelated elements: strengthening partnerships, improving human resources, changing attitudes so as to make children central, adopting a participatory budget process, and the need to engage in a dialogue to anchor children's concerns in the budgetary process.

62. In his presentation, the Chairperson of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of Children (ACERWC) observed the need to revisit resources allocated to children programmes. He noted that while some resources for children's programmes were allocated at the macro level, not much was being done at the micro-level. There was need therefore to increase voluntary and community contributions for children's activities. Another important concern highlighted was that overall budgets for children were not significant, and even less is transferred directly to the beneficiaries (the children) and their families. The Presenter further noted the need for transparency in the budgetary process and insisted that the criteria for budget allocations to children should be part of good governance.

63. The Representative of Save the Children- Sweden started out his presentation by indicating some of the positive developments in Africa that have an impact on the budget process. These included: the increase in the average growth rates in Africa; an improvement in macro-economic indicators; and some adopted reform policies that have managed to lift a proportion of the population out of poverty. Participants were then informed of the baseline and comparative indicators that profile public expenditure in African countries, with a focus on health and education. It was noted that, overall, African countries were not spending enough on children. The analysis presented indicated that a large proportion of the budget in African countries goes to the general budget. The Presenter gave an overview of the various challenges – both external and internal – that African countries are confronted with and which had a negative impact on budgetary processes and allocations for programmes. He noted that there were a number of opportunities that Africa should build upon to secure more funding. The Presenter concluded by emphasizing the need for African countries to adopt pro-poor policies.

64. The discussion that ensued the presentations was lively and focused on a few key issues. A number of proposals were made on increasing and diversifying budget resources, including setting up a specialized bank, increasing investments by developed countries in Africa, and the targeting of services geared at children. The issue of social justice and redistribution of wealth was another concern voiced by the participants to ensure that resources are targeted to those in need. Participants proposed that the Ministries responsible for children's affairs should be involved in the monitoring of national budgets.

65. In conclusion, it was recommended that the African Union Commission prepares a report on spending on children in Africa, and shares it with concerned authorities in Member States.

IX. Agenda Item 7: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

66. No item was raised under this Agenda item.

X. Agenda Item 8: DATE AND VENUE OF THIRD PAN-AFRICAN FORUM

67. A number of countries expressed their willingness to host the next Pan-African Forum on Children in four years' time. The offers were made by the following Member States: Libya, Mali, and Nigeria. It was agreed that the countries would carry out consultations through the Embassies accredited to the AU Commission in Addis Ababa to decide on who would host the next Forum.

XI. Agenda Item 9: ADOPTION OF:

(i) Call for Accelerated Action on the Implementation of the Plan of Action Towards Africa Fit for Children

68. The Call for Accelerated Action, revised according to the recommendations of the Ministerial Meeting, was presented by Advocate Bience Gawanas, AU Commissioner for Social Affairs. After minor amendment, it was adopted.

(ii) Conclusions and Recommendations of the Ministerial Meeting

69. The Rapporteur, Hon. Mrs. Indranee Seebun, Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare and Consumer Protection from Mauritius presented a summary of the conclusions and recommendations of the Ministers' Meeting. The Summary as adopted follows here-below:

70. "The AU Ministers in charge of Children, Meeting at the Second Pan-African Forum on Children held on Theme: *"Review of Progress and Call for Accelerated Action Towards Achieving the African Common Position on Africa Fit for Children"*, deliberated on major issues affecting children.

71. After due deliberations, the Ministerial Meeting adopted the following conclusions or recommendations:

- (i) Expressed sincere appreciation to the Government and People of Egypt, for hosting the Forum and their hospitality and excellent facilities

availed the delegations. The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, ably led by H.E. Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, the First Lady of Egypt, was particularly commended for the untiring efforts which made the Forum a great success, and for being the Patron of the Forum.

