AFRICA'S AGENDA
for Children 2040
Fostering an Africa fit for Children

African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC)

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Background to the Agenda

Africa is set on a course towards a different and better Africa. The vision that inspires this course is captured in the African Union (AU)'s Agenda 2063. Because the ideals in Agenda 2063 will not be achieved overnight, young people – and children, in particular – have to be the drivers of Africa's renaissance. Securing future progress, peaceful co-existence and welfare lies in their hands. In order to allow them to take charge of Africa's future, their full potential has to be unlocked by fully protecting and realising their rights.

Agenda 2063 lists the following 'aspirations' for the Africa 'we want':

- a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development;
- an integrated continent, politically united, based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance;
- an Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law;
- a peaceful and secure Africa;
- an Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, values and ethics
- an Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children;
- Africa as a strong, united, resilient and influential global player and partner.

By 2015, 25 years have lapsed since the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government (AU Assembly), adopted the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (African Children's Charter) on 1 June 1990. This landmark moment provided an opportunity to reflect on the accomplishments over a quarter of a century, to identify the remaining challenges and to plan ahead. Much was achieved between 1990 and 2015, but much remains to be done.

Over the 25 years between 1990 and 2015, the African Children's Charter has come to be recognised as the principal treaty dealing with children on the African continent. By December 2015, it had been ratified or acceded to by 47 AU member States.

The Children's Charter's almost universal acceptance as the foremost treaty framework was a gradual process. The milestone of its entry into force, which required ratification by 15 States, was reached after about a decade, on 29 November 1999. By the end of the first decade (1990-1999), 16 States had become party to the treaty; by the end of the second decade (2000-2009), another 29 States had been added; in the last five years (2010-2015), only two States joined. The advent of the

new millennium, in 2000, saw the largest number – six States – ratifying in a single year. The accelerated acceptance by States at the time coincided with the transition of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) into the African Union (AU). The seven States that are not yet State parties have at least signed the Children's Charter. By signing the Charter, they have shown that they are prepared to align themselves with its object and purpose.

The adoption of the African Children's Charter's and its subsequent level of acceptance irrevocably changed the basis on and the way in which continental organs and member States deal with children. Under the Children's Charter, children are no longer viewed as objects of concern and sympathy, but are accepted as autonomous rights holders. This understanding of the child, particularly the girl child, has been resisted by forces of patriarchy and those holding deep-seated traditional views about the child's subservient position in society. While some conceptual contestation continues, the Charter has set the continent on a constant course of growing acceptance of the independent personhood of children.

Together with the shift in the discourse towards accepting children as rights holders came the recognition that States bear the duty to uphold these rights. Accountability of the State – in the form of the current government – is based on the synergy between rights holders and duty bearers. The Children's Charter has given us a continental basis for State accountability to uphold the independent personhood of our children.

By 2015, four States had entered reservations in respect of the African Children's Charter. Botswana does not consider itself bound by article 2, which defines the child with an inflexible upper age limit of 18, differing from the more flexible approach of the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Sudan does not consider itself bound by article 21(2), which calls for the abolition of child marriage, and further made reservations in respect of the right to education of pregnant girls (article 11(6)) and to privacy (article 10). Egypt entered reservations in respect of adoption and the rights of the children of imprisoned mothers (articles 24 and 30 respectively). Mauritania entered a reservation in respect of freedom of religion (article 9). On matters related to procedure, Egypt entered a reservation concerning the competence of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (African Children's Committee) under article 44 to receive communications, and to conduct investigations under article 45(1). Of these four States, all of whom State parties to both the African Children's Charter and the CRC, three (Botswana, Egypt and Mauritania) made reservations under both treaties, reiterating their reservations under the CRC when becoming party to the African Children's Charter. Egypt has subsequently withdrawn its reservation under the CRC. While a greater number of African States initially entered reservations under the CRC, by 2015, Djibouti, Egypt, Mauritius and Tunisia (to a large extent) had withdrawn these, leaving only the following States with reservations under the CRC: Botswana, Mali, Mauritania, Somalia and Tunisia (albeit only in limited form).

In terms of the African Children's Charter, the African Children's Committee, consisting of 11 members, has been created as supervisory body to monitor States' implementation of its provisions. Reflecting the mandate of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (African Commission), the Children's Committee performs its supervisory function by examining State reports, by considering individual communications and by undertaking investigations. In this respect, the African pendant provides for more intrusive monitoring, compared to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, which is only mandated to examine State reports, submitted under the CRC. The African Children's Committee held its first meeting in 2002. Initially severely under-resourced and largely unknown, the Committee made a slow start. The initial years of the Committee were without a fully functional Secretariat, until its first substantive Secretary was appointed in 2007. Since then, the African Children's Committee has worked hard within the OAU/AU structures to assert its legal authority as the continent's leading children's rights body.

All African UN member States have ratified the CRC and 47 of them are party to the African Children's Charter. Of these 47 States, 11 (Benin, Botswana, Burundi, Cape Verde, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, the Seychelles, Swaziland and Zambia) have never submitted a State report to the African Children's Committee. By contrast, all of these States have submitted at least their initial reports to the UN CRC Committee. This data set strongly suggests a predilection for the UN system.

In addition to the African Children's Charter (and the CRC), a number of other AU and other international treaties are of great relevance to children, and serve to complement the African Children's Charter. The most obvious is the 'mother treaty', the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (African Charter), which provides extensively for the rights of 'every individual', including children.

The African Youth Charter, which entered into force in 2009, is also of particular significance. Agenda 2063 (paragraph 54) stipulates that the 'youth of Africa shall be socially, economically and politically empowered through the full implementation of the African Youth Charter'. 'Youth' is defined as persons between the ages of 15 and 35 years. The youngest of the 'youth' and the oldest of the 'children' (those between 15 and 18 years of age) are, therefore, clearly covered by both treaties. Speaking to the needs of 'youths' on the continent, the Youth Charter addresses issues such as skills development and youth employment, which are not touched upon in the African Children's Charter. As far as it is relevant to children, the African Children's Committee should draw inspiration from the Youth Charter. A treaty body has not been established under the Youth Charter. By implication, its provisions may form the basis of complaints to the African Commission and African Human Rights Court and, where applicable, the African Children's Committee.

The Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol or African Women's Protocol) complements the African Charter, by expounding on the rights of women and girls. In article 1(k), 'women' are defined as

'persons of female gender, including girls'. The Women's Protocol is, therefore, devoted not only to the rights of women over the age of 18, but also to younger women and girls. Although the Women's Protocol never uses the term 'girl' or 'girl-child', some rights are clearly of particular relevance to this category of 'women'. Examples are the stipulation that the minimum age of marriage for women is 18 years (article 6(b) of the Women's Protocol); and the prohibition of harmful cultural practices, in particular female genital mutilation (article 5 of the Protocol).

In addition to ratifying the African Youth Charter and the African Women's Protocol, African States should ratify, domesticate and give meaningful effect to the following treaties:

- the AU Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally-Displaced Persons;
- the ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (Convention 182);
- the ILO Convention on Minimum Age for Admission to Employment (Convention 138);
- the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
- the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography;
- the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts;
- the Optional Protocol to the CRC on a Communications Procedure (the CRC Committee may only receive communications in respect of States that have accepted this Optional Protocol to the CRC; by 2015, 20 States have done so, among them one from Africa (Gabon));
- the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Inter-Country Adoption;
- the 1954 UN Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons; and
- the 1961 UN Convention on the Prevention of Statelessness.

Introduction to the Agenda

Against this background, *Africa's Agenda for Children: Fostering an Africa Fit for Children* elaborates on the vision of Agenda 2063 in respect of children. In doing so, this Agenda takes cognisance of the elucidation in Agenda 2063 (paragraph 53) that 'African children shall be empowered through the full implementation of the African Charter on the Rights of the Child'. By nurturing and nourishing its children, the present generation of Africans will promote the growth of the continent and secure its future.

By taking stock and prioritising future action, this document develops Africa's agenda for children for the coming 25 years based on the lessons learnt from the past 25 years. By 2040, the rights of Africa's children should be firmly protected, with full effect being given to the priorities in this Agenda. This is the Africa we aspire to.

