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**27th SESSION OF THE AFRICAN
COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON THE RIGHTS AND
WELFARE OF THE CHILD (ACERWC)
2-6 MAY 2016
ADDIS-ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

**ACERWC/RPT (XXVII)
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REPORT

TWENTY SEVEN ORDINARY SESSION OF THE AFRICAN COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON THE RIGHTS AND WELFARE OF THE CHILD (ACERWC)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The 27th Session of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child was held at the headquarters of the African Union Commission in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 2 to 6 May 2016.

II. ATTENDANCE

2. The meeting was attended by the nine members of the ACERWC, Representatives of the African Union Commission, Representatives of CSO of Cameroon, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Representatives of United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR), Save the Children, Plan International, World Vision International (WVI), The African Child Policy Forum (ACPF), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT International), African Movement of Working Children and Youth (AMWCY), SOS Children's Villages International, Africawide Movement for Children, Child Rights Network for Southern Africa, East African Centre for Human Rights (EACHRights), West African Civil Society Forum (WACSO), Coalition au Burkina Faso pour les Droits de l'Enfant (COBUFADE), Holt International, Light for the World; Baha'i International Community (BIC), Girls Not Brides, Zimbabwe National Council for the Welfare of Children (ZNCWC), Holt International, Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, Eastern Africa Child Rights Network (EACRN), Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER), Centre pour la Promotion et la Défense des Droits de l'Enfant (CPDE), Défense des Enfants International (DEI) en RCA, Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI), Governance For Africa (GFA), Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology(MMUST) Defence for Children International (DCI), Ghana NGO Coalition on the Rights of the Child (GNCRC), Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association (ZWLA)

ITEM 1: OPENING CEREMONY

Remarks by AUC Commissioner for Social Affairs

3. In his welcoming remark on behalf of H.E Dr. Moustapha S. Kaloko, Commissioner of AUC Social Affairs, Amb. Olawale I. Maiyegun, Director of Social Affairs, welcomed the Committee Members and all participants to the 27th Session of the ACERWC. He also welcomed Mr Mohamed Ould Ahmedou dit H'Meyada, the newly elected Committee Member.

4. Amb. Maiyegun further appreciated the growing collaboration between the Committee and the Department of Social Affairs in taking forward the issues of children in the African Union agenda and informed that the Department of Social Affairs has sustained the momentum on working towards addressing the plights of children in Africa. He said the Campaign on ending child marriage was exhibiting success and to date, 11 Member States

of the African Union have held their national launches while 15 more are set to launch by the end of this year 2016. This gives AU an opportunity to work closely with Member States and other stakeholders to advance the goals of the Campaign and bring synergy and strengthen efforts to end child marriage. He also cited the first Girls' Summit held in Lusaka in November 2015 as a great success in the Ending Child Marriage Campaign.

5. He indicated that the Department will hold the 8th Meeting of the African Taskforce on Food and Nutrition Development by June 2016 whose main agenda is to discuss and finalize a detailed implementation plan for operationalizing the revised African Regional Nutrition Strategy which was adopted by the AU Executive Council in June 2015. The forum includes focused discussions on continental programs to be implemented with leadership of AU to address Child Stunting across the continent, as part of the activities to meet the Malabo Declaration of reducing Child Stunting to 10 % by 2025. In 2016, the Department collaborated with HRST to plan and commemorate the First Africa Day for School Feeding in Niger as well as WHO and other partners to hold a meeting on immunization.

6. He also informed that, the Department, under the Division of Social Welfare, Vulnerable Groups and Drug Control, is also facilitating the Continental Plan of Action on the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities (2010 – 2019). The goal of the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities (2010 – 2019) is the full participation, equality and empowerment of people with disabilities in Africa. Children with Disabilities are of course pivotal to this plan and the goal is to ensure the full enjoyment by children with disabilities of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children.

7. Finally Amb. Maiyegun concluded the speech by thanking all partners have been constantly assisting the AU in the general and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in particular over the past many years.

Opening Speech by Chairperson of the Committee

8. The Chairperson of the Committee, Prof Benyam Dawit Mezmur, started his speech by welcoming the Committee Members, Mohamed Ould Ahmedou dit H'Meyada, the newly elected Committee Member and on the same note expressed his gratitude to Prof Julia Sloth-Nielsen whose term ended in January 2016.

9. Prof Benyam further posed a question is the life of children born today better than that of those born 25 years ago? The question, he said, requires serious consideration as the answer is yes but not for all children. He further acknowledged that there has been progress in the protection and promotion of the rights of children but it has been inequitable

10. Apart from the well-known challenges that affect children like hunger, violence, health, he said, new ones are emerging that include surrogacy, selected abortion and problems such as child pornography and online abuse which come together with technological advancement and they as well need to be given serious consideration.

11. Prof Benyam emphasized that it was important for Partners to confirm their concrete support to the Committee as there has to be costs for the realization of the rights of children.

12. He further recalled that the Day of the African Child 2016 will be observed under the theme “Conflict and Crises in Africa: Protecting all Children’s Rights” and called on all to participate in the commemoration. Further to this he informed that three Complementary reports will be considered and also the African Children’s Charter Project Phase 2 where there will be discussions on how to take the project forward. He also recalled that 2016 is the AU Year of Human Rights with a focus on Women’s Rights and this includes the girl child in particular and all children in general. Finally, the Chairperson thanked all present and officially declared the 27th Session of the ACERWC officially opened.

Swearing in of the new Committee Member

13. A new Committee member, Mr. Mohamed H’Medaya took oath to hold office under the supervision of the representative from the AU Legal Counsel. He then signed the statement of oath.

ITEM 2: CONSULTATION AMONG COMMITTEE MEMBERS (CLOSED SESSION)

14. The Members of the Committee discussed the agenda of the session and adopted as amended.

ITEM 3: PROCEDURAL MATTERS

- **Adoption of the Agenda and the Program of Work**

15. The Agenda and Program of Work were adopted as amended.

- **Organization of work**

16. The Committee agreed to carry out its deliberations in open, semi closed and closed sessions according to the Agenda.