- (ii) Endorsed the Report and adopted the recommendations of the Experts Meeting (29-31 October 2007) as amended. (Annexed). The Meeting *inter alia*, decided that the Pan-African Forum focuses on children only and not youth, in line with the definition of children as contained in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.
- (iii) Adopted the Call for Accelerated Action on the Implementation of the Plan of Action Towards Africa Fit for Children (2008-2012). The Call for Accelerated Action will also be Africa's contribution to the UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on Children, due in New York, December 2007.
- (iv) Accepted and endorsed the appeal made by the First Lady of Egypt, H.E. Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak to launch an African campaign on the elimination of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) as a programme within the framework of the Call for Accelerated Action to achieve an Africa Fit for Children.
- (v) Issued a Communiqué on the attempted kidnap of Sudanese and Chadian children from Chad.
- (vi) Adopted Recommendations of the Roundtables on:
 - Violence against Children
 - Budgeting and Resources for children's programmes
- (vii) Welcomed the Testimony on Child Blindness by the African Union for the Blind (AFUB)
- (viii) Requested the Chairperson of the AU Commission to present the Call for Accelerated Action and conclusions of the Ministerial Meeting of the Second Pan-African Forum on Children to the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government."

XII. Agenda Item 10: CLOSING CEREMONY

72. The closing ceremony was chaired by the Minister from Ghana, as Chair of the African Union. The Chair and the speakers at the closing ceremony thanked the Government of Egypt for hosting the Second Pan-African Forum on Children, and the First Lady of Egypt for her patronage of the Second Forum.

73. In her address, H. E. Ms Alima Mhama, Minister for Women and Children's Affairs of Ghana expressed Ghana's appreciation for being chosen by AU Member States to present the outcome of the meeting, the Call for Accelerated Action, to the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children to be held in December 2007 in New York. Her Excellency also noted the need to continue to share experiences across the continent. She concluded her address by saying that

by the next Pan-African Forum on Children, Africa would have found solutions to its problems.

74. In his address, Mr. Jean-Baptiste Zoungana, the Chairperson of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) noted that the situation of children in Africa has deteriorated. He emphasized the need for putting children at the center of national concerns, as they are the future and the adults of tomorrow. Mr. Zoungana pleaded for the report of the Forum to be presented to the AU Summit of Heads of State and Government.

75. The AU Commissioner for Social Affairs, Advocate Bience Gawanas, pledged the commitment and support of the African Union to work with Member States and partners to promote the rights and welfare of children. Advocate Gawanas noted that special emphasis should be given to the girl child. She particularly thanked the children and youth who participated in the Forum either directly or as panel discussants, whose voices captured the hearts and minds of the participants of the Forum.

76. In her statement, Ambassador Mouchira Khattab, the Secretary General of the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) in Egypt, extended her appreciation to the participants of the Forum for their active contributions to the discussion, and for making the Forum a success.

77. The Minister of State for Social Care, Women and Children Affairs of Southern Sudan, H. E. Dr. Sami Mohamed Yassn, concluded the closing ceremony by delivering a vote of thanks to the Government, People and the First Lady of Egypt for hosting a successful Conference. He also thanked all Member State representatives, development partners, NGOs and CSOs and children groups that had contributed to the success of the Forum. He called on participants to move the children's agenda forward in order to ensure a better life for the children of Africa.

EX.CL/380 (XII)
Annex II

**CALL FOR ACCELERATED ACTION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE PLAN OF ACTION TOWARDS AFRICA FIT FOR CHILDREN
(2008 – 2012)**

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA P. O. Box 3243 Telephone 5517700 Fax: 5517844
website : www.africa-union.org

**SECOND PAN-AFRICAN FORUM ON CHILDREN:
MID-TERM REVIEW
29 OCTOBER – 2 NOVEMBER 2007
CAIRO, EGYPT**

PANAF/FORUM/CHD/MIN/2(II)

**CALL FOR ACCELERATED ACTION
ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN OF ACTION
TOWARDS
AFRICA FIT FOR CHILDREN
(2008-2012)**

**CALL FOR ACCELERATED ACTION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE PLAN OF ACTION TOWARDS AFRICA
FIT FOR CHILDREN (2008-2012)**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. **We**, the Ministers of AU Member States responsible for promoting and safeguarding the rights and welfare of children in our respective countries, meeting in Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt, from 29 October to 2 November 2007 considered and reviewed the progress made in implementing the 2001 Declaration and Plan of Action of Africa Fit for Children which constituted the African Common Position to the 2002 UN General Assembly Special Session on Children. We focused our deliberations on the ten priorities set out in the Plan of Action, namely: Overall Framework; Enhancing Life Chances; Overcoming HIV/AIDS; Realising the Right to Education; Realising the Right to Protection; Participation of Youth and Children; Actions at all levels; International Partnership; Follow-up Actions and Monitoring; and Call to Action.