This Agenda is informed by and builds upon numerous existing legal and policy frameworks, among which the following are the most salient:

- the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child;
- the AU Commission (Department of Political Affairs) Human Rights Strategy for Africa;
- the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child Strategic Plan (2015-2019);
- the Abuja Declaration and Plan of Action on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Other Related Infectious Diseases (2001);
- the Africa Fit for Children Declaration and Plan of Action (2001);
- the Call for Accelerated Action on the Implementation of the Plan of Action towards an Africa Fit for Children (2008-2012);
- the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to Assess Progress towards Africa Fit for Children (Department of Social Affairs);
- the African Union's Social Policy Framework for Africa (2008);
- Concluding Observations of the African Children's Rights Committee;
- General Comments of the African Children's Committee;
- Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- African Child Policy Forum, *The Africa Report on Children's Wellbeing* (2013);
- UNICEF *The State of the World's Children* (2015); and
- AU Department of Social Affairs African Health Strategy 2016-2030.

The Agenda sets out ten aspirations, to be achieved by 2040, against a brief background contextualising the particular issue. It proceeds to identify action steps,

mostly, but not exclusively, to be taken by States, for the first period of the five-phased 25-year journey ahead.

The ten aspirations are the following:

- Aspiration 1: The African Children's Charter, as supervised by the African Children's Committee, provides an effective continental framework for advancing children's rights.
- Aspiration 2: An effective child-friendly national legislative, policy and institutional framework is in place in all member States.
- Aspiration 3: Every child's birth and other vital statistics are registered.
- Aspiration 4: Every child survives and has a healthy childhood.
- Aspiration 5: Every child grows up well-nourished and with access to the basic necessities of life.
- Aspiration 6: Every child benefits fully from quality education.
- Aspiration 7: Every child is protected against violence, exploitation, neglect and abuse.
- Aspiration 8: Children benefit from a child-sensitive criminal justice system.
- Aspiration 9: Every child is free from the impact of armed conflicts and other disasters or emergency situations.
- Aspiration 10: African children's views matter.

These aspirations are followed by two further parts:

- the implementation of this Agenda; and
- monitoring and evaluation of this Agenda.

Aspiration 1: The African Children's Charter, as supervised by the African Children's Committee, provides an effective continental framework for advancing children's rights.

The African Children's Charter is the primary AU treaty dealing with children's rights. It has by 2016 been ratified by 47 AU member States. As stipulated in the African Children's Charter (articles 42 to 45), the African Children's Committee supervises the implementation by States of its provisions by examining State reports, considering individual communications and undertaking investigative missions. Since its inauguration in 2002, the Committee has examined and adopted Concluding Observations on 18 reports. In 2014, a record number of States submitted their reports, reflecting a stark improvement in State participation and the Committee's visibility. Of the 47 State parties, 11 had by 2016 never submitted a State report to the African Children's Committee. By contrast, all these States have submitted at least their initial reports to the UN CRC Committee. The African Children's Committee has finalised only three communications. It has also undertaken a number of country missions, including one to Tanzania to investigate claims of violence against children living with albinism.

By 2040:
- **The African Children's Charter is effectively domesticated and implemented across the continent.**

- **The African Children's Rights Committee is well-known as a champion of children's rights and functions as the primary continental body for advancing children's rights.**

- **The African Children's Charter enjoys full continental acceptance, and there are no reservations to the Charter.**
- **All State parties regularly submit state reports to the African Children's Committee.**
- **The State reporting and communications procedures are effective tools for realising children's rights and for holding governments accountable to their obligations in respect of children.**
- **The African Children's Committee interprets the African Children's Charter as an autochthonous instrument, in the best interests of children.**
- **The principles and provisions of the African Children's Charter are made widely known to children and adults alike.**

Aspiration 2: An effective child-friendly national legislative, policy and institutional framework is in place in all State parties.

The main aim of the African Children's Charter – and the corresponding obligation of States - is to ensure that child-friendly laws and policies are adopted in each member State; and that practices develop to give effect to these laws and policies. Article 1 of the African Children's Charter captures this obligation. Child-friendly laws and policies are rights-based and aim to serve the best interests of children. It is desirable, in addition to general or generic laws, policies and institutions dealing with children, and child-specific legislation, that policies and institutions also be put in place. Obviously, it is equally, if not more, important that these laws and policies are effectively implemented. The rest of the Agenda focuses on particular areas of law making and implementation. It is also crucial that the institutions are capacitated to operate and in fact function in a way that serves the best interests of children.

By 2040:
- **A child-friendly national legislative, policy and institutional framework is in place and is enforced in all States.**
- **Existing child-friendly national legislative, policy and institutional frameworks are reinforced.**
- **Well-capacitated child-centred institutions function effectively and in a rights-based way, serving the best interests of children.**

Aspiration 3: Every child's birth and other vital statistics are registered.

The registration of birth is a basic right. A birth certificate provides legal proof of age and identity. It often is a prerequisite for access to basic services, such as health and education, to claim inheritance rights, or to curb child marriage and ensure age-appropriate treatment by the justice system. Birth registration is also an important source of data, required to properly plan for social services. Birth registration is part of civil registration, which extends to the registration of marriage and death. Compulsory marriage registration is an important mechanism to curtail child marriage. Impediments to registration include cost and geographic inaccessibility. Registration of death provides important data, which informs policy and resource allocation. Birth registration is sometimes linked to the right to nationality. Children may be refused nationality in their country of birth, on the basis of their parents' citizenship, or their ethnicity, and be considered ineligible for birth registration. Birth registration is closely

linked to the prevention of statelessness. While not all children born without birth registration are stateless, those born to, for example, refugee or asylum-seeking parents, a lack of birth registration can cause statelessness. Under the African Children's Charter, States are required to ensure that children are registered 'immediately after birth' (article 6(2), and that marriages are officially registered (article 21(2)). The SDGs include a specific commitment to providing legal identity for all, including birth registration, by 2030.

By 2040:
  - **Birth registration is universal, compulsory and free.**
  - **All legal systems contain an effective and accessible framework for the registration of all births.**
  - **This framework is implemented effectively to ensure that every child is registered at birth.**
  - **An accessible system for the registration of marriages and deaths is also put in place.**
  - **All legal systems contain an effective and accessible provision ensuring that a child acquires the nationality of the country of his or her birth, if, at birth, the child is not granted nationality by any other State.**

Aspiration 4: Every child survives and has a healthy childhood.

Although there has been some improvement, far too few of Africa's children survive birth and the first year of their lives. In Africa as a whole, the infant mortality rate decreased from 90 deaths per 1 000 live births in 1990 to 54 deaths per 1 000 live births in 2014. In 1990, the under-5 mortality rate (per 1 000 live births) in Africa was 146; in 2012 it had decreased to 65. While significant progress has been made since the adoption of the African Children's Charter, the rate is still unacceptably high. The major causes of infant mortality in Africa are preventable. Asphyxia among infants can be prevented if more skilled birth attendants are available; malaria can be contained if universal distribution of insecticide-treated mosquito nets is achieved; and appropriate antibiotics can prevent pneumonia. Many early child deaths could be prevented with access to simple, affordable vaccinations, in line with the Global Vaccine Action Plan (GVAP) 2011-2020. In 2016, African Ministers of Health, Finance, Education, Social Affairs and Local Governments adopted the Declaration on Universal Access to Immunisation as a Cornerstone for Health and Development in Africa (Immunisation Declaration), committing themselves to continued investment in immunisation programmes.

A high maternal mortality rate has a direct bearing on the prospects of neonatal survival. While the average maternal mortality ratio for African countries has decreased from 870 per 100 000 live births in 1990 to 460 in 2013, the African rate is still much higher than anywhere else in the world. Systemic and socially-embedded causes contributing to this situation include low contraceptive prevalence rates; high adolescent birth rates; limited ante-natal care coverage; and a high unmet need for family planning. Sustained improvement to child and maternal survival require improvements to the health care system, including physical access to health facilities (as measured by walking distance). According to the African Children's Charter (article 14), not only is the enjoyment by every child of the right to the best attainable health a central concern, but it also spells out specific obligations, for example that the State must ensure the reduction of infant mortality rates. Since May 2009, when the AU had launched the Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA) to accelerate action towards improving maternal and newborn health and survival across the continent, 44 AU member States have launched national campaigns. The AU's Africa Health Strategy 2016-2030 calls for universal health coverage by 2030, and for 'ending preventable maternal, new born and child deaths and ensure equitable access to comprehensive, integrated sexual, reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child and adolescent services, including voluntary family planning'.

