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**REPORT OF H.E. EDGAR CHAGWA LUNGU, PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA AND LEADER ON COMBATING
EARLY MARRIAGE OF YOUNG GIRLS**

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Your Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

1. As the current African Champion on Ending Child Marriage, I have the honour to report on activities and progress of the AU Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa.
2. The campaign has created a space and platform for African leaders to engage on the issue of child marriage and has resulted in tangible advancements in the Pan-African policy and normative framework for ending child marriage, which includes the adoption of the African Common Position on the AU Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa. The campaign has also brought child marriage onto the agenda of formidable AU organs including the Peace and Security Council
3. It is encouraging to note that out of the 30 countries with the highest prevalence of Child Marriage in Africa, the AU Campaign has so far been launched in 28 Member States.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. Since the inception of the Campaign in 2014, 30% of Member States have enforced and enacted laws that protect the girl child in Africa. In addition, 41% of the countries who have launched the campaign, have progressed to develop national strategic plans to address child marriage and 55% have developed national inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms.
5. From 2017 – 2018, the AU Campaign undertook country visits to several countries including Egypt, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Zambia, Tanzania, Eritrea, Sierra Leone and Mozambique. The visits reveal what we already know, progress is evident but there is still a lot of work to be done.
6. For instance, in spite of progress in several aspects, the Mozambique country visit report shows that 48.2% of girls aged 20-24 were married before the age of 18.
7. In Mali, 1 in 2 girls are married before the age of 18, with a slight decrease in child marriage over the past 30 years.
8. In Sierra Leone however, the child marriage rate has constantly declined during the past years, from 56% in 2006 to 48% in 2008 and now only 39% of girls are married before their 18th birthday.

9. We should all be inspired by the progress made by Sierra Leone.
10. The prevalence of child marriage in Zambia is at a lower range compared to sub-Saharan African countries, though the absolute number is not low as 31% of women aged 20 – 24 were first married or in union before age 18.
11. I would also like to take this opportunity to recognise and commend the several other countries that have made significant strides in developing Action Plans and policies towards ending child marriage. In this light, it is important to mention a strategic activity involving the finalisation of a landmark Compendium of Marriage Laws across 55 African Union Member States, which was officially launched in November 2018. It is a collection of marriage laws in Member States, developed to serve as an updated compilation of Member States' legal frameworks and legislation related to marriage.

Your Excellencies,

12. One of the areas of intervention recognised by the Campaign is the capacity building of girls through education and training, especially in science and technology. In this regard, 88 African girls from 32 Member States took part, in collaboration with UN Women and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in an exciting new initiative, entitled “African Girls Can Code” in Addis Ababa in August 2018.
13. Indeed, many high-level key events have been held which have united Heads of States and partners, including civil society, in committing to end child marriage and calling for action.

Your Excellencies,

Invited Guests,

14. Despite the numerous achievements made, the Campaign on ending child marriage is still an uphill battle that requires collective effort. As we focus on preventing and ending child marriage, we must also focus on teen mothers whose education has been disrupted. Denying these children re-admission to school and failing to address stigma associated with early motherhood, further jeopardises their lives and that of their children who also become susceptible to child marriage
15. One of the challenges identified in the Campaign is the management of information systems for capturing data and reporting on child marriage. Just over 40% of Member States have National Monitoring Systems for generating data on Child Marriage. Evidence has shown that the effectiveness of these systems in supporting reporting along the Campaign objectives is weak, as less than 25% of reporting Member States could provide all required data. This is an area that the Campaign will be looking at in 2019, to facilitate the strengthening of monitoring systems at national level.

16. Looking ahead, the AU Campaign on Ending Child Marriage will be addressing the areas of Advocacy, Monitoring and Evaluation, facilitation of technical assistance and capacity building for Member States and relevant actors.

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

17. Let me conclude by commending the countries that have taken the important step of advocating against this terrible practice of child marriage. I encourage my fellow Heads of States to stand even stronger in their countries by continuing to support the AU Campaign; strengthening national strategies to end child marriage and aligning them to the African Common Position to end child marriage; putting in place specific laws to prosecute all parties that promote child marriage; allocating the necessary resources to keep our girls and also boys in school and encourage the realisation of their immense potential for their own sake and for our nations.

18. I thank you for your attention.

DRAFT
DECISION ON THE REPORT ON ACCELERATING THE
AU CAMPAIGN ON ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE
Doc. Assembly/AU/24(XXXII)

The Assembly,

1. **TAKE NOTE** of the Report on Accelerating the AU campaign on ending child marriage and the recommendations contained therein;
2. **COMMENDS** all 28 Member States of the African Union that have launched the AU Campaign on Ending Child Marriage as well as those that now have costed national strategies and action plans towards ending child marriage and **CALL UPON** Member States to launch and implement the campaign;
3. **RECOGNIZES** that child marriage is a complex issue which adversely impacts the personal development and future opportunities, health and wellbeing of children, with detrimental consequences on children, women, families, communities and affects a nation's sustainable development;
4. **RECOGNIZES** that all children, both girls and boys, have fundamental human rights, especially the right to non-discrimination, survival, development, education, health and welfare, and freedom to take advantage of opportunities available in harnessing their potential, and that child marriage is a serious violation of these rights;
5. **REAFFIRMS** our commitment towards the Implementation of the Common African Position on Ending Child Marriage in Africa and recommendations from the first African Girls Summit held in Lusaka, Zambia in November 2015 and all the recommendations from the 2nd African Girls Summit on Ending Child Marriage held in Accra Ghana in November 2018;
6. **RE-COMMITS** to keeping the fight to end child marriage in Africa, high on national, regional and continental agendas; and ensuring accountability for results and targets to be reported back to the AU Assembly annually;
7. **DECIDES** to take concrete actions to end child marriage in all its forms and manifestations, with firm commitment to article 21(2) of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child;
8. **DECIDES** to have annual comprehensive report on the progress of ending child marriage in Africa will be presented at the subsequent January/February Assemblies of AU Heads of State;

9. **REQUESTS** the Commission of the African Union to establish a peer review mechanism on ending child marriage in collaboration with the Government of the Republic of Zambia on the Implementation of this decision.

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Report of H.E. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia and leader on combating Early Marriage of Young Girls

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