2. **We** reaffirm commitments made in making **Africa Fit for Children**, among others, in:

- The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) adopted by the African Heads of State and Government - July 1990;
- The Declaration and Plan of Action on Africa Fit for Children adopted in 2001 which was also Africa's contribution to the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children held in New York - May 2002;
- Plan of Action on African Decade on Persons with Disabilities – 2002;
- The Declaration and Plan of Action on Employment and Poverty Alleviation in Africa adopted by the Third Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso in September 2004;
- Plan of Action on the Family in Africa, 2004;
- Decision - Assembly/AU/Dec.75(V) on Accelerating Action for Child Survival and Development in Africa to meet the MDGs, in particular MDG 4 on reducing child mortality and morbidity – Sirte, July 2005;
- Decision - Assembly/AU/Dec.92(VI) on the Second Decade of Education in Africa (2006-2015) – January 2006;
- The Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights – January 2006;
- The Abuja Call for Accelerated Action toward Universal Access to HIV and AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria Services in Africa - May 2006;
- The African Youth Charter - July 2006;

- Africa Health Strategy of 2007-2015.

3. **We** further reaffirm all other relevant declarations, decisions, resolutions, recommendations, and policy documents at all levels, including the UN Millennium Declaration and the MDGs on improving the livelihood and well-being of Africa's children.

4. **We** are concerned that the situation of children in Africa remains critical due to socio-economic, cultural, political challenges including conflicts, violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, trafficking, natural disasters and generally preventable diseases, poverty, and harmful traditional practices.

5. **We** note with concern the special vulnerability of the girl child and children with disabilities; special attention needs to be accorded across all priority actions to help them access services and realize their rights with dignity.

6. **We** are aware that although a number of significant achievements have been made in Africa in the promotion of child survival, protection, development and participation, the progress has been slow and thus targets set in the Africa Fit for Children and the World Fit for Children are yet to be attained.

7. **We** recognize the need to strengthen mechanisms for accountability to ensure more consistent and comprehensive progress during the next five years.

II. SITUATION AND CHALLENGES

8. The well-being of Africa's children depends first and foremost on the well-being of their families and communities. Africa has among the highest levels of absolute poverty in the world. Government programmes and their outreach to eradicate poverty require considerable effort and support. This has major implications for the health, education and protection of the rights of children. As always, children pay the penalty for a situation over which they have no control or responsibility.

ENHANCING LIFE CHANCES

9. The Declaration and Plan of Action of Africa Fit for Children sets out an ambitious series of measures to ensure that every child in Africa has a good start in life, can grow and develop in a child friendly, nurturing environment of love, acceptance, peace, security and dignity. Considerable progress has been made towards the achievement of these goals. Although new initiatives and developments since the declaration show some promise, the impact is not significant.

10. The life chances of Africa's children is amongst the lowest in the world. Almost 5 million African children die every year from preventable and treatable diseases. Since Africa Fit for Children was adopted in 2001, an estimated 28,800,000 African children have died of causes that are preventable.

11. Driven by this understanding, in 2007 the African Union Ministers of Health adopted the new Africa Health Strategy. As they noted, "While Africa has 10% of the world's population, it bears 25% of the global disease burden and has only 3% of the global health work force." The new strategy aims to strengthen health systems in a

comprehensive manner. It deals with critical areas including reducing neonatal morbidity and mortality, combating malaria and malnutrition. It offers a clear set of directions for dealing with the conditions and diseases that are undermining the life chances of Africa's children.

12. At the same time, it is also understood that non-medical interventions such as clean drinking water and improved sanitation are crucial to the health and nutrition of children and their families.