As far back as 2001, AU member States adopted the Abuja Declaration and Plan of Action on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Other Related Infectious Diseases, in which they committed themselves to increase their health budget to at least 15% of the state's annual budget. Few States have subsequently reached that target.

By 2040:
- **No child dies a preventable death.**
- **Mother-to-child-transmission of HIV is eliminated.**
- **Children living with HIV are identified and provided with anti-retroviral treatment and are sustained on treatment to achieve viral load suppression.**
- **Every child is vaccinated against vaccine-preventable diseases, in particular diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, measles, polio and tuberculosis.**
- **The effect of malaria and other preventable illnesses on children is curbed.**
- **Nutritional supplementation, in particular of Vitamin A, is available to every child.**
- **Children are educated about HIV, AIDS and sexuality, with a focus on the prevention of HIV transmission.**
- **Exclusive breastfeeding is generally accepted and practised.**

- **Maternal mortality is significantly reduced.**
- **All children have access to and make use of quality, primary health care services; the treatment and prevention of HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, pneumonia and diarrhea are prioritised.**

Aspiration 5: Every child grows up well-nourished and with access to the basic necessities of life.

Children growing up live in conditions of poverty and experience hunger and malnutrition; they lack access to safe drinking water, sanitation, adequate nutrition, and adequate shelter or housing. Hunger and malnutrition are major causes of underweight children, stunted growth, ill health and death among children in Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa remains the most food-deficient of all regions of the world, with 25 per cent of its population having faced hunger and malnutrition during the period 2011-2013, a modest 8 per cent improvement from the level experienced during the period 1990-1992. A lack of safe drinking water leads to diarrhea-related deaths. A lack of sanitation creates an enabling environment for disease. To survive and grow up to become adults, children need uninterrupted access to nutritious food; access to sources of safe drinking water; sanitation and hygiene; and access to shelter or housing. In all African countries, some children – such as children with disabilities; orphans, abandoned children and other children without parental care; children heading households; homeless children surviving on the streets; children of marginalised or stigmatised ethnic and other minority communities; refugee and internally displaced children; and children of indigenous communities; girls -- live at the margins of society. They are vulnerable to human rights abuses, and are at greater risk of neglect than other children. Poverty and violence often affect them more acutely than other children. Children with disabilities have largely been neglected, mistreated, socially excluded and made invisible in African societies. Very low rates of education are registered among children with disabilities and indigenous peoples' children, especially those living a nomadic life style. Orphans and other children without parental care, particular those in child-headed households, bear a heavy burden of chronic poverty.

By 2040:
- **Children who are most at risk are identified in their respective communities and their rights are prioritised and improved.**
- **Extreme poverty, measured as people living on less than $1.25 a day, is eradicated among all children.**
- **Poverty, according to national definitions, is reduced by at least half the proportion of children living in poverty in all its dimensions.**

- **Every child has access to sources of clean and safe drinking water, hygienic sanitation and hygiene facilities, adequate nutrition, and shelter or basic housing.**

- **No child experiences hunger or is exposed to food insecurity; no child is underweight or stunted.**

- **Social security schemes aimed at the most vulnerable children in society, such as children who head households and children with disabilities, are in place and are effectively implemented in practice.**
- **National health insurance extends to all children, including the most vulnerable children, such as the children of unemployed parents, children without parental care and orphans.**
- **Child-sensitive social protection is provided to children and families most in need of care.**
- **Children with disabilities realise their full potential.**
- **There are no street children in African cities or towns; no child is forced to beg for a living.**

Aspiration 6: Every child benefits fully from quality education.

Education is central to enhancing a child's full potential. The lack of education is a life sentence of poverty and exclusion. The African Children's Charter recognises the right to education of all children (article 11). Education is a key component of Africa's development agenda. An assessment of the First Decade of Education for Africa (1997-2006) revealed that 'most of the goals' were not achieved. Against this background, member States reaffirmed their commitment to implement the goals of the Second Decade of Education in Africa, 2006-2015 and the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2016-2025). Over this period, some significant gains were registered. The primary school enrolment rate in sub-Saharan Africa grew from 52 per cent in 1990 to 78 per cent in 2012. However, the dramatic increase in enrolment has not been equalled at the secondary level. Also with a 67 percent primary completion rate, Africa is still far from achieving primary completion rates for all by 2015. Factors influencing these percentages need to be researched by States in order to determine the cause and to remedy the situation at the root of the problem. Although the demand for and supply of secondary and higher education have increased, albeit less dramatically than at primary level, the good results in terms of quality and learning outcomes do not meet the needs of the labour market. Many learners do not find employment when they finish school. Many children are at risk of not developing to their full potential due to the lack of early stimulation and exposure to stress at an early age. Improved nutrition and stimulation in the early years increases the efficiency of investments in health and education, thus improving the economic opportunities of children and youth in later life. Education should, therefore, be relevant to its particular context to meet the needs of the labour market. In many parts of Africa, private actors increasingly provide education, giving rise to problems of inferior education due to a lack of regulatory

oversight. Education is a public good, of which the quality has to be assured. States should curb the unregulated rise of private actors in education, as a failure to effectively regulate may compromise the quality of education and lead to the exploitation of children.

By 2040:

- **All children receive early stimulation and learning opportunities from birth onwards.**
- **Pre-school education is prioritised and increasingly made compulsory for all children.**
- **Every child starts and completes free, quality, primary and secondary education that leads to relevant and effective learning outcomes.**
- **Primary and secondary education is free, without hidden costs impeding access.**
- **Children with learning, mental and physical impairments are included and given the necessary support to complete primary and secondary school; as far as possible, the principle of inclusive education is fully implemented; where appropriate, special-needs schools are opened for children with mild to severe learning, mental and physical impairments.**
- **Boys and girls have equal opportunities and access to primary and secondary school education; no girl child is denied education as a result of becoming pregnant.**
- **There is gender equity among teachers, with an equal percentage of male and female teachers; there is a safe and gender-sensitive responsive learning environment comprising facilities, materials, and rights-based curricula; teachers are adequately qualified, well trained and motivated; all schools are safe spaces, with adequate facilities conducive to effective learning, and respectful of learners' dignity; sport infrastructure at schools is expanded and extra-curricular activities for children are available; a teacher-learner ratio of at most 1:40 is maintained in all classrooms.**
- **Schools provide universal access to affordable information, communication and technology devices, content and connectivity, and integrate these into teaching and curricula.**
- **The content and pedagogical approach of education at secondary level is directed at equipping learners for employment, creating employment and entrepreneurship; primary and secondary education focuses on science, technology, engineering, mathematics and informational technology; girls fully participate in science, technology engineering and mathematics education.**
- **Mother-tongue education is introduced into primary schools.**
- **Education inculcates a spirit of pan-Africanism among the youth, in order to cultivate a common identity and destiny and facilitate a pan-African approach and the African Renaissance; AU clubs are formed in**

all schools across the continent; education engenders positive African values and instills pride in our common heritage as Africans.

- **Rights-based curricula with common features and standards are developed across the continent, aimed at critical thinking and leadership, and espousing the values of integrity, accountability and transformative citizenship.**
- **Education prepares children for change, and equips them to be change agents; age-appropriate, informed and evidence-based education on sexuality and reproductive rights at school enable girls and boys to make informed sexual and reproductive choices; themes such as gender violence, discrimination and abuse, harmful practices and peaceful resolution of disputes are addressed as part of a 'life skills' learning programmes.**
- **Clear standards exist and effectively regulate the activities of private actors in providing education.**
- **Every child is educated about his or her rights and responsibilities.**
- **All learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.**

Aspiration 7: Every child is protected against violence, exploitation, neglect and abuse.

Violence against children takes many forms. It may occur in the private sphere, in schools, in communities or in the home. It may take the form of: corporal punishment in various settings, both public and private; forced and harmful labour practices and trafficking for forced labour; harmful practices such as female genital mutilation, child marriage, virginity testing, breast ironing and child witch killings; gender-based violence; sexual violence; sexual exploitation; pornography; and sexual trafficking. There is significant evidence that violence, exploitation and abuse can affect the child's physical and mental health in the short and longer term, impairing their ability to learn and socialize, and impacting their transition to adulthood with adverse consequences later in life. The African Children's Charter (in article 21(2)) is the first international treaty to set the minimum age of marriage at 18 years. A number of actions have been taken to give effect to this provision. The AU launched its campaign to End Child

Marriage in Africa; and appointed a Special Rapporteur on Child Marriage, mandated to conduct fact-finding missions on alleged violations, to seek co-operation with State parties, and to develop constructive dialogue with governments, civil society organisations and other actors. The African Children's Charter, meeting together with other actors, in 2014 adopted the Addis Ababa Declaration on Ending Child Marriage In Africa, calling for the prioritisation of the abolishment of child marriage.