ITEM 4: BRIEF PRESENTATIONS BY PARTNERS

17. **United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)** : On behalf of UNICEF, Dr Iyorlumun J Uhaa, UNICEF Representative to the AU and UNECA, started by congratulating the newly elected member of the Committee Mr. Mohamed Hmedaya. He said that there have been many meetings in 2016, within the Continent to discuss the alignment of the SDGs and Agenda 2063 and in so doing also provide great opportunities to advance the agenda for children. Africa is now talking about accountability mechanisms and hence the Committee has an important role to play in ensuring children's rights are at the center of the alignment. He also said that the Committee needs to put more effort in highlighting violations of children's rights as well as effectively monitoring the implementation of the Charter.

18. On the Continental Study on children affected by armed conflict, he recalled that children don’t create conflict yet are most affected by conflict, physically, physiologically, socially and

also facilities which are critical to their wellbeing like health centers and schools are destroyed or occupied by armed forces, as well as the children being exposed to sexual violence, family separations and being forced to become child soldiers among other vices. He asked all present to scrutinize the Study report that will be presented and make recommendations that will protect the rights of the child. Finally he reassured the Committee of the commitment of UNICEF to work with the Committee to realize the rights of the African Child.

19. Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): Ms Adwoa Kufuor, Regional Adviser on Gender in the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights started by informing that during the last session, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has considered over twenty countries. For the continent, it has reviewed Zambia, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Benin, Senegal and Madagascar. She noted that on the area of juvenile justice, it found that in a number of countries, the minimum age of criminal responsibility remains at unacceptable low level with some as low as 8 years.

20. She also mentioned that many States do not have adequate legislative framework to facilitate the effective investigation and prosecution of sexual exploitation and abuse of children and said that given the borderless nature of child online sexual abuse, intergovernmental cooperation is key as is international partnerships, including with academia and the private sector. On the issue of child marriage which is amongst the issue of discussion at this session she said that there has been significant progress towards eliminating and preventing child marriage and OHCHR continues to provide leadership in laying out the international norms and standards related to child marriage. She also informed that OHCHR is working closely with AU Gender Directorate to make the African Year of Human Rights a success. She confirmed that OHCHR will continue to support the work of the Committee so as to complement and reinforce the impact of the Committee and to maintain the political will generated to end the practice.

21. SOS Children's Villages International : Ms Truphosa Amere, Regional Advocacy Advisor, for SOS East and Southern Africa informed that SOS Children's Villages is a non-governmental and non-denominational child-focused organization which has been working on behalf of children that are without parental care or at risk of losing it, their families and their communities for more than 60 years worldwide. She said that as SOS Children's Villages, they acknowledge the fact that Africa has experienced a myriad of challenges that have weakened the very core of our society, the family and that the journey to full enjoyment of children's rights and freedoms has not been easy. However, she said that these challenges notwithstanding, the Africa's children, governments and institutions have indeed come a long way; and this session is a testament to that.

22. She further said that SOS Children's Villages believe that the children are Africa's greatest asset and hence, the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and more so Africa's Agenda 2063 is dependent on our children and youth. For this reason, all should ensure that adequate resources are channelled towards providing them with quality care and securing their rights and freedoms. A child is not just a child she said, as they are the pillars of our tomorrow, the backbone of any community and the arms upon which the

vision for the continent and the respective Countries rests. And finally she said that when we protect children and young people, we secure the future hence there is no loss in empowering Africa's children, all stand to gain!

23. Child Rights Network for Southern Africa (CRNSA): On behalf of the Child Rights Network for Southern Africa (CRNSA), Ms Judith Mulenga, Chairperson of CRNSA, made a statement where he informed that CRNSA is a network of national child rights networks in Southern Africa with a vision 'A Southern Africa where children's rights are respected, protected and fulfilled'. The Network he said is based in Botswana with members in ten southern African countries. She further indicated that CRNSA commits to building the capacity of national network on children's rights and good corporate governance. Finally, she mentioned that the Network commits to complementing the work of the Committee in Southern Africa especially by assisting national child rights networks in coming up with Complementary reports to the ACERWC and disseminating information from and about the Committee.

24. Baha'i International Community : Prof Techeste Ahderon, the Resident Representative of the Baha'i International Community (BIC) in the Addis Ababa Office (AAO) started by informing that the organization celebrates this year its own 90th anniversary as an International NGO, engaging first, with the League of Nations in the 1920s and then, with the UN after 1945 in bringing to light the limitless potential of children not only as future adults but also the active role they can play for peace and security in Africa as their rights and welfare is protected more and more. In a workshop entitled "Ending all Conflicts in Africa by 2020: No peace no development" organized by BIC AAO in New York on 25 September 2015 it was noted that the social and academic education of young people, especially in conflict zones, was an important factor seen to be of central importance in building a culture of peace. Ending all conflicts in Africa he said it's essential but building a concept of peace culture thereafter is not only desirable but necessary for sustainable peace in Africa.

25. At the meeting he mentioned in NY last year, a Senior Advisor at UNICEF, emphasized that, across a range of indicators, recent years had been among the worst to be a child in Africa. But the many hardships of war notwithstanding, she also observed that "There is, in children who come out of conflict, a burning desire for education." Having this insight in mind, the BIC AAO and its 46 national affiliates in Africa is taking preliminary steps to develop peace education as a strategy for protecting the rights and welfare of children. The Concept Note authored by ACERWC for the 2016 commemoration of the DAC itself highlights the role that education must play in any effort to adequately protect the rights and welfare of children.

26. Girls Not Brides: Ruth Koshal, the Senior Officer for African Engagement, Girls Not Brides started by introducing the Organization. She informed that one of the goals for Girls Not Brides is to collaborate with regional, national and local communities to influence regional intergovernmental processes and fora to commit to take action on child marriage (Africa). To achieve this goal, Girls Not Brides members interact to ensure that existing AU commitments are confirmed and implemented. Specifically, Girls Not Brides has engaged with the AU Campaign to End Child Marriage, supported the AUC Goodwill Ambassador on Ending Child Marriage and recently collaborated with the Special Rapporteur to End Child Marriage.

27. She finally informed that Girls Not Brides looks forward to continued collaboration with the Committee members, Committee Secretariat, the AU Special Rapporteur on Child Marriage the AU Goodwill Ambassador for Child Marriage on the AUC Campaign to End Child Marriage and other related activities.