OVERCOMING HIV AND AIDS

13. The Declaration and Plan of Action of Africa Fit for Children called for reducing the incidence of HIV amongst young people aged 15-24 years by 25% by 2005 and preventing mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) of HIV by 25% by the same year. In fact, PMTCT has indeed been reduced by 25% in several countries. Outside Southern and Eastern Africa, the incidence level of the virus among young people has largely remained low. At the same time, additional investment of millions of dollars is available and is being used to fight the pandemic on every front.

14. Still, the magnitude of the pandemic can hardly be exaggerated, especially in Southern and parts of Eastern Africa. In 2006, 2 million children had been infected as had 10 million youth between 15 and 24 years. Of these, three-fourths are female. Only a very small portion of young people who require treatment have access to the same.

15. In some parts of the continent, around one-third of pregnant women are infected and around one-third of the children born to these women will also be infected with the virus. Without treatment, more than half of these children will die before their second birthday. Mother-to-child transmission is the second most common mode of HIV transmission and can be reduced through timely anti-retroviral therapy. However, despite the progress noted above, the necessary drugs are not widely available and in some rural areas the access is very low.

16. One of the unanticipated consequences of the AIDS pandemic for Africa has been the emergence of a virtual nation of children who are orphaned, growing faster than the worst fears predicted. By 2010, it is estimated that the number of children without one of the parents will total 53 million.

17. In 2006, African Union Heads of State and Government, meeting in a special summit on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, adopted the Call for Accelerated Action toward Universal access to HIV and AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria services in Africa by 2010. Clearly, these diseases remained, as they had been in 2001, the greatest survival issues affecting Africa's children and youth.

REALIZING THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

18. The Declaration and Plan of Action on Africa Fit for Children reiterated the educational goals and commitments that had been emphasised in other Conferences and Summits of Heads of State and Government and Ministers of Education where they committed themselves to Education For All with an emphasis on provision of universal access to quality, free and compulsory basic education, and ensuring equal

access to girls and boys. With the abolition of school fees by a number of countries, more African girls and boys now attend school than ever before. Progress towards Education For All has come closer to reality. Enrolments increased between 1990 and 2005 from 57% to 70%, and in some countries there is improvement in gender parity as well.

19. Nevertheless, educational challenges continue to be a major issue in Africa. An evaluation of the first Decade of Education for Africa (1997-2006) revealed that "most of the goals" were not achieved. Among the issues that urgently need to be tackled are the low completion and high drop out rates, access to education facilities and services for children with disabilities, low transition rates to post-primary education, teacher training, inadequate recreational and sports facilities in schools, technical and vocational training, as well as abuse of children especially adolescents and girls. The number of children out of school continues to rise in some countries. Early childhood development including pre-primary schooling also needs increased focus in order to enhance access. The education systems are still struggling with major resource constraints including, shortage of trained teachers.

20. Inadequate attention has been paid to higher education and research, as a source of human resources and new knowledge for the enrichment of all levels of education. The Ministers also identified the need for state of the art management information systems to facilitate knowledge-based educational planning, monitoring and follow-up.

21. In the face of these realities, African Ministers of Education have ushered in the Second Decade of Education in Africa, 2006-2015, with a comprehensive Plan of Action designed to meet the formidable challenges ahead.

REALIZING THE RIGHT TO PROTECTION

22. The Declaration and Plan of Action of Africa Fit for Children commits state parties to protect children from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence. There is inadequate data on most issues of child protection. This includes children affected by armed conflict, sexual exploitation of boys and girls, female genital mutilation, forced marriage and child marriage, child labour including worst forms of labour.

23. Although some progress has been made, it is still grossly inadequate. There is now an increasing awareness and recognition of violence against girls being a major problem at home, community and even schools. In recent years, considerable attention is being paid to female genital mutilation. Although, initial results are promising, a major continent-wide effort is needed for its elimination. Trafficking for purposes of prostitution, pornography and household servitude has grown rapidly across many African countries. Early and forced marriages remain a harsh reality for millions of young girls. Cultural traditions, customary laws and religious practices are often used to justify such unacceptable and destructive practices.

24. Despite the attention given to the issue, many African children are still affected by armed conflict. Children with disabilities are stigmatized and denied educational opportunities.