No form of violence against a child is justifiable. Children have a right to be protected from violence. As stated in the African Children's Charter (article 1(3)), 'any custom, tradition, cultural or religious practice that is inconsistent with the rights, duties, and obligations contained in the present Charter shall be to the extent of such inconsistency be discouraged'. States, thus, have the responsibility to ensure that their laws and the practices of their people are in line with the African Children's Charter. The Children's Charter calls on States to eliminate customs and practices prejudicial to the 'health or life of the child', or which discriminate on the basis of sex (article 21(1)), and calls on States to protect children against sexual exploitation, drug abuse and other forms of abuse, and neglect (articles 16, 27 and 29). These provisions are in line with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Developmental Goals 'which envisages a world which invests in its children and in which every child grows up free from violence and exploitation'.

Of grave concern is the ritual killing and maiming of persons with albinism and other disabilities – particularly children. In 2016, following an on-site mission to Tanzania, the African Children's Committee in its Report on Investigative Mission on the Situation of Children with Albinism in Temporary Holding Shelters – Tanzania called for an end to the institutionalisation of children with albinism.

By 2040:

- **No child is exposed to any form of violence, including gender-based violence in the public or private sphere; children are free from physical and psychological abuse, sexual violence and exploitation, and sex trafficking.**
- **Harmful practices (such as breast ironing, female genital mutilation or cutting and child marriage) have been ended.**
- **No child is exposed to sexual exploitation and used for child pornography.**
- **Harmful child labour practices and child trafficking for forced labour is eliminated.**
- **No child is subjected to corporal punishment.**

Aspiration 8: Children benefit from a child-sensitive criminal justice system.

Many children are detained in African prisons. The majority of these children are not housed in special youth or juvenile detention centres, but are incarcerated together with adults, often under very unfavourable conditions. Many children are detained for extended periods, pending trial, even for minor offences. This situation flies in the face of article 17 of the African Children's Charter, which requires that criminal justice systems should provide special treatment to children consistent with their dignity and, in particular, should ensure that they are detained separately from adults. Children whose parents or primary caregivers are in conflict with the law in Africa are an invisible and often highly-vulnerable group whose rights and welfare can be gravely affected at every stage of their parent's criminal proceedings and term of imprisonment. Article 30 of the African Children's Charter aims at ensuring that children are not incarcerated with their mothers.

By 2040:

- **The minimum age of criminal responsibility in all State parties is set at 12 years or above.**

- **A holistic juvenile justice system is in place, including a comprehensive law on juvenile justice, with provisions for diversion and efficient alternatives to the justice system.**

- **Children in conflict with the law are kept out of prison; alternatives such as mediation, diversion and alternative dispute resolution are developed.**
- **All State parties have developed and implemented crime prevention strategies for children.**
- **All justice proceedings concerning children avoid undue delay and postponement of proceedings is kept to a minimum.**
- **Where detention of children is used as last resort, institutions have their rehabilitation and reintegration as the main objective of all policies and processes from the moment the child arrives.**
- **Accurate evidence and data on the administration of criminal justice for children is collected and used to inform policy reform.**
- **The criminal justice system responds to the needs of child victims and witnesses of crime before, during and after trial.**

Aspiration 9: Every child is free from the impact of armed conflicts and other disasters or emergency situations.

The past 25 years have been riddled with wars on the continent, often involving child soldiers, and always adversely affecting the rights and wellbeing of children. Children suffer disproportionately from the effects of war. They bear the brunt of the conflict, risking their lives, losing their homes, being separated from their families, and being exposed to sexual violence, mines, unexploded ordnances and improvised explosive devices and recruitment to armed groups. While there has in recent times been some reduction in armed conflict on the continent, the situation remains volatile. Children living in situations of armed conflict and instability experience severe human rights violations. There is a very strong correlation between conflict and children's rights. Under article 22 of the African Children's Charter, States must ensure that no child directly takes part in armed conflict, and that no child is recruited into armed groups and forces. This aspiration is in line with the AU's campaign to 'silence the guns' in Africa, and the commitment by AU member States to end all wars on the continent by 2020. Other disasters or emergency situations, such as natural disasters, including the effects of climate change, and epidemics, such as Ebola, often have a disproportionately negative impact on children. Despite their precarious position, children are often overlooked in States' disaster-management and response. In many instances, armed conflict, disaster and other emergencies give rise to internal displacement and the flow of refugees across borders.

By 2040:

- **Armed conflict on the continent is significantly reduced.**
- **The proliferation of arms, in particular small arms and light weapons, has been halted.**
- **Armed forces deployed during hostilities are proactively supported by military training, which includes specific modules dealing with issues such as the identification of children, the verification of age, and the handover referral system of children to civilian authorities at the earliest possible instance.**
- **There are no child soldiers; no child is recruited into the armed forces or plays a direct part in armed hostilities.**
- **The social, cultural, economic and political determinants of conflict and violence are addressed through changing of attitudes and behaviour.**
- **Basic services are restored in States facing conflict and instability; children's wellbeing, reflected in low infant mortality rates and extensive access to health care and education, is the worst in States undergoing protracted conflict and instability.**
- **Children, in particular the youth and adolescents, play a key role in peace-building and prevention, so as to draw attention to the structural and more immediate causes of conflict as they relate to children.**
- **Children involved in and affected by armed conflict are reintegrated into communities and provided with adequate psychosocial support.**

- **Children's rights are integrated into peace-making, peace-building and preventive actions.**
- **Children are equipped to be resilient in the face of disasters or other emergency situations.**
- **Separated and unaccompanied children are prioritised and provided with special protection.**

Aspiration 10: African children's views matter.

The African Children's Charter provides for child participation, highlighting that the views of children matter and must be heard (articles 4(2) and 7). Guided by the principle of 'nothing about us without us', children should be involved in decision making affecting their interests in line with Agenda 2063 (paragraph 47), which stresses the following: In pursuit of a people-centred continent, all the citizens of Africa will be actively involved in decision making in all aspects. The children expressing their views should be delegated to act as representatives, based on the principle of representation; and not merely be appointed. Because children's views are not monolithic, a diversity of childhood experiences, comprising differences in gender, age, ability, the urban/rural divide, minorities as well as the voices of indigenous communities, and children heading households, should be included. The representatives should also have a means of reporting and consulting others, leading to some form of accountability. Many countries have taken measures to engage and consult children, and have made child participation more accountable. However, greater efforts are still required to ensure that children's views are meaningfully channelled and taken into account.

By 2040:

- **Child participation, based on the principles of representation, inclusion and accountability, is cultivated at all levels.**
- **Children participate meaningfully in law making and policy adoption in matters affecting their interests, and are involved in the oversight of their implementation.**
- **Dedicated processes for children's participation are in place, such as a permanent and dedicated forum in the form of a child parliament, or *ad hoc* forum in the form of a child caucus aimed at bringing forward the voices of children in these processes.**
- **At school level, child participation and leadership are cultivated by involving children in school management, for example in advisory student/learner councils.**

- **Legal protection is in place affirming children's rights to assemble, organise and access information and to express themselves freely.**

- **Children have the right to be consulted and heard in proceedings involving or affecting them.**
- **Children are involved in the monitoring and accountability process for this Agenda, the SDGs and the AU's Agenda 2063.**

Implementation of this Agenda

Implementation takes place in five phases

The Agenda is implemented in each State party, on the basis of a national implementation plan, guided by the overall Action Plan, for each implementation phase. The end dates of each of the five implementation phases are 2020, 2025, 2030, 2035 and 2040. Each State party reports to the African Children's Committee at the end of each phase.

Implementation should be aligned with States' other international obligations and commitments

AU member States should align their national implementation plans and the various Action Plans with their commitments and obligations under AU Agenda 2063, the SDGs and other international treaties.