28. West African Civil Society Forum (WACSOF) Ms Olusola Folayan, Regional Programme Officer informed that the West African Civil Society Forum (WACSOF) was created to institutionalize and systematize interactions and constructive partnership between Non State Actors (NSA) / Civil Society and the ECOWAS as well as National authorities in the ECOWAS Member states. The forum has been working with CSOs in West Africa in the last two years to curb Child marriage in the region through Organizing a Regional Contact Meeting of identified CSOs along with experts and the Media on the theme of Strategizing to End Child/Early Marriage in West Africa among other activities. The Forum she said, is offering it support to keep working with the Committee members to realize its vision in West Africa.

29. Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA): Ms Ismene Nicole Zarifis, Director of Programs informed that the Institution would like to draw attention to certain harmful practices that are eroding the rights of many children in West Africa. Some countries especially Ghana, a common belief in witchcraft has led to accusations of children being witches and sent out of their homes and communities, and sent to so-called 'witch-camps' where they are not able to attend school, and are deprived of basic facilities necessary for their growth and development. She also said that there is also the practice of exorcism that is popular in countries such as Nigeria, Ghana and Sierra-Leone many children reportedly lose their lives or become disabled in the process of this exorcism.

30. She called upon the Committee to take note of these practices and to employ the full range of measures within its protection and promotional mandate to ensure that the rights of these children are protected.

31. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) : Ms Kabeya Diane Misenga, Deputy Head of Delegation of International Committee of the Red Cross Delegation to the African Union informed the Committee along four areas of intervention in favour of children which are: the visits to children in places of detention to assess their conditions and treatment; the tracing services provided to unaccompanied and separated children who have lost contact with their families as a result of an armed conflict or other situation of violence; the prevention and protection work carried out in favor of children affected by armed forces and armed groups (protection dialogue held with armed forces and armed groups to inter alia promote respect of relevant international treaties and laws and encourage their reintegration, visits to children detained for their implication in an armed conflict) and lastly protection dialogue carried with parties to a conflict aimed at raising awareness at the impact of armed conflict or other situation of violence on access to education.

32. Zimbabwe National Council for the Welfare of Children (ZNCWC): Mr Maxim Murungweni, Programmes Manager of ZNCWC informed that the Zimbabwe National Council for the Welfare of Children with financial and technical support from the Child Rights Network of Southern Africa has partnered with the Government of Zimbabwe (Ministry of

Health and Child Care) in developing a joint National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of the ACERWC Recommendations/concluding observations for Zimbabwe. A two day NAP planning and development workshop for both government and CSOs was conducted last week with the final NAP for the concluding observations expected to be submitted before Cabinet within 2 months.

33. ZNCWC, he informed together with the Government have already started implementing the concluding observations from the ACERWC. They are also conducting a research on Young Women /Children in commercial sexual exploitation as well as implementing a Stop Child labour project aimed among other projects. He thanked the ACERWC Committee for its continued support to both CSOs and Government of Zimbabwe in implementing these recommendations.

34. **Holt International** : Mr Charles Abbey, Senior Executive Africa and Haiti Program of Holt international informed the committee that, in line with Holt's Mission to "Lead the global community in advocating on behalf of the world's most vulnerable children", this Session presents an opportunity for Holt to "tell its own story" about its achievements and contributions to the rights and welfare of children around the world and also to grow and expand its programs in Africa through partnerships. The activities of Holt International are child-focused services in three main program areas of Family Strengthening, Orphan and Vulnerable Care and Adoption Services. More recently, Holt has added an Orphan and Nutrition Program as a cross-cutting program which has achieved success in India and Viet Nam.

35. **Plan International**: Mr Chikezie Anyanwu, Director, Plan International AU Liaison Office started by welcoming the new member of the Committee. He then informed that the second phase of their global campaign - Because I Am A Girl 2.0; the new organisational global strategy and the Sustainable Development Goals Global which are all in line with the ACERWC strategic Plan 2016-2020 and AU Agenda 2063 are setting an ambitious influencing agenda for children which Plan International look forward to working closely with the ACERWC and AUC on. He said that Plan International are happy to note that the Committee will be exploring how to use the Charter reporting by member states as one of the mechanisms for evaluating the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), hence will be looking forward to collaborating with the Committee on this.

36. He finally re- confirmed Plan International continued commitment to supporting the AU Campaign on Ending Child Marriage in Africa and work of the Special Rapporteur and AU Goodwill Ambassador on Ending Child Marriages in Africa.

37. **Global Initiative Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children**: Ms Sonia Vohito presented her organisation which aims to act as a catalyst to encourage more action and progress towards ending all corporal punishment in all continents. She informed that the Africa project of the Global Initiative aims specifically to increase the number of states in Africa committed to and actively pursuing the prohibition and elimination of all corporal punishment of children, in the family, schools and all other settings. The reality is to date 49 states ban corporal punishment of children in all settings, including in the home. These states included seven African states. The last African country to have banned corporal punishment (by law) in all settings is Benin, in January 2015.

38. According to the statistics, the percentage of African children fully protected by law against corporal punishment in all settings is 8%. So more have to be done and with the support of the African Committee.

39. African Child Policy Forum (ACPF) Mr Théophile Nikyema, Executive Director of ACPF joined the other presenters in congratulating and welcoming the new Member of the Committee. He then said that his Organization is looking forward this year, 2016, as it is declared the African Year of Human Rights, and work with the AU and in particular to call the attention of African Member States to particular issues affecting children. He said that despite the remarkable progress made towards the improvement of the rights and wellbeing of children in Africa in the past two decades, the rights of children in Africa are still far from realization.

40. He informed that ACPF will be working on a number of child rights issues in this year, which we hope will contribute to the broader human rights agenda on the continent. In particular, ACPF will hold its 7th International Policy Conference on the African Child in November 2016, a high level forum which brings together policy leaders from across the continent and beyond, to deliberate on key issues affecting the African child. The theme of the IPC in 2016 is “Crimes and Extreme forms of Violence against Children in Africa”. In 2016 ACPF will also launch the Africa Report on Child Wellbeing. The focus of the Africa Report this year is on the implementation of children’s rights in Africa and includes a number of key recommendations on the implementation of child rights in African countries. He further informed that ACPF will continue to work on a number of other projects in the areas of Child justice, Children with disabilities, and Violence against children and concluded by reiterating ACPF’s commitment to continue our support and engagement with the Committee and to work together towards a better future for Africa’s children.