25. While some harmonization and domestication of laws have been accomplished, more remains to be done. Only 41 African countries have ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Children's rights are seldom accorded the same priority that society does for adult's rights. Few children enjoy the rights that have been articulated in the ACRWC, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and do not have access to legal protection and remedial measures. Many UN protocols designed for the protection of children have not yet been ratified by some countries.

26. While the seriousness of these many injustices are widely recognized and while certain halting steps forward have been taken, the gap between policy and practice remains very considerable. Africa's children deserve from their governments protection from threats to life and respect for their human dignity.

PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

27. The Declaration and Plan of Action on Africa Fit for Children affirms "the right of youth and children to participate". Some preliminary initiatives have been launched in various parts of the continent to implement this goal. The African Youth Charter, 2006 provides, among others, the right of youth to participate in the development of the continent and in decision-making "at local, national, regional and continental levels of governance".

28. Despite the promises made, the reality is that meaningful participation of children in affairs of state, society, community and family is extremely rare. It should be recognised that a meaningful and well informed participation of children and adolescents not only leads to a better understanding and possible solution to the problems they face, but is also one of the most effective ways to enhance their social development, self esteem as well as respect for others and the need for responsible behaviour.

III. CALL FOR ACCELERATED ACTION

29. We, the Ministers of AU Member States responsible for the promoting the rights and welfare of children, reaffirm our commitment in achieving the targets of the 2001 Plan of Action and commit to the following priority actions in each of the areas:

1. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

- a) All AU Member States to ratify the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, by end of 2008;
- b) domesticate the Charter and enact appropriate laws or amend laws to bring them in line with the Charter by 2010;
- c) accelerate legal reform to ensure all children are protected by comprehensive legislation in line with the African Charter and other international human rights standards;
- d) harmonize existing laws on children at national level;
- e) requests AU to develop an additional protocol to the ACRWC on elimination of involvement of children in armed conflict;

- f) develop an appropriate policy framework within all Ministries dealing with children to accelerate actions for realizing the rights of children and achieve concrete results as noted in this Call for Action.

2. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

- a) establish adequately resourced and mandated structure(s), such as national observatories, ombudspersons on child rights, that will include children as members;
- b) establish appropriate structures to provide leadership, oversight and accountability for implementation of laws, policies and programmes for children;
- c) set up functional mechanisms to coordinate the implementation of inter-sectoral programmes for children, that would involve all relevant Ministries and Departments as well as civil society, private sector and institutions represented and led by children themselves;
- d) set up a joint task force drawn from the African members of the UN Committee on Rights of the Child and the Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child with adequate regional representation to examine the feasibility of harmonizing and simplifying reporting formats and to examine opportunities for mutual learning as well as options for adding value to each other's processes, when it comes to reporting and review of reports from countries in Africa.

3. MOBILIZING AND LEVERAGING RESOURCES FOR AFRICA FIT FOR CHILDREN

- a) allocate sufficient resources in the national plans, Poverty Reduction Strategies and the supporting Medium Term Expenditure Frameworks and budgets for implementing various elements of the Plan of Action of Africa Fit for Children with a focus on marginalized children, including those from poor families, vulnerable, children who are orphaned and children with disabilities;
- b) enhance cooperation among stakeholders for learning lessons from good practices around resource mobilization and explore multi-country proposals for seeking funding from bilateral and international partners as well as from the private sector for accelerating the achievement of the goals in the Plan of Action of the Africa Fit for Children.
- c) allocate adequate resources to strengthen social protection measures for children, especially the most vulnerable including children with special needs and those who are orphaned;
- d) Allocate sufficient resources for structures created to address children's issues.

4. ENHANCING LIFE CHANCES

- a) strengthen health systems in order to provide good and quality maternal and child health services and develop health centres and hospitals that are child friendly, in line with the Africa Health Strategy;
- b) scale up essential interventions to reduce maternal morbidity and mortality as well as reduce neonatal mortality;

- c) scale up a minimum package of proven childhood interventions based on successful strategies such as Accelerated Child Survival and Development (ACSD) and Integrated Management of Childhood and Neonatal Illnesses (IMNCI) as part of national health policies and plans, poverty reduction strategies and health sector reforms, consistent with the Decision AU/Dec.75 (V) on Accelerating Action for Child Survival and Development in Africa to meet the MDGs;
- d) support family and community based actions that enhance children's health, nutrition and well-being including safe drinking water, improved sanitation and hygiene as well as appropriate young child feeding practices and food security measures when needed.

