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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
1262ND MEETING

20 FEBRUARY 2025
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/COMM.1262 (2025)

COMMUNIQUÉ



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Adopted by the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) at its 1262nd meeting held on 20 February 2025 on the Fight Against the Use of Child Soldiers in Africa.

The Peace and Security Council,

Recalling the Assembly Decision [Assembly/AU/Dec.753(XXXIII)] adopted during the 33rd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union held in February 2020 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, which, among others, requested the AU Commission to integrate child protection into Silencing the Guns campaign and the Theme of the AU for the year 2020, as well as to develop a comprehensive policy on child protection in AU peace support operations;

Also recalling its previous decisions and pronouncements on the fight against the use of child soldiers in Africa, in particular, Communiqué [PSC/PR/COMM.(CMXCIV)] adopted at the 994th PSC session on 11 May 2021, and the Communiqué [PSC/PR/COMM.1202 (2024)] of the 1202nd session held on 27 February 2024;

Noting the opening remarks of **H.E. Ambassador Miguel Ntutumu EVUNA ANDEME**, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea to the AU and Chairperson of the Peace and Security Council of the AU for February 2025; and the introductory statement by **H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye**, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs Peace and Security;

Also noting the presentation by the **Honourable Robert Doya Nanima**, Special Rapporteur on Children Affected by Armed Conflict and Member of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC); as well as the statement by **H.E. Ambassador Jainaba Jagne**, Co-chair of the African Platform on Children Affected by Armed Conflicts (AP CAAC), the statement by **H.E. Virginia Gamba**, Special Representative of the UN-Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC), and by **H.E. Dr. Laila Omar Gad**, Representative of United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to the AU; and

Acting under Article 7 of its Protocol, the Peace and Security Council,

1. **Expresses deep** concern over the continued armed conflicts across the continent, which have devastating impacts on civilians, particularly children, who remain extremely vulnerable to grave violations, including recruitment and use by armed forces and armed groups, sexual violence, abduction, killing, and denial of essential services like education and healthcare; in this regard, **strongly condemns** the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts by both armed forces and armed groups across the continent, as it constitutes a gross violation of human rights, child rights and international humanitarian law; and **underscores** the need for all security forces and armed groups to fully observe and comply with their obligations in the 1949 Geneva Conventions on International Humanitarian Law; and International Human Rights law;
2. **Urges** Member States, Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) to strengthen accountability mechanisms so as to hold perpetrators of child recruitment and exploitation accountable under existing legal frameworks that prevent and criminalize the use of child soldiers; and **calls on** the AU Member States to take decisive legal and punitive measures against all perpetrators;
3. **Stresses** the imperative of addressing the root causes and structural drivers of conflict, including poverty, political instability, and inequality, which expose children to recruitment and

exploitation; in this respect, **underscores** the need for governments and stakeholders to redouble efforts investing in education, economic opportunities, food security, and conflict prevention measures to address the root causes of child recruitment and use in armed conflicts;

4. **Underscores** the need for the AU Commission to mainstream child protection into AU institutional responses, and ensure child protection in AU-mandated, authorized or endorsed Peace Support Operations; both towards preventing violations against children in armed conflict, and in promoting accountability in mission areas;

5. **Reiterates** the important role of Member States, AU Commission, and RECs/RMs, in integrating child protection into mediation efforts, and in implementing child-focused reintegration strategies in post-conflict settings such as in Post-Conflict, Reconstruction and Development (PCRD), Security Sector Reform (SSR) and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programmes;

6. **Also reiterates** the call for the AU Commission, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, to expedite the development of a Continental Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Framework to address the psychosocial needs of children affected by armed conflict, including those formerly associated with armed groups;

7. **Emphasizes** the need to integrate child protection considerations into national, regional and continental early warning systems, in order to ensure timely identification of risks to children in conflict situations, and **urges** the adoption of child-centred responses to mitigate vulnerabilities and prevent violations;

8. **Calls on** Member States and stakeholders to prioritize the provision of essential services such as education, healthcare, psychosocial support, and social care, while designing tailored reintegration programmes to restore the dignity and rights of children recruited and exploited in armed conflicts;

9. **Encourages** Member States to facilitate the continuation of education even in situations of conflicts, **and emphasizes** the need for implementation of the safe schools declaration in the promotion of Education for children affected by armed conflicts in Africa;

10. **Appeals to all** Member States, the AU Commission, and the wider international community to provide and allocate substantial funding for child-focused and gender-sensitive programmes that address the specific needs of children in conflict and post-conflict settings;

11. **Encourages** the AP-CAAC, stakeholders, international partners, civil society organizations, and humanitarian agencies to strengthen advocacy and knowledge-sharing on the protection of children in conflict situations, ensuring better coordination and awareness; **and requests** the continued engagement with affected regions and communities to ensure the successful rehabilitation and reintegration of children formerly associated with armed groups, thereby preventing their re-recruitment and reintegration into conflict;

12. **Commends** Member States that have ratified and implemented the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and other international instruments for protection of Children, including the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and the Safe Schools Declaration; and **encourages** Member States who have not yet done so, to ratify and domesticate these instruments as well as to implement/observe their provisions effectively to better protect the rights of children;

13. **Requests** the AU Commission, in coordination with the relevant stakeholders, to enhance regular and continuous monitoring of the situation of children in conflict situations in Africa and promote a learning and knowledge generation platform that embodies the African reality of child protection;
14. **Calls on** the ACERWC to expedite finalization of the comprehensive study on child soldiers in Africa for presentation to the Policy Organs for consideration as mandated by the Executive Council Decision [EX.CL/Dec.1248 (XLIV)] adopted at the 44th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council, held on 14-15 February 2024, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; and **welcomes** the ACERWC willingness to produce an annual Africa Report on Children in Situations of Conflict and present the Report to the PSC, on an annual basis;
15. **Reiterates** the call for the Chairperson of the AU Commission to appoint a Special Envoy for Children Affected by Armed Conflicts in Africa to facilitate the effective implementation of the AU Child Rights Agenda;
16. **Decides** to remain actively seized of the matter.