41. End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT International): Ms Catherine Mbengue, Africa Region Coordinator for International ECPACT thanked the Committee for giving the opportunity to her organisation and ACPF to present the Pan African Global study report that a group of partners and experts conducted in the different continents of the world an important issue for Africa.

42. She said that the Global study on the sexual exploitation of children in the context of travel and tourism comes at the rights time with the adoption of the new global development agenda: sustainable development goals. This is especially true as Agenda 2063 articulated targets to end violence against children; a silent epidemic that costs a lot of money each year to the Continent. She added that the formulation of an agenda for children will give the opportunity to change the situation of violence and establishes a continent fit for children.

43. Save the Children International (SCI): Ms Farida Bascha Senior Program Manager informed that on 26 April 2016, Save the Children launched “Every Last Child” a three-year (2016-2018) global campaign across the globe in 77 countries to defeat the discrimination that leads to millions of children dying needlessly, being denied the chance to learn or being exposed to violence, just because of who they are and where they live. It sets out Save the Children’s ambition to help end exclusion – and urging leaders from around Africa to join us in doing whatever it takes to reach Every Last Child by making Three Guarantees to All Children:

- Fair finance – sustainable financing of and free access to essential services
- Equal treatment – end discriminatory policies, norms and behaviors
- Accountability of decision-makers – to children, their families and communities

44. Given the momentum generated by both Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030, she said, Save the Children call on the Committee to position itself as a Regional accountability mechanism among other regional human right bodies to monitor the implementation of both Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030 to ensure that the aspirations contained in these development frameworks for children to become a reality and hence invited the Committee to review its two guidelines on State party and Complementary reports to provide for Member States and CSOs to disclose, in their respective reports on the implementation of the charter, actions and measures taken in their country to achieve goals contained in these two overlapping and complementary frameworks using the existing indicators. She also reiterated their support to the Committee in advocating for the implementation of the recommendations emerging from the continental study on the effects of armed conflict, radicalization and terrorism on children in Africa.

45. World Vision International (WVI): Mr James Odong, Director, External Engagement World Vision International started by commending the Committee for its commitment in the promotion and protection of child rights in Africa. He also congratulated the Committee for marking the 25th anniversary of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child last November successfully which concluded with a great task of developing an Agenda for Children Rights for the next 25 years. World Vision he said, takes note that the Committee is adopting report of the Continental study on the impact of armed Conflict on children in Africa which is a timely adoption with the theme for this year's Day of the African Child being 'Conflict and crisis in Africa: protecting all children's rights' and remain committed in supporting this process and looking forward for a great commemoration during June.

46. He also reiterated their support in each and every recommendation of the study being taken forward to Member States with full political will and ownership for the realisation of child wellbeing of children in conflict settings. He said that World Vision is set to launch its next global campaign and the focus will be on reducing violence against children and look forward to working together with the Committee as well other development partners.

47. Eastern Africa Child Rights Network (EACRN): Mr Ruzigana Maximilien, Chairperson of the EACRN, informed that currently the life of many people including children is on a high risk due to the insecurity situation in Burundi. He recalled that one of the EACRN Committee Board Members fled the Country last year also for the same reasons. He implored the 27th session of ACERWC to talk about the children issues in Burundi and that the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) had conducted a mission in Burundi and hence have some facts according to the presentation that was made during a side event organized by Burundian team of lawyers and CSOs at the last session of the Commission in April 2016 and delivered the appropriate message to the Government of the Republic of Burundi as regards the rights of children. This is a good opportunity to discuss the protection of children as 2016 is a year of Human Rights.

48. Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER) Ms Angella Nabwowe presented the Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER), a not-for-profit human rights NGO in

Uganda promoting a human rights based approach to Social and Economic Rights (ESRs) and mainstreams children as one of the main interest groups considering that they suffer disproportionate impact of social and economic rights violations. Part of their strategy is to work with regional and international mechanisms like the ACERWC by engaging in litigation and submission of alternative reports. Ms Nabwowe informed that ISER contributed to the drafting of Africa's Agenda for Children for the coming 25 years and also made a presentation on the impact of Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) on the right to education during the last session.

49. Key among our areas of concern is the slow progress in the realization of children's right to education, especially for vulnerable groups including girls, children with disability and poor children, which in the most part results from the declining government investment in education. Ms Nabwowe gave the case of Uganda, where the portion of the national budget set aside for education when inflation is taken into account has actually been declining in real terms from 16.85% to 13.65% over the last four financial years. While basic education receives even less. Ms Nabwowe also informed that Uganda has also been experiencing declining investment in the health sector over the years and the 2015/16 – 2019/20 Health Sector Development Plan shows that Government will be the least contributor to the plan, contributing 27% hence cost remains one of the barriers to accessing health. Lastly, they noted that Uganda is behind schedule in submitting its periodic report to the ACERWC and committed to work with other stakeholders

50. Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI): On behalf of the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI), the Program Officer, Mr Benson Chakaya informed that the network comprises of 44 African National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) spread across Africa. He added that the role of the network is to contribute to the establishment of and strengthening of NHRIs to better promote and protect human rights for all Africans. It is also responsible for coordinating NHRIs cooperation and collaborations of NHRIs and the regional and international human rights systems. He also informed that the network has in the recent past implemented a capacity building project for NHRIs in implementing decisions and recommendations of African human right bodies with a specific focus on the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights.

51. Further to this, he said that in partnership with Plan international they are set to implement a continental project for ensuring accountability among states on child right protection. The project, he emphasized seeks to promote the work of the African Committee on the Rights and Welfare of the Child by ensuring that NHRIs participate fully in child rights monitoring at state level. Finally he confirmed NANHRI commitment to ensure that there is a strong NHRIs engagement with the African Committee and Child rights CSO coalitions and organization.