5. OVER-COMING HIV AND AIDS

- a) scale up universal access to HIV and AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support (linking with other health measures on promoting reproductive health and reducing Tuberculosis, Malaria and other related diseases) with an emphasis on adolescents, young girls, women, children living with HIV and AIDS and the most vulnerable segments of the society;
- b) scale up programmes for Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV and AIDS;
- c) support measures that will assure primary prevention and protection as well as address the social context of HIV and AIDS that makes young girls, adolescents and children more vulnerable;
- d) support initiatives to foster positive attitudes towards those affected, and address stigma and exclusion.

6. REALIZING THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

- a) implement the goals of the Second Decade of Education for Africa, 2006-2015;
- b) ensure safety of boys and girls in schools, provide for quality child friendly schools that will ensure provision of safe drinking water, segregated toilet facilities for boys and girls and incorporate school health and school feeding, as well as guidance and counseling services, as measures that will enhance quality of learning and reduce drop outs of children;
- c) ensure universal access to comprehensive quality basic education including early childhood care and education as well as preschool education, for both girls and boys with special attention to reducing disparities and addressing the rights of the marginalized children, including those from poor families, children on the streets, children with disabilities, children in situations of armed conflict and children out of school;
- d) strengthen the Education Management Information System (EMIS) to include data on access, retention and achievement as well as educational processes, such as pedagogical techniques and learning outcomes;
- e) develop and expand sports infrastructure at schools and promote extra-curricular activities for children.

7. REALISING THE RIGHT TO PROTECTION

- a) ensure universal birth registration through comprehensive measures including campaigns and appropriately resourced systems;
- b) put in place a comprehensive juvenile justice system that is consistent with the provisions of the ACRWC including rehabilitation and reintegration of children in conflict with the law;
- c) promote and implement integrated national strategies comprising zero-tolerance, backed by appropriate amendment to criminal codes and relevant legislation enforcement and raising awareness to abandon harmful traditional practices such as female genital cutting/mutilation and early marriage;
- d) promote and implement multi-sectoral programmes on ending violence against children, including neglect, abuse, sexual exploitation, child labour and trafficking guided by the findings and recommendations of the UN Study on Violence against Children as well as support activities such as lifelines and safe havens to rehabilitate and reintegrate children victims of abuse, sexual exploitation, rape and trafficking;
- e) implement measures to prevent conflict through integrating peace education and promoting effective participation of children, consistent with international humanitarian law and the provisions of ACRWC, protect children from the impact of armed conflict and include children in post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation activities as well as implement the recommendations of the 10 years review of the Graca Machel study on 'Children in situations of Armed Conflict'

8. REALISING THE RIGHT TO CHILD PARTICIPATION

- a) Promote the right to participation of all children (particularly those who are marginalized, children from poor families, children with disabilities and children who are orphaned and vulnerable) based on their evolving capacities through establishing appropriate consultative fora including child rights clubs, children's parliament, and associations;
- b) create a safe and enabling environment for children's participation and provide them with access to appropriate and useful information, listen to their views and support them to participate in decision making and in search of solutions about issues affecting their lives through optimal use of social communication channels and interactive media;
- c) provide for full and effective participation of children in all aspects of celebrating the Day of the African Child;
- d) document good practices of child participation vis-à-vis how they enhance and accelerate achievement of results for children, for learning lessons and wider application;
- e) promote children's participation in sports and cultural activities.

IV. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

30. The Declaration and the Plan of Action on Africa Fit for Children, 2001 suffered from lack of a monitoring and evaluation framework. The review, therefore requests:

Member States to:

- a) use the framework for monitoring and evaluation through the national observatories and the coordinating mechanisms to review and track progress, identify gaps and find remedial measures on an annual basis;
- b) submit biennial progress reports on status of implementation of the PoA and the Accelerated Call to the AU Organs through the African Union Commission.