Implementation is dependent on a large range of stakeholders

The realisation of this Agenda depends on its effective implementation by a range of stakeholders, including the AU political organs, States, relevant government ministries of State parties, civil servants, parents, children, families, teachers, civil society organisations, religious and community leaders, communities and the media.

The approach of AU organs to States should not be homogenised, but should take into account the peculiar circumstances of each country. For example, in the priority areas of under-5 mortality rates and child marriage, the need for urgent and directed action is much more pronounced in some States. The AU's political engagement should target these States. As far as under-5 mortality is concerned, in 2013, ten sub-Saharan African States had a rate of above 100 per 1 000 live births. This group includes five countries emerging from or experiencing conflict (Angola, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Sierra Leone and Somalia); and five other States (Chad, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger and Nigeria). The latter five States, in particular, should be targeted and supported with capacity building, the development of programmes, and donor support. As far as child marriage is concerned, the two countries with the highest prevalence of child marriages (as a percentage of women between the ages of 20 and 24 years who were first married or in union before they were 18 years old) are in Africa, namely, Niger (with 76 per cent) and the Central African Republic (with 68 per cent). Other States, such as Algeria, have a much lower prevalence (of 2 per cent). On the positive side, in respect of birth registration, three countries (South Africa, Uganda and Nigeria) account for three-quarters of the improvement.

Heads of State and government should ensure wide political visibility to the Agenda, and the issues raised therein.

International partnerships should be cultivated to support the implementation of the Agenda

International partners should co-ordinate among themselves where appropriate and align their support and programmes with the strategic objectives, programmes and identified needs of stakeholders of the AU organs and institutions, regional economic communities and member States.

International partners should provide quality and timely technical and financial support to the activities of States, the African Children's Committee and civil society organisations. International partners should provide technical and financial support towards continent-wide ratification and reporting processes. International partners should invest in community-based mechanisms and local structures to champion the implementation of social protection programmes at the local level. Interventions by development organisations and donors' projects should be designed holistically and collectively to deliver comprehensive services beyond the limits of individual projects' life cycles and the capacity limits of institutions.

The visibility and implementation of the African Children's Charter and the effective functioning of the African Children's Committee greatly rely on a wide array of national non-State actors. These actors include national human rights institutions; traditional and religious leaders; civil society organisations and non-governmental organisations; academic institutions; research centres; think-tanks; the media; and children themselves. Their partnership is, therefore, crucial. Civil society also assists in monitoring States' compliance with their obligations, and contributes to the implementation of the decisions of AU organs.

Better co-ordination of efforts across all levels of administration and through effective articulation between governments and non-governmental actors is necessary.

Public-private partnerships, particularly involving local business, are called for, provided that the State exercises regulation, quality control and accountability.

The broad aspirations of this Agenda should guide the adoption of specific measures by national, sub-regional, continental and international stakeholders.

The successful implementation of the Agenda depends on the availability of the required resources

States should prioritise children when developing national and sub-national budgets. They should also prioritise the mobilisation and leverage of sustainable domestic resources and allocate them to implementing various components of the Plan of Action of Africa Fit for Children with a focus on the marginalised, the vulnerable, the poor, children who are orphaned, displaced children and children with disabilities.

States should allocate resources and developed data gathering to inform evidence-based programming, intervention and advocacy. States should undertake costing, to ascertain the cost/benefit ratio to the State in respect of prolonged violations, on the one hand, band measures to curb violations, on the other. Clear budget lines must be allocated to responsible ministries and departments from national to local level. Ministries and agencies responsible for planning and budgets are indispensable allies in this process: The economic costs of inaction on investing in children are too great to be relegated to the margins of a national policy debate.

Effective and efficient supply chains and integrated and transparent procurement systems should be built and maintained.

African development banks, African regional economic communities and development partners should support the implementation of this Agenda, and should increase their efforts at mobilising resources and securing new investments.

The successful implementation of the Agenda depends on awareness and visibility

National partners should, in collaboration with the African Children's Committee, have developed and widely disseminated evidence-based communication and advocacy tools on the rights of children in Africa. The media has a crucial role to play in sensitising populations, creating informed awareness of the plight of children and the importance of their rights being protected, and providing information about a State's fulfilment of its obligations under national and international law.

The broader context needs to be taken into account

Children's rights exist within the broader political, social and economic context. These rights depend for their realisation on good political, social and economic governance. This includes macro-economic policies, the prevalence of and measures taken to curb corruption, general social protection policies and constitutional provisions, the openness of the political culture, the space available to civil society, and the progressive achievement of greater equality in society, generally. Although these may not be the main entry points in discussions with and engagements with States, it is inevitable that those concerned with children's rights (such as the African Children's Committee, as well as national and international partners) should concern themselves with matters of governance, on the basis that the rights of children are located within the broader context of political and economic governance, and that

these underlying issues of concern have to be addressed in order to advance children's rights.

Monitoring and evaluation of this Agenda

Monitoring is dependent on a large range of stakeholders

The African Children's Committee co-ordinates the overall monitoring and evaluation of the Agenda.

The Children's Committee will co-ordinate the implementation, monitoring and evaluation at the continental level. It will, on a continuous basis, collect and share best practices, as emerging from the State-reporting process, reports by civil society organisations and otherwise.

Children should be involved in the monitoring and accountability process for this Agenda.

At the national level, the State co-ordinates an annual review of progress and remaining challenges in achieving the objectives of each Action Plan, by facilitating a stakeholder platform or meeting, attended by all relevant stakeholders, including non-State partners and children, to review the achievements towards the implementation of the Agenda. State parties undertake to consolidate these annual reviews into a comprehensive report for each of the five phases, and to submit these reports to the African Children's Committee.

After the end of every period in the five-phased implementation process (2020, 2025, 2030, 2035 and 2040), the African Children's Committee will facilitate a stakeholders' platform meeting in respect of State parties, attended by all relevant stakeholders, including non-State partners and children, to review the achievements relating to the implementation of the Agenda at the national and regional level, in order to identify the main challenges and formulate priorities for the following five years.

Following the stakeholder platform, the African Children's Committee will submit the outcome of these deliberations in the form of State of the Africa's Children Report to the Assembly of the Union.

The Action Plan for the first phase, ending in 2020, is attached to this Agenda. The relevant AU organs will develop an Action Plan for each of the subsequent five-year periods, based on the results of the assessment of the previous period by State parties and the AU Assembly.

There is a need for reliable data-gathering system

Effective monitoring requires reliable and useful data. There is a dire need for reliable scientific data, including statistics to monitor progress towards improving children's lives. Data gathering must be effective and must be disaggregated to ensure appropriate targets are set – and met – for particular disadvantaged groups of children. The full potential of productive interaction between governments, international partners, African and other scholars and researchers and children's rights advocates should be harnessed to provide data-based child advocacy. States should, in collaboration with national partners, generate solid national evidence on violence against children. The development of national and decentralised routine data collection systems to monitor States' progress on the implementation of this Agenda, specifically, and the African Children's Charter, generally, should be supported. States should put in place a monitoring and reporting process in order to develop a detailed understanding of the scale of the problem, and to track progress.

To the extent possible, States should harmonise and integrate the monitoring of their national implementation plans with periodic State reporting to the African Children's Committee and the UN CRC Committee, and under the Universal Periodic Review, the SDGs and other relevant international or national frameworks.

Short term Action Plan (ending 2020)

Aspiration 1: The African Children's Charter, as supervised by the African Children's Committee, provides an effective continental framework for advancing children's rights.