ITEM 5: PRESENTATIONS ON THE COMPENDIUM OF LAWS ON ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE, ON THE SITUATION ON THE ACTIVITIES ON CHILD MARRIAGE IN AFRICA AND ON THE COMMEMORATION OF THE DAC 2015

52. In this particular session, three presentations were made on matters related to ending child marriage.

53. The first presentation was made by Ms Letty Chiwara UN Women Representative to Ethiopia, AU and UNECA presented the draft compendium of child marriage laws. In her presentation, she indicated that the document is produced in collaboration between UN Women and Department of Social Affairs of the AUC. Regarding the importance of the document, she indicated that the compendium will serve as a reference tool as it encompasses a number of legal frameworks. She as well mentioned that the document was prepared in consultation with the concerned Member States.

54. She then concluded her presentation by calling upon the Committee to consider using the Compendium as an accountability tool.

55. Dr Fatima-Zohra Sebaa-Delladj, the AU Special Rapporteur on Ending Child Marriage, made the second presentation. She started her presentation by highlighting the fact that of all the countries in the world which have the highest rate of child marriages, sixteen of them are in Africa, which shows how deep rooted social problem is child marriage across the continent. She stated that it was therefore in recognition of this challenge that the AUC in collaboration with other partners and Member States have launched the AU's Campaign on ending child marriage. In her presentation, she indicated that she is advocating for an inclusion of a legal provision on the prohibition of child marriage in all countries in Africa. She also presented the growing collaboration between her office and other partners, particularly UNICEF, is setting programs on ending child marriage through economic support and setting minimum age.

56. She then called up on State Parties, the Committee and partner organizations to closely strengthen their effort in working towards eradicating of child marriage in Africa.

57. The third presenter, Louise Holly, from UNICEF, presented a report on the commemoration of the Day of the African Child 2015. After giving a background on the commemoration of the DAC, she stated that there were a number of continental and national commemorations to celebrate the Day of the Child in 2015. On the Continental level, for instance, a two days event was held in South Africa on the 14th and 15th June 2015. Moreover, she also briefed the participants that at a national level, different events were held in many countries and organizations including in Burkina Faso, DRC, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

58. After the presentations, discussions were made and Committee Members and participants have pointed out a number of issues including: the possibility of celebrating the DAC even before June 16, and June 16 can be considered as culmination of all the events; the debate between customary laws and positive laws and how that affect the problem of child marriage; the possibility of integrating prohibition of child marriage with the right to education and health; the link between child marriage and birth registration and the remedies for children who are already married.

59. Finally, the panellists have also made reflection on a number of issues raised by the participants including the relevance of keeping the momentum with regard to the commemoration of the DAC as it may not be possible to keep the celebration for months and weeks.

ITEM 6: ECPAT/ACPF PEEK PRE VIEW PRESENTATION OF THE GLOBAL STUDY ON THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN IN TRAVEL AND TOURISM

60. Mr Théophile Nikyema, from ACPF, and Ms Catherine Mbengue, from ECPAT International, presented the overview of the Global Study on Sexual Exploitation of children in travel and tourism (SECTT). In his presentation, Mr Nikyema stated that the objectives of the study are getting an updated picture of SECTT, assessing the current responses against SECTT, awareness-raising on SECTT and developing mechanisms with a view of improving interventions. He also mentioned that a task force has been established and key study partners have also been brought on board around the study. Ms Catherine in her part presented the key findings of the study, which include the existence of traditional understanding of SECTT, the presence of multiplied opportunities for offenders, all countries in the study are not immune from the challenge, and the response from Governments against the SECTT is really weak and in most cases it is confirmed that impunity continued to reign. She concluded her presentation by pointing out the main recommendations which include the need for integrated approach and coordinated efforts on SECTT and mechanisms should also be in place for preventing SECTT and ending impunity. She also called up on the ACERWC to join its voice at high level meetings on matters related to SECTT.

61. After the presentation, discussions were made and participants raised the following major points: the need for strengthened psychological support for the victims, the need for the existence of a strong and functional accountability mechanisms at national levels, particularly participants stressed on the need to establish accountability against persons who are abusing and exploiting children despite the fact that they assume the responsibility of protecting them.

62. The Chairperson of the Committee concluded the discussion by emphasizing on the tendency of externalizing the problems related to sexual exploitations of children in travel and tourism. He stated that one needs to understand that SECTT is also an African problem which requires a collective and tailored response from all stakeholders

ITEM 7: THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES AND THE ACERWC

63. A presentation was made on the strategy for promoting and protecting the rights of children with disabilities in Africa by Mr Thomas Odera Ongolo from the Department of Social Affairs of the AUC. Briefings were also made on the draft Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa by Mr Lefhoko Kesamang, from Department of Social Affairs.

64. Thomas Ongolo indicated that the Strategy identifies seven areas of specific concern that compel urgent attention from all actors. These are: the Links between poverty and disability, social attitudes, stigma and discrimination, right to education, right to health, the right to be heard and to participate, violence against children with disabilities, the importance of statistics, research and evidence gathering. He also presented the areas of focus which are aligned with the eight strategic thematic areas identified in the Continental Plan of Action for the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities (2010-2019). The five areas of focus are: there is need to Promote the strategy, making member states aware, posting it in websites:

national action plans, review of legislative and policy framework, complaints mechanisms, monitoring and evaluation. In his presentation Mr Ongolo has also pointed out a question on whether there has been any implementation done on the strategy. Finally he requested for the Committee to consider taking the matter of children with disabilities as one of its main agendas and consider appointing a special rapporteur to take the work on the protection and promotion of children with disabilities forward towards the rights direction.

65. Mr Kesamang on his part presented the Draft Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa which was prepared by the Working Group on Older Persons and People with Disabilities in Africa. He also briefly presented the summaries of all the elements of the provisions of the draft Protocol.

66. After their presentations, participants have appreciated the timeliness of the presentations, as children with disabilities are currently facing an increasing challenge in Africa, and raised the following points: increasing the visibility of children with albinism, the challenges of gifted and talented children, the possibility of harmonizing the AU Continental Plan of Action and the UN Convention on Persons with Disabilities, the concerns of children with disabilities in the context of conflicts and the aggravated vulnerability of children with disabilities.