AU Commission to:

- a) develop a framework for monitoring and evaluation of this Call for Accelerated Action with appropriate baselines, targets and indicators for measuring progress at country level to allow inter-country comparisons, develop continental databases, include findings from research, share knowledge and good practices for scaling up interventions to achieve goals for children;
- b) elaborate a ***“State of Africa’s Children Report”*** every two years;
- c) conduct a review on progress made in implementing this Call and the Plan of Action every five years;
- d) strengthen the capacity of the ACERWC to follow up on the monitoring of key provisions of the Plan of Action and the Call;
- e) use the information generated from the annual reports of Member States for ensuring the inclusion of children's issues in the African Peer Review Mechanism.

The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child to:

- a) undertake country visits and also use the monitoring and evaluation framework of the Call for Accelerated Action as supplementary information to review the State Parties reports.

V. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

31. The AU Commission will ensure that all policy documents related to children on the continent are disseminated as widely as possible amongst all major stakeholders:

a) Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to:

- i) establish a social development desk, where it does not exist, to coordinate all social issues including children’s programmes;
- ii) raise awareness on and promote the rights and welfare of the child in accordance with the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Plan of Action on Africa Fit for Children;
- iii) work closely with Member States, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and other stakeholders to implement the Declaration and Plan of Action on Children as well as other children’s programmes;
- iv) develop regional child policies in collaboration with partners and lead the agenda for children in the region;

- v) collaborate and exchange information with the AU Commission on all matters related to children;
- vi) take the Call and Africa Fit for Children as a regional issue and leverage resources to meet the additional needs identified for accelerating implementation of high impact interventions.

b) The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) to:

- i) advocate and lobby with Member States for the ratification of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child;
- ii) lead in advocacy towards implementing the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the Plan of Action on Children, as well as the Accelerated Call for Action;
- ii) monitor and report cases of violation of children's rights, particularly in conflict and other emergency situations.

c) Other AU Organs (especially Pan-African Parliament, ECOSOCC, Peace and Security Council) to:

- i) accord high priority to the Call for Accelerated Action and the Plan of Action on Africa Fit for Children on their agenda and play meaningful roles in implementing these commitments;
- ii) include the promotion of children's rights and welfare in their specific programmes;
- iii) work in collaboration with the Department of Social Affairs and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child on child related activities.

d) Development Partners to:

- i) provide technical and financial support to Governments to continue to implement the Declaration and Plan of Action on Africa Fit for Children as well as the Call for Accelerated Action;
- ii) accord high priority to financing various elements for scaling up actions to achieve results for Africa fit for Children;
- iii) collaborate with the AU Commission and Member States to promote, disseminate and implement the Plan of Action on Africa Fit for Children and the Call for Accelerated Action.

e) Civil Society to:

- i) create network of civil society organizations to support the dissemination, implementation and monitoring of the Call for Accelerated Action and the 2001 Plan of Action;
- ii) provide relevant information to the AU Commission to assist in compiling progress reports, and also the State of the Africa's Children report.

f) Children's Groups to:

- i) participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Call for Accelerated Action and the 2001 Plan of Action;
- ii) mobilize themselves to use all available fora to bring children's perspective in decisions and programmes that affect children.

IMMEDIATE FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS

32. **We** hereby,

- Mandate the current Chairperson of the African Union to submit this Call for Accelerated Action as Africa's contribution towards the Mid-term Review of the World Fit for Children at the UN General Assembly Commemorative High-Level Plenary Meeting to be held in December 2007.
- Call for measures to be taken at all levels to implement the commitment made in the Plan of Action on Africa Fit for Children and the Accelerated Call for Action.
- Call for the dissemination of the Call for Accelerated Action as widely as possible.

Done in Cairo, Egypt on 2 November 2007

2008

Report of the second pan-African forum on children: mid-term review - 29 October - 2 November 2007 - Cairo, Egypt

African Union

African Union

<http://archives.au.int/handle/123456789/3120>

Downloaded from African Union Common Repository