By 2020 -

- **the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, Somalia, São Tome and Principe, South Sudan and Tunisia have become State parties to the African Children's Charter;**
- **Botswana, Egypt, Mauritania and Sudan should have withdrawn their reservations under the African Children's Charter;**
- **Algeria, Botswana, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mauritius, Niger, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, Somalia, São Tome and Principe, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sudan and Tunisia should have become State parties to the Maputo Protocol;**
- **Kenya should have implemented the African Children's Committee's recommendations in the *Children on Nubian Descent* case; Uganda should have implemented the Children's Committee's recommendations in the *Northern Ugandan Children* case; and Senegal should have implemented the Committee's recommendations in the *Senegalese Talibés* case;**
- **all States that have not yet done so (Benin, Botswana, Burundi, Cape Verde, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Seychelles, Swaziland and Zambia) should have submitted their initial reports; all other State parties should continue to submit periodic reports about the implementation of the African Children's Charter;**

- **States should have given full effect to the Concluding Observations issued after the examination of their reports;**

- **States should have co-operated fully with the African Children's Committee in the exercise of its promotional and protective mandate;**

- **States should have undertaken and supported activities to make the Children's Charter better known and understood at the domestic level, for example, by supporting activities related to the annual Day of the African Child, with the full and effective participation of children;**

- **States should have appointed a senior and well-respected official as focal person between the government and the African Children's Committee;**
- **States should have provided adequate resources to strengthen the operational capacity of the African Children's Committee.**

By 2020, the African Children's Committee –

- **should have continued organising inception workshops for new Committee members;**
- **should have engaged Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, Somalia, São Tome and Principe, South Sudan and Tunisia to become State parties to the Children's Charter, based on their signature of the African Children's Charter and ratification of the CRC;**
- **should have used the State reporting process to urge Botswana, Egypt, Mauritania and Sudan to withdraw their reservations under the African Children's Charter;**
- **should have targeted Benin, Botswana, Burundi, Cape Verde, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, the Seychelles, Swaziland and Zambia to submit their reports; these State parties have, by 2016, *never* submitted a State report to the African Children's Committee; at the same time they have all submitted at least their initial reports to the UN CRC Committee; in the absence of a report, the African Children's Committee should have proceeded to examine the human rights situations in these countries, based on available information, including civil society reports;**
- **should, in collaboration with the relevant AU organs, have developed training programmes to improve the technical capacities of key State officials and members of civil society to undertake the reform of children-related laws and policies and to prepare accurate and effective State reports under the African Children's Charter;**
- **should have co-ordinated efforts to facilitate the sharing of good State practice on harmonising national law, policy and practice with the African Children's Charter;**
- **should have aligned the State reporting process under the African Children's Charter with that under the UN CRC, highlighting the specific thematic areas contained in the African Children's Charter;**
- **should have streamlined the process of examining and adopting Concluding Observations in response to State reports, in anticipation of an increased number of submitted reports;**
- **should have consistently adopted targeted, precise and measurable recommendations to States;**
- **should have in place an effective system for the follow-up of recommendations in findings on communications and in Concluding**

Observations, including follow-up visits to States; the Committee should in particular have followed up on the implementation by Kenya, Uganda and Senegal in the *Children on Nubian Descent* case, the *Children in Northern Uganda* case *and the Senegalese Talibés* case;

- should be undertaking regular missions to countries where children are in crisis and should be holding widely-published public hearings on issues of importance to children's rights;
- should be widely published and visible in its activities; a complete and updated record of its activities, including State reports, C Observations, mission reports and its annual reports, should be easily accessible on its website and other formats;
- should, in collaboration with its partners, have developed and widely disseminated evidence-based communication and advocacy tools on the rights of children in Africa;
- should have significantly reduced delays in finalising submitted communications;
- should have interpreted the African Children's Charter as an autochthonous instrument in its jurisprudence, Concluding Observations and interpretive elaborations;
- should be collaborating with the African Commission through regularly-held meetings between them, in order to identify synergies, gaps, complementarities and to exchange experiences, lessons and knowledge (including jurisprudence) and to avoid the unnecessary duplication of efforts;
- should have engaged the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) with a view to closer collaboration between the APRM process and State reporting under the African Children's Charter;
- should, within the framework of the African Governance Architecture (AGA), consistently be engaging relevant AU organs on matters of joint concern, such as the Peace and Security Council, the Pan-African Parliament, and the AU's Economic, Social and Cultural Council.

By 2020, African Union's -

- political organs should have ensured the required resources to strengthen the human resource and institutional capacity of the African Children's Rights Committee, allowing it to appoint on a permanent basis at least two legal officers and to undertake at least six missions per year;
- Executive Council and Assembly should consistently have included an item on their agenda on the rights of the child;
- political organs should, in collaboration with the African Children's Committee and relevant national partners, have developed training programmes to improve the technical capacities of key State officials and members of civil society to undertake the reform of children-related laws and policies and to prepare accurate and effective State reports under the African Children's Charter.

By 2020, CSOs/NGOs -

- **working on the rights of children should have obtained observer status with the African Children's Committee and should be fully participating in the sessions and work of the Committee;**
- **should have made use of the procedures before the African Children's Committee, by submitting communications and shadow reports;**
- **should have assisted with the translation into local languages, the popularisation and dissemination of the African Children's Charter, the Committee's activities and the rights of the child, more generally.**

Aspiration 2: An effective child-friendly national legislative, policy and institutional framework is in place in all State parties.

By 2020, States -

- should have embarked on a process of comprehensive and systematic review of their national statutory, customary and religious law relating to children;
- should have considered the adoption of a single, comprehensive and accessible children's rights statute, harmonising and consolidating existing laws on children at the national level;
- should, if already in existence, strengthen a child-friendly legislative, policy and institutional framework;
- should have established well-resourced and mandated structures, such as national children's rights observatories and ombudspersons for children, which also include children as members; States should also have established appropriate structures that provide leadership and oversight and are accountable for the implementation of national laws, policies and programmes for children, and for strengthening the work of the African Children's Committee;
- should have developed a policy framework and have set up functional mechanisms to co-ordinate the implementation of inter-sectoral programmes for children, which would involve all relevant ministries and departments as well as civil society, the private sector and institutions represented and led by children themselves;
- should have adopted and started implementing a National Plan of Action for Children, including a national strategy on child marriage.

By 2020, national partners -

- should, in collaboration with the relevant AU organs and the African Children's Committee, have developed training programmes to build the technical capacities of key State officials and members of civil society to undertake the reform of children-related laws and policies and to prepare accurate and effective State reports under the African Children's Charter;
- should have systematically documented, in accessible format, including publications, and analysed good State practice on harmonising national law, policy and practice with the African Children's Charter;
- should have undertaken costing, to quantify the cost connected to the prolongation of violations of children's rights compared to the benefit to the State of curbing violations.

Aspiration 3: Every child's birth and other vital statistics are registered.

By 2020, States –

- **should adopt strategies in line with the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (APAI-CRVS);**
- **should have put in place a simplified, easily accessible and free system for registering every child immediately after birth; ;**

- **should have put in place an accessible and effective vital registration system not only for births, but also for marriages and deaths, embedded in a sensitisation campaign about the importance of registration for the realisation of the child's rights and the curbing of child marriages;**
- **should have curbed the statelessness of children by allowing children to acquire the nationality of their country of birth; by abolishing laws precluding mothers from passing their nationality on to their children, and by eliminating all discrimination in according nationality on the basis of the child's or the child's parents' immigration status, social origin, sex, ethnicity, language, disability or birth out of wedlock, or any other factor.**

By 2020, the African Children's Committee -

- **should have encouraged State parties to adopt legal provisions that a child born in the State with one parent (either mother or father) also acquires the nationality of that State at birth.**

By 2020, civil society organisations/non-governmental organisations and other national stakeholders -

- **should educate parents and raise general awareness about the importance and modalities of birth registration.**

Aspiration 4: Every child survives and has a healthy childhood.

By 2020, States -

- should have reduced by one-third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promoted mental health and wellbeing;
- should have ensured universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes;
- should have achieved universal health coverage, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all;
- should have achieved the immunisation against measles and polio of all infants; and should strengthen the health care system to allow for effective routine immunisation of all children for all major diseases, in line with the Global Vaccine Action Plan (GVAP) 2011-2020;
- should, in line with the Immunisation Declaration, have achieved the GVAP target of at least 90 per cent national coverage and at least 80 per cent coverage in every district for all nationally-available vaccines.
- should have ended preventable deaths of newborn children and children under five years of age;
- should have put in place programmes to educate and sensitise parents to enable and capacitate them to take care of their newborn children;
- should have achieved the goal of providing anti-retroviral medicines to at least 90 per cent of pregnant women living with HIV;
- should have eliminated new HIV infections among children by 90 per cent, and have achieved a reduction in the number of AIDS-related maternal deaths by 50 per cent;
- should have improved programmes to ensure a sustained reduction in HIV prevalence and incidence among adolescents;
- should have improved programmes to strengthen basic health care systems in order to provide quality maternal and child health services;
- should have developed health centres and hospitals dedicated to children, and should have ensured that all health centres and hospitals are child friendly;
- should have provided all children living with HIV with anti-retroviral treatment;
- should have prioritised the treatment and prevention of HIV, tuberculosis, malaria, pneumonia and diarrhea, so as to reduce under-5 mortality;

- should have improved 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;
- should have made insecticide-treated nets available to all children under five in malaria-endemic areas;
- should have reduced the maternal mortality rate in their countries to below at least 500 per 100 000 live births;
- should have improved access of women to attending antenatal care, resulting in a significant increase in the percentage of women attending antenatal care;
- should have increased the number and accessibility of birth attendants and should have sensitised communities to the benefits of birth attendants, so as to achieve a significant increase in the number of pregnant mothers who are attended to by health care workers during birth;
- should have allocated at least 15 per cent of the national budget to health, in line with the Abuja and Dakar budgetary targets;
- should have set up a fully-functional health infrastructure equipped to deal with children's health concerns; States should ensure that the health infrastructure is able to effectively respond to emergency situations such as the outbreak of Ebola in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone;
- should be supporting communities, particularly by improving the conditions giving rise to disease. Ministries of Health should play a leadership role in co-ordinating multi-sectoral and multidisciplinary interventions to address the social determinants of health. The responsibility for action with respect to health should rest with the highest level of government.