ITEM 8: PRESENTATION AND ADOPTION OF THE CONTINENTAL STUDY

67. Consultants from the Pan African Research Services (PARS) presented the findings of the ongoing study that it is conducting on behalf of the ACERWC on the impact of conflicts and crises on children in Africa. The consultants started their presentations by giving a background on the study including the objectives, scope, methodology and limitations of the study. With regard to the scope of the study, it was indicated that the report concerns the protection of the rights of children in, and on the aftermath of armed conflict situations in Africa over the last ten years. The presenters also indicated that the report, as identifies impacts of conflicts and crises on children in light of five selected thematic areas, which are education, health and adequate food, separated children, and sexual and gender based violence. Armed conflict impacts adversely on children. While presenting the findings of the study, the consultants stressed on the following major points: the impacts are interrelated and the solution requires for a whole requiring a holistic approach, destruction of schools is among the prominent impacts identified in most of the countries, recruitment of children into armed groups is a common practice in some of the countries, and health services almost wiped out in most of the countries. It is also indicated that most of the countries in the targeted countries have robust national legal frameworks and have ratified a number of international and regional instruments; however, the bulk of the problem is poor implementation of the existing laws.

68. After the presentation, discussion was made and participants have made contributions and some concerns and questions were also raised. These include: whether the consultants have discussed with all stakeholders on the ground, particularly whether they talked to the protection clusters in the targeted countries. A number of participants have also indicated the need to include stronger recommendations particularly to Member States on issues related to fighting impunity and establishing accountability against people who are violating children's rights in the context of conflicts and crises. Issues related to provision of

psychological support and rehabilitation of children in countries which are coming out of conflicts, the cross boarder nature of conflicts and its impact on children, and existence of emergency resilient education system.

69. After the questions and inputs the consultants mentioned that they will consider incorporating the comments and address the gaps as indicated in the discussions. Particularly, they assured that the comments related to impunity and accountability mechanisms will be addressed comprehensively in the report.

ITEM 9: PRESENTATION ON THE AFRICA'S AGENDA FOR CHILDREN FOR THE COMING 25 YEARS

70. Prof. Frans Viljoen presented Africa's Agenda for Children 2040 Fostering an Africa Fit for Children. The presentation was made to provide information on the process undertaken in developing the Agenda, and to incorporate comments of stakeholders. It was indicated that the ACERWC initiated the Agenda with the objective of assessing the achievements and challenges faced since the adoption of the Charter. He mentioned that the conceptualization of the Agenda took into account Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and was drafted after consulting various AU documents such as the Africa Fit for Children Declaration and Plan of Action and the Concluding Observations of the ACERWC. He further informed that interviews with members of the Committee and regional consultation with various stake holders were undertaken in the process of developing the Agenda. The Consultant also presented in detail the contents of the draft Agenda which includes the 10 aspirations and sub-aspirations for the coming 25 years; the achievements, challenges, and gaps in the past 25 years; and the way forward. At the end of the presentation, the Consultant proposed that the participants discuss and input in working groups on the format of the draft, the time framework to monitor the implementation of the Agenda, the issue of resources and data gathering.

71. After discussions in the working groups, the members of the Committee and the participants suggested the inclusion of issues in relation to children and the environment, children in emergency situations, children with disabilities, vocational education, health care for mothers, and the practice of ritual killings and maiming. They also proposed the alignment of the monitoring and evaluation of the Agenda with that of Agenda 2063 and the SDGs.

72. The consultant indicated that the suggestions are enlightening and will be taken into account. Furthermore, he indicated that after incorporating the inputs, the final draft will be available on the website of the Committee for additional comments.

ITEM 10: PRESENTATION AND ADOPTION OF THE JOINT GENERAL COMMENT ON CHILD MARRIAGE

73. Ms Katy Hindle, from Centre Human Rights of the University of Pretoria, presented the draft joint General Comment by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the ACERWC on child marriage. The General Comment is done on article 6 (b) of Maputo Protocol and article 21(2) of ACRWC. She started her presentation by setting the scope of

the General Comment as it is limited only to the issue of child marriage. After her brief presentation on the background of the General Comment, participants were requested to be in small discussion groups and discuss the following questions:

- Is child marriage a harmful practice or social practise?
- Monetary compensation within available means or should money be paid into centrally administered fund?
- Can the return of dowry be as part of reparations?

74. Reflecting on the above questions, participants indicated that there are numerous factors that lead to child marriage which could be attributed to both social and cultural issues. Therefore it was agreed that the General Comment should include both factors. Different ideas were reflected when it comes to returning dowry as an act of the reparation. Some participants said that dowry should be returned to restore a child's dignity as a human being. It was also stated that dowry could facilitates exchange within families; hence it could be important for social relationships. Others however proposed the avoidance of dowry reparations and suggested that there should be social rehabilitation instead. There should be a way to rescue, rehabilitate and integrate the child back into the society. And not concentration on compensating and returning the dowry yet the child has already been exposed to different effects of child marriage. Some strongly put it out that the acceptance of dowry and dowry reparations mean that child marriage has been accepted which is what the committee is against.

75. Before concluding the discussions Katy recommended that there is dire need for further discussion on issue of dowry. She also mentioned the way forward as the Centre for Human Rights will work on the advanced version of the documents taking into account comments of ACHPR and ACERWC. The revised draft version then will be presented in October 2016 during the joint Sessions of the Committee and the Commission.

ITEM 11: PRESENTATION AND ADOPTION OF THE GENERAL COMMENT ON ARTICLE 31 RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHILD

76. The Secretariat informed the participants that the development of the General Comment on article 31 of the African Children's Charter regarding the responsibility of the child is now at its final stage. As part of finalization of the document, an experts' meeting will soon be organized in collaboration with ACPF. In this regard, the Secretariat indicated that invitations will be sent out to partners and experts in the coming few weeks. The Secretariat then called up on all stakeholders to take part in the upcoming experts' meeting

ITEM 12: CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND BUSINESS: STATE OBLIGATIONS AND CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITIES

77. Mr. Patrick Geary, a Specialist on Children's Rights and Business from UNICEF Headquarters, made a presentation on Children's Rights and Business. In the presentation he highlighted that Children's Rights and Business Principles were developed as a result of the need for a strong visibility of children's right on the business and human rights agenda.

