

African Union



**ACERWC**  
African Committee of Experts on  
the Rights and Welfare of the Child



Keeping our Commitment to the African Child



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the Rights & Welfare of the Child

Status of implementation of  
the Charter & **Agenda 2040:**

# in the Western Africa Region

25 November, 2020



Keeping our Commitment  
to the African Child!

#ACERWC36

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**Workshop on Status of Children's Rights in  
West Africa Region Outcome Statement**

**The African Committee of Experts on the  
Rights and Welfare of the Child**

**27 November 2020, Addis Ababa**

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**The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child meeting at its 36<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session and the Workshop on the Status of Children’s Rights in West Africa Region in commemorating the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child on 27 November 2020;**

**Recalling** its mandate to protect and promote children’s rights in Africa as well as monitor the implementation of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child;

**In line with** the Decision of the Executive Council (EX.CL/DEC.1084(XXXVI)), where the Council ‘Welcomes the initiative of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) to lead on the celebration of the 30th Anniversary of the adoption of the African Children’s Charter in the year 2020; and Urges Member States of the African Union to take concrete steps to commemorate the Anniversary in 2020 and intensify their efforts to ensure the full implementation of the African Children’s Charter;

**Recognizing** the efforts that Members States have taken in implementing the African Children’s Charter **and** Africa’s Agenda for Children (Agenda 2040); **further recognizing** that the year 2020 sets a milestone in providing an opportunity to assess the implementation of the Charter as well as Agenda 2040;

**Considering** the findings of the ACERWC’s studies on the status of implementation of Agenda 2040 and harmonization of laws, and noting the presentations from:

- i. The Republic of Burkina Faso;**
- ii. The Republic of Gambia;**
- iii. The Republic of Ghana;**
- iv. The Republic of Niger;**
- v. The Republic of Nigeria;**
- vi. The Republic of Togo;**
- vii. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); and,**
- viii. The West African Civil Society Forum (WACSOF).**

**Commends** the measures undertaken by States in West Africa, particularly for:

- The ratification of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) by all countries in West Africa without any reservations;
- Implementing children parliaments in many countries;
- The Submission of Initial reports by all States in the region except Cabo Verde and the Gambia;
- Embedding child rights in the Bill of Rights of the national constitutions in Cabo Verde, the Gambia and Ghana;
- Almost all States for enacting comprehensive and consolidated statutes on children’s rights;
- Cabo Verde, Togo and Benin for outlawing corporal punishment in all settings; and,
- The issuance of birth certificates in about 11 States in the West African region free of charge.

**At the occasion of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Charter, the Committee calls West African States to:**

- Continue the commemoration of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Charter in the year 2021 along with the theme and activities of the Day of the African Child for the Year 2021-'30 years after the adoption of the Charter: accelerate implementation of Agenda 2040 for an Africa fit for children'.
- The Republic of the Gambia and the Republic of Cabo Verde to urgently submit their initial report to the Committee;
- The Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Togo, Sierra Leone and Benin to honor their reporting obligations to the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and submit their periodic reports timeously;
- The Republic of Niger, Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal to adopt a comprehensive child rights law aligned with the provisions of the Charter;
- Côte d'Ivoire and Niger to set a minimum age for completing primary education that is consistent with the legal minimum age for entering into employment;
- Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Niger to promulgate laws related to the retention of pregnant girls or adolescents mothers in schools;
- Guinea, Sierra Leone, Togo, The Gambia, Liberia and Senegal to repeal laws and practices that discriminate girls who become pregnant outside of marriage and to ensure that pregnant girls/ adolescents mothers enjoy their rights in the Charter with necessary support provided, including their rights to education;
- Almost all States to ensure the availability and accessibility of Sexual and Reproductive health information and services to adolescents without a third-party authorization;
- All States to undertake all appropriate measures to mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19 that exacerbate the violence against children in the region;
- Niger, Senegal, Mali, Guinea Bissau, Burkina Faso, Benin and Guinea to amend its legislation to increase the minimum age of marriage in accordance with the African Children's Charter;
- Guinea and Mali to expressly penalize FGM;
- Nigeria to abolish capital punishment against children;
- Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Gambia, Ghana, Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Senegal to amend its legislations to increase the minimum age of criminal responsibility in accordance with standards set by the Charter as well as the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child;
- All States except Cabo Verde, Togo and Benin to outlaw corporal punishment in all settings;
- All countries to take all appropriate measures to reduce the rate of child marriage, FGM and other harmful cultural practices especially during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Nigeria and Mali to ensure the protection of children affected by conflict, take measures to ensure that children are not recruited into armed groups and provide rehabilitation and reintegration for children who have been associated with armed groups;
- Nigeria to domesticate and implement the Child's Rights Act across the 36 States;
- Eradicate statelessness which is affecting children in the region;
- Effectively involve customary and religious leaders in the promotion and protection of children's rights and the fight against harmful practices (child marriage, FGM, worst forms of child labour, child begging, etc.);
- Effectively allocate sufficient budget and resources for the protection and promotion of children's rights and the implementation of the African Children's Charter in all West African countries;
- Effectively address the issue related to cross borders FGM and child marriage in all States and strengthen the inter-country coordination to tackle cross borders issues;
- Strengthen the data collection and management system to inform policy decision making; and,
- Create specialized Courts to deal with children's issues and prioritize cases of SGBV, abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation against children in all West African States.

**Done at the 36<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child virtually held on 23 November – 04 December 2020.**