By 2020, the African Union -

- political organs should have reinvigorated their political commitment to maternal mortality, in line with the AU's Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality (CARMMA), and should have embarked on a continental campaign for the dramatic decrease in infant mortality; political organs should have targeted countries with a maternal mortality rate of more than 500 (Sierra Leone (1 100); Chad (980); Central African Republic (880); Somalia (850); Burundi (740); DRC (730); South Sudan (730); Côte d'Ivoire (720); Guinea (650); Liberia (640); Niger (630); Cameroon (590); Guinea-Bissau (560); Nigeria (560); Mali (550); and Malawi (510)), to assist them to significantly reduce the maternal mortality rate in their countries;

- **should have put a clear strategy in place for responding to health emergencies such as the outbreak of Ebola in West Africa;**
- **should have facilitated a common African position on the migration of health professionals and led engagement with Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries to overcome the devastating impact this migration is having on Africa's health systems.**

Aspiration 5: Every child grows up well-nourished and with access to the basic necessities of life.

By 2020, States -

- should be supporting family and community-based actions that enhance children's health, nutrition and wellbeing, including safe drinking water, improved sanitation and hygiene as well as appropriate young child feeding practices and food security measures when needed;
- should have allocated adequate resources to the wellbeing of children, in particular, to ensure access to basic nutrition, health and education through pro-poor social protection programmes for those most in need, including the most vulnerable children; States should have increased their investment in basic services for its population, while focusing on children;
- should have achieved universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all; States should have achieved access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and ended open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations;
- should be focusing on the poorest and most vulnerable in the distribution of allocations, in order to reduce inequalities affecting the population as a whole, including children;
- should have adopted and be implementing pro-poor social protection policies and programmes, such as cash transfers or child grants for all vulnerable children, and particularly for child-headed households;
- should have institutionalised social protection by putting in place appropriate institutional arrangements to build the capacity of systems and individuals to efficiently deliver social protection services;
- should have made an explicit commitment to entrench children's socio-economic rights within national legislation or in their constitutions;
- should have developed and implemented a minimum social protection package, consisting of at least targeted child support grants to the poorest segment of the population, within a comprehensive social protection system through progressive expansion and coverage of programmes to reach all those most in need of such services;
- should have taken specific measures to reach marginalised and vulnerable children and included them in all their programmes;
- should have adopted and effectively implemented laws prohibiting the use of children for begging;
- should have studied and developed legislation and policies for children in need of alternative care, or special support;

- should, as far as possible, have dealt with vulnerability in a multi-pronged, multi-dimensional and comprehensive way, targeting all vulnerable children indiscriminately, regardless of the cause of the vulnerability; children's rights promotion and development practice should embrace comprehensive service delivery for vulnerable children within a holistic, effective and sustainable system;
- should have addressed the root cause of the extreme vulnerability and exclusion of children, and should not be using criminal law provisions, such as vagrancy laws, to target and criminalise the conduct of children in need of care;
- should have relaxed fostering and adoption laws and sensitised the community to the advantages of fostering and adopting children who are outside the family environment.

By 2020, the African Children's Committee -

- should have scrutinised State reports from the point of view of the poorest and most vulnerable children;
- should have guided States to ensure that socio-economic rights are made effectively justiciable in their legal systems;

By 2020, African Union -

- political organs should have taken the lead in monitoring the implementation of the AU's Social Policy Framework through developing an appropriate tool setting benchmarks and time-bound goals to ensure greater accountability for the implementation of social protection.

By 2020, national partners -

- should have become fully involved in the formulation and implementation of national social protection programmes, while better aligning their engagement and contributions to national-led social policy frameworks;
- research centres should have studied and disseminated information, created awareness and understanding about the benefits of social protection for economic growth among policy makers and practitioners to increase awareness of the long-term economic benefit of social protection, beyond the moral and human rights imperatives.

By 2020, development partners -

- should have committed to increased and longer-term investments in building and strengthening national social protection structures for

social protection in terms of skills, capacity and organisational ability and effectiveness;

- **should have made funding decisions based on a broad analysis of funding gaps set against an overall social protection strategy developed in a participatory manner so that social protection strategies are owned and led by government.**

Aspiration 6: Every child benefits fully from quality education.

By 2020, States –

- **should have designed and implemented comprehensive early childhood care and development policies, focused on child development, socialisation and learning from birth to entry into primary school;**
- **should have enacted legislation and ensured an environment conducive to the pursuit of education by girls;**
- **should have eliminated all gender disparities in education and ensured equal access to girls at all levels of education;**
- **should have in place a policy for effective free and compulsory primary, and free secondary education;**
- **should have substantially increased the number of young persons with relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship;**
- **should have ensured that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development;**
- **should have built and upgraded education facilities that are child-, disability- and gender-sensitive and that provide a safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environment for all;**
- **should have put in place a legal framework to regulate and monitor educational services provided by non-State institutions;**
- **should have substantially increased the supply of qualified teachers, including through international co-operation for teacher training in developing countries;**
- **should have promoted the use of African languages as medium of instruction as well as subjects of study in the school systems;**
- **should have included in all primary and secondary school curricula a component on educating children about their rights and responsibilities, as set out under the constitution and national legislation;**
- **should have ensured that free compulsory education for all children is a legal requirement and factual reality; States should reach out to disadvantaged and socially-excluded groups, mostly in rural areas, and vulnerable children, including persons with disabilities, indigenous children and children of ethnic and/or religious minorities;**
- **should have allocated at least 15 per cent of the national budget to health, in line with the Abuja and at least 9 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) on education, in line with the Dakar budgetary targets.**

By 2040, the African Union -

- **should have collaborated with educational experts from different States to develop rights-based and gender-sensitive curricula with common features and standards.**

Aspiration 7: Every child is protected against violence, exploitation, neglect and abuse.

By 2020, States -

- should have prohibited corporal punishment as a form of discipline or punishment in schools, institutions and in the criminal justice system;
- should have set a minimum age for admission into employment at 15 years or higher; this minimum age should correspond to the minimum age for completing compulsory schooling;
- should have prohibited all forms of harmful labour practices and child trafficking, and ensured the effective implementation of these laws;
- should have domesticated laws designating the minimum age of marriage as 18 years, in compliance with international law;
- should have prohibited all forms of physical abuse, sexual violence and exploitation, sex trafficking, female genital mutilation (FGM), child marriage and child pornography, and ensured the effective implementation of these laws;
- should have engaged with the UN, AU and aid agencies to ensure that children are protected from being sexually exploited by aid workers, military personnel and peacekeepers, and that the perpetrators of such acts be prosecuted and punished;
- should, in conjunction with relevant stakeholders, have supported a comprehensive country-wide study to identify factors inhibiting the effective implementation of laws protecting children against violence, abuse and exploitation, and formulating strategies for their successful implementation;
- should have embarked on public information and awareness campaigns for the abolition of harmful practices, initiated collective discussions involving the communities concerned, and undertaken capacity building of professionals working with and for children;
- should have strengthened collaboration with traditional and faith leaders and built upon their influential voice to enhance awareness among families and communities about the detrimental impact of harmful practices on children; to clarify that these practices are not based on or legitimised by religion; and to support a process of social change which may lead to the lasting abandonment of these practices;
- should have adopted and effectively implemented legislation prohibiting all forms of violence against children, including new and emerging manifestations, supported by detailed legal provisions on counselling, reporting, investigation and prosecution of incidents of violence against children;