He informed that the process of developing the principles was participatory and was done after an online and in-person consultation with children and adults. He informed that the Children's Rights and Business Principles was a call on businesses to put in place appropriate policies and processes including a policy commitment and due diligence process for addressing potential and actual impacts on human rights including impact assessment and reporting. In contextualizing UNICEF's guidance, he informed that a sectorial approach which focuses on extracting, food and beverage, ICT, travel and tourism, and global supply chain industries has been chosen. He emphasized that States too have an obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the Principles and in this regard, indicated that General Comment No.16 of the UNCRC can be used as a guideline for States in implementing the Principles. At the end of the presentation, the presenter called upon the Committee to raise issues and make recommendations related to children's rights & business in its engagement with State Parties, to draw State Parties' attention to international and regional standards and resources on children's rights & business, to share and facilitate the gathering of national and regional notable examples and best practices, and to look to UNICEF for technical advice and support and encourage State Parties to do the same.

78. Following the presentation, Members of the Committee and participants raised questions on child labour, the relation of the Principles with the ILO Convention, traditional and small businesses, the role of the judiciary, and the involvement of parents. In addressing the questions, the presenter mentioned that the Principles focus on a broader engagement of children in the business other than the issue of labour. He said that while recognizing the need to hold accountable small business, emphasis is given to multi-national corporations because of their role as a leader in the business sector. In relation to engaging the judiciary, he informed that UNICEF developed guidelines on accessing national remedies.

79. In closing the discussion, the Chairperson of the Committee requested partners to organize a seminar for Members of the Committee on the issue and Save the Children International pledged to organize the seminar.

ITEM 13: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ON THE ACCP PROJECT (SIDA PROJECT)

80. Ms. Beatrice Arionget, the ACCP Coordinator made an overview presentation on the current bridging period and the planned activities for phase two of the project which will run starting from January 2017. She informed that the two year bridge phase is a 21 months period running from 1st April 2015 to 31st December 2016. It was informed that the bridging period will end in September 2016 while the period between October and December will be the closing of the bridging period. In relation to the end of the bridging period in September 2016, the coordinator brought to the attention of the Committee the need to make decision on the continued secondment of the two staff at the Secretariat of the Committee after September 2016 and beyond in the event that the funding for ACCP II does not come through.

81. It was also informed that in February 2016, the ACCP Consortium convened in Accra, Ghana where time was spent on strategizing, contextual analysis as well as planning for the

ACCP II. It was indicated that the following recommendations were made during the meeting:

- The ACCP Phase II continues to focus on the 3 objectives of the 1st phase that would allow sustaining traction gained;
- Update the first objective to also reflect a possible “exit strategy” and or plan towards a self-sustainability framework for the work of the ACERWC. As such the objectives will focus on a strategic shift from the activity/objective focus to outcome focused;
- Consider contextual changes since the launch of the first phase of the Project.
- Looking into cross-cutting issues as the donor SIDA has a system where it is compulsory for them to input an assessment into these;
- To make clear in the proposal of Phase II what support will be provided by EU, and how this project differs from the envisaged support from SIDA;
- To learn from other similar partnerships/collaborations in planning for Phase II; and
- Apply Phase II for 5 years, and emphasize the Project’s relevance despite the prevailing circumstances on funding.

82. The coordinator informed the Committee that the development of the proposal for Phase II is undergoing and that the first draft will be submitted for review by members of the Committee on 9th May 2016.

83. Following the presentation of the project coordinator, members of the Consortium briefed the Committee on their initial proposed project ideas for Phase II. The representative of Save the Children International (SCI) informed that SCI is interested among others to continue supporting the secondment of the Legal Researcher and the Communication Specialist, support the review of the Protocol of the African Court on Human and People’s Rights, support the implementation of the Collaboration Plan between ACERWC and RECs, and support children and Child Rights CSOs’ participation in the sessions of the Committee. On behalf of Plan International, the representative presented that Plan International will continue taking part in the project among others through support with translation of State Party Reports into AU working languages, support field missions to states to follow up on “Concluding Observations” and monitor critical/emergency child rights violations, support the conduct of three regional/inter-country experience sharing sessions on Implementation of Concluding Observations/Recommendations, and support ACERWC's Participation in PRC sessions. The Representative of IHRDA, it was informed that IHRDA will provide assistance the Committee in following up the implementation of its decisions on Communications, assist in the setting up special mechanisms and the provision of technical assistance to these mechanisms, maintain and update the child rights database of the ACERWC and translations, and facilitate dialogue, exchange, coordination, and collaboration between the Committee, the ACHPR and the AfCHPR, facilitate joint follow-up on communications relating to children and the development of General Comments. On behalf of Dullah Omar Institute (DOI) and African Child Policy Forum (ACPF) who were not represented, the coordinator presented their respective ideas. It is said that DOI will engage in supporting the development of General Comments on selected articles/themes of the Charter, preparing country briefs on State Parties reporting before the Committee, and in developing a model law addressing child marriage in Africa. As for ACPF it was pointed out that it will continue to work with the Committee in undertaking a comprehensive study and documentation of the status of the harmonization of laws and policies on children in Africa.

84. At the end of the presentation, members of the Committee raised questions for members of the Consortium on issues relating to support for the Legal Researcher and the Communication Specialist between September and December 2016 and the identification of activities in Phase II that are directly linked with the Strategic Plan of the Committee and those that will support the activities of the Committee. In replying to the questions members of the Consortium indicated that each member is considering on how to continue supporting the secondment of staff to the Secretariat. In this regard, they call up the Committee to undertake Human Resource Assessment and demonstrated interest to support the Committee in the process.

ITEM 14: INITIAL DISCUSSIONS ON INCORPORATING SDGs IN THE STATE REPORTING MECHANISM

85. The discussion on the possibility of incorporating SDGs in the State Party Reporting mechanism was introduced by the Chairperson of the ACERWC who stressed on the point that the SDGs are here to stay for another 15 years. He indicated that the matter of SDGs is a conversation that is happening even in other major organisations like in the UN. He therefore stressed that a discussion should also happen at the Committee level to explore the available opportunities. The Chairperson then invited the representative from Save the Children to briefly inform the Committee on their activities with regard to SDGs.