- **should have provided for a means of redress and of fighting impunity, as well as for addressing the root-causes behind harmful practices, including discrimination against particularly vulnerable children;**
- **should have removed from all national legislation any legal provisions providing justification for, or allowing consent to, harmful practices against children, including on grounds of culture, tradition, honour or religion;**
- **should have taken legislative and administrative measures, including the review of legislation and policies, and adopted a comprehensive strategy to eliminate attacks on, killing of and discrimination against children with albinism;**
- **should have put in place quality programmes and services to prevent and respond to violence against children, including by linking with broader social protection programmes and by promoting and supporting community-based child protection interventions;**
- **should have enhanced collective advocacy efforts to promote non-violent values and awareness raising to transform attitudes condoning or normalising violence against children at all levels;**
- **should have facilitated awareness raising regarding child marriage by engaging with civil society organisations, grass-roots organisations, traditional and religious leaders and the private sector, including the media;**
- **should have regulated the use of the media (radio and television) and social media in abusing children;**
- **should have adopted legislation abolishing female genital mutilation, sensitised and trained health care workers to refrain from conducting medicalised forms of FGM and to educate the community;**
- **should have increased the percentage of adolescents having access to family planning services.**

By 2020, traditional and religious leaders -

- **should have played a decisive role in the protection of children from violence, including harmful practices, by using their influential voice to enhance awareness amongst families and communities about the detrimental impact of harmful practices on children; to clarify that these practices are not based on or legitimised by religion; and to support a process of social change that may lead to the permanent abandonment of these practices.**

By 2020, academic institutions, research centres, think-tanks -

- **should have engaged in children's rights-focused research and studies, in particular to better understand the 'implementation gap'; this research should be action-oriented, should be informed by societal**

needs and demands, with broad stakeholder involvement, should be multi-disciplinary in nature, and should not be dominated by lawyers or legal/juridical approaches; research should be directed at informing effective interventions.

By 2020, the African Children's Committee -

- **should have identified influential norm custodians who are able to influence and shape norms, in consultation with national actors;**
- **should, in collaboration with the think-tanks and academic institutions, have been involved in research, knowledge gathering about the 'implementation gap' and 'best practices' of effecting social change.**

By 2020, the national partners -

- **should have initiated and engaged in national dialogue to discuss the feasibility of abolishing and eradicating corporal punishment from the private setting of the home;**
- **working with children, should have a child protection policy and safeguarding policy in place, in order to ensure a safe environment for children by, for example, minimising risks of child abuse.**

By 2020, the AU -

- **should have accelerated the End of Child Marriage in Africa project in the relevant countries through the development, elaboration and implementation of national strategies and action plans to end child marriage;**
- **should have taken further measures to raise awareness and advocate for the end of other forms of violence against children.**

Aspiration 8: Children benefit from a child-sensitive criminal justice system.

By 2020, States –

- **should have legislated the minimum age of criminal responsibility to be 12 years or above;**
- **should have adopted and implemented legislation explicitly requiring the separation of children and adults at all points of detention;**
- **should have introduced a system for expediting investigations and prioritising cases where the defendant or any victim or witness is a child;**
- **should have programmes in place to ensure that judicial personnel, law enforcement agents and other professionals involved in the criminal justice system are sensitised to provide child-friendly services;**
- **in collaboration with national partners, should have embarked on a campaign to sensitise professionals and the general public on the importance of a child-friendly and a rights-based approach in the justice sphere;**
- **should have enhanced the capacity of law enforcement agencies to ensure accountability to children;**
- **should have abolished the use of the death penalty in respect of offences committed by children; States should have ensured that the death sentence may not be imposed on pregnant women or the mothers of young children;**
- **should have taken special measures allowing for diversion and restorative justice in respect of children; States should be referring children to juvenile justice institutions where they can learn skills and be reintegrated into society without compromising their psychological or physical well-being;**
- **should have reviewed sentencing procedures in order that a non-custodial sentence is always considered when parents or primary caregivers of children are being sentenced; States should be providing for appropriate alternative care for children whose parent or primary caregiver is imprisoned; States should have established special institutions to house children in prison, under very exceptional circumstances when non-custodial measures cannot be considered, and it is in a child's best interests to live with a parent or caregiver in prison;**
- **should have set up alternative measures to pre-trial detention, such as bail and written notices to appear at court;**

- should have developed reliable mechanisms for collecting accurate, disaggregated data on the practice and administration of criminal justice for children, including case load data for children, case characteristics data and resource data based on juvenile justice indicators in line with international child-rights standards;
- should have started to develop a proportionate and gender-sensitive response to offending by girls;
- should have put in place regular independent inspections and monitoring of detention facilities by qualified bodies, at times unannounced, with full access to facilities and the freedom to interview children and staff in private;
- should have reviewed and developed prevention strategies addressing the root causes of offending, such as poverty and inequality, by emphasising inclusion and access to basic services, with children at particular risk of coming into conflict with the law, being specifically targeted with support services;
- should have established a clear child protection policy in closed institutions that is known to all staff, with step-by-step procedures on how allegations and disclosures of violence are to be handled;
- - should ensure appropriate reintegration and rehabilitation support services for children in conflict with the law, including through a multi-disciplinary approach involving the social workforce;
- should ensure that the specific needs of child victims and witnesses of crime are addressed before, during and after trial.

By 2020, the African Children's Committee -

- should have elaborated on the juvenile justice system, exploring, for example, the respective responsibility of parents, communities and schools for educating children about wrongfulness or right and wrong.

By 2020, research institutions -

- should have conducted research to identify the background, characteristics and social reintegration needs of girl offenders;
- should have carried out research to identify causes, patterns and effects of criminal behaviour of children.

Aspiration 9: Every child is free from the impact of armed conflicts and other disasters or emergency situations.

By 2020, States -

- **should have prescribed 18 years or above as the minimum age of recruitment into the armed forces, and effectively enforced this standard;**
- **should have empowered children and young people to be forces for peace and conflict prevention; children and young people are an integral part of successful efforts to prevent conflict and build peace; it follows that they should be specifically included in any attempt at addressing the structural and more immediate causes of conflict;**
- **should have ensured the systematic and timely investigation into and prosecution of crimes against children in the context of armed conflict, and provided assistance to victims;**
- **should have addressed the root causes of conflict, in order to eliminate the impact of armed conflicts on children and ultimately to build a more resilient and sustainable protective environment for children in urban and rural contexts;**
- **should have adopted specific measures to end impunity for violations against children; that those responsible for violating the rights of children during armed conflict are held accountable and are punished;**
- **should have adopted specific measures that end impunity for violations against children in armed conflict; these measures should extend to States not involved in the conflict, by way of adopting extraterritorial provisions for relevant crimes, ensuring that national provisions comply with the rules and provisions of the International Criminal Court (ICC); applying the universality principle where relevant; ensuring that domestic legislation criminalises arms trade to countries with a track record of the illegal recruitment of children;**
- **should have reviewed their domestic legislation and practice in order to abolish the arms trade to countries where children take part in armed conflict, including the trade in small arms and light weapons;**
- **should have included disaster preparedness as part of the school curriculum;**
- **should have reviewed and adjusted its disaster management and response policies and programmes to ensure that the needs of children and their families are identified and cared for;**

- **should have adopted policies and programmes providing for special protection and assistance to separated and unaccompanied children, including measures to ensure that they are reunified with their families.**

By 2020, the African Union's -

- **political organs should have ensured that all peace-making and peace-building processes are child-sensitive, including by way of specific provisions in peace agreements, the participation of children in those processes and the prioritisation of resources.**

Aspiration 10: African children's views matter.

By 2020, States –

- should have adopted national legislation to institutionalise and formalise a process to involve children in parliamentary processes and in the operation of child-specific institutions;
- should have considered the views of children and young people in the monitoring and accountability of all laws, policies and programmes affecting children.

By 2020, the African Children's Committee –

- should have considered the views of children and young people in the monitoring and accountability of implementation of the Charter;
- should have developed and implemented platforms for children to participate in the monitoring of this Agenda.