86. Doris Mpoumou Save the Children International's representative said that both SDGs and Agenda 2063 are done concurrently. She further said that with SDGS there is need to learn from MDGs whose accountability was not strong. The chairperson stated that the accountability of SDGs should be made strong by reviewing the guidelines and reports of states on SDGs and Agenda 2063. Reports can be done at regional level, continental level about the budgetary allocations for implementation of the two.

87. There was a suggestion by UNICEF that the committee could play an important role in monitoring the extent to which states are making investments in different areas to achieve children's rights and also to ensure states are placing sufficient emphasis on equity when working towards implementation of the Charter, SDGs and Agenda 2063.

88. A question was raised on whether there should be a prioritization in the SDGs in those areas that affect the children directly but not undermining other SDGs. For example, on education, food security, health. A response was made in regard to this question on prioritization; countries are at different levels of development with different issues. Save the Children representative further explained that countries report on all SDGs in the matter of prioritization within the countries.

89. A question on how the committee can play roles in implementation of the SDGs since there have been cases where children's rights have been violated even during the implementation process was raised. The committee will use the SDGs to fulfil the mandate of the children Charter. DAC could be a promotional mechanism rather than an evaluation mechanism in realization of the SDGs.

90. A recommendation was made to have a children's version of the charter to enable children understand their rights while they grow up.

91. In closing the discussion, the participants proposed the formation of a team of organisations that pledge to partner and whose main objective will be to see how ACERWC can link the SDGs to the Charter provisions and also accountability and implementation of SDGs in relation to Agenda 2063. The organisations that pledged to be in this team were: UNICEF, Save the Children, Plan International, ECPAT, CRNSA, and WASCOF with Save the Children as the lead partner. The lead partner recommended that two members of the committee be appointed to act as the focal point as persons to undertake and report on the activities of the team. The team will later come up with the action plans and the time framework.

ITEM 15: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ON THE 2017 ACERWC BUDGET

92. The Secretariat presented to the Committee the draft budget 2017. After discussions the Committee has accepted the draft budget 2017 to be presented to the Sub Committee on budget for its adoption.

ITEM 16: DISCUSSION ON THE ADVISORY OPINION OF THE AFRICAN COURT ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS (CLOSED SESSION)

93. A deliberation was made on the Advisory Opinion of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights made on 5th December 2014 on the matter of the Committee's request on its standing before the Court. The Chairperson of the Committee informed that the Committee made the request as the result of the challenge it faced in relation to the implementation of the decisions of the Committee on Communications against State Parties as the Committee is not mandate to issue binding decisions. It was informed that Court opinioned that the Committee is not an 'African Inter-governmental Organization' within the meaning of article 5(1) of the Court's Protocol and that it is highly desirable for the Committee to have access to the Court under article 5 (1) of the Protocol.

94. In discussing the way forward to ensure that the Committee has access to the Court, it was highlighted that the amendment of the Protocol can be made either by the Court or by State Parties. Finally, the Chairperson informed that the Committee will reach on decision on the way forward after conducting a further internal discussion on the matter.

ITEM 17: ADOPTION OF THE THEME FOR THE DAC 2017 (CLOSED SESSION)

95. The Committee discussed and adopted the theme for DAC 2017 to be "The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), for Children in Africa: Accelerating protection, empowerment and equal opportunity"

ITEM 18: DISCUSSION ON THE 28TH SESSION OF THE ACERWC IN BANJUL FROM 21ST OCTOBER 2016 (CLOSED SESSION)

96. The Secretariat of the Committee informed that under the AGA Flagship Initiative: Project 2016 on the Year of Human Rights with particular focus on the rights of women, the three AU Organs namely African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child being the AU Organs with a human rights mandate, agreed to have a joint session in Banjul in October 2016. The three Organs will have a joint opening and then proceed to separate rooms to continue with their separate meetings.

97. The Secretariat informed that having the Session out of Addis Ababa, will have more financial implications and hence have approached Plan International to chip in and they will keep the Committee informed of the developments. The Secretariat also informed that due to the large number of State Party reports that have been submitted, the Session would take at least 10 days and would include a pre-session as well as consideration of State Party reports.

98. The Committee welcomed the idea and agreed that:

- it was a good opportunity to meet with the officials of the Government of Gambia and have discussions on child rights issues and also on the submission of the initial report on the implementation of the Charter.
- they needed to come up with a cut off date whereby if the venue has not been confirmed then the Committee Session would be held in Addis Ababa.
- It was important for the Secretariat to send the State Party Reports that are to be considered to the Committee Members before they come for the Session so that they can read through.
- The Committee Members asked for a list of Countries who have submitted their reports on the implementation of the Charter and the official language as this would help them choose Countries that each member would want to rapporteur.

ITEM 19: CONSIDERATION OF COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED (CLOSED SESSION)

99. The Secretariat presented to the Committee the Communications received against State Parties. After the presentation, the Committee appointed a working group to work on the admissibility of the Communications.

ITEM 20: CONSIDERATION OF OBSERVER STATUS RECEIVED (CLOSED SESSION)

100. The Committee considered the application for an observer status from Terre des Hommes Holland. In this regard the Committee found the application meets the requirements as stated in the Guidelines and decided to grant an Observer Status to the organisation.

ITEM 21: CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT/ELEMENTS OF THE LIST OF ISSUES (CLOSED SESSION)

101. The Committee discussed cluster by cluster on each of the reports, the elements that should be included in the Concluding Observations and Recommendations to the Governments of Cameroon, Ghana and Sierra Leone.

ITEM 22: ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT REPORT

102. The report was adopted as amended.

ITEM 23: CLOSING CEREMONY

103. In his closing remarks, the Chairperson of the Committee, Prof Benyam Dawit Mezmur highlighted the various activities that the Committee undertook during the 27th session.

104. On behalf of the Committee, the Chairperson expressed his gratitude to partners, the Secretariat, and the interpreters for all their support. Finally, she officially declared the 27th Session closed.