



## **Joint Statement of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child's Working Group on Children's Rights and Business and the Consortium on Children on the Move and Child Labour on the World Day Against Child Labour**

**12 June 2024,**

The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child's (ACERWC) Working Group on Children's Rights and Business and the Consortium on Children on the Move and Child Labour, namely, the African Union Commission (AUC), International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Labour Organization (ILO), and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) join the world today in commemorating the World Day against Child Labour, under the theme: **"Let's Act on Our Commitments: End Child Labour!"**

According to the latest estimates, Africa has approximately 92.2 million children in child labour – more than the rest of the world combined. The World Day Against Child Labour is a critical reminder of the persistent issue of child labour that continues to undermine the rights and well-being of millions of children across Africa. We stand together in our commitments to end child labour and to protect the rights of every child on the African continent.

The root causes of child labour in Africa are multifaceted, including pervasive poverty, lack of access to quality education, forced migration and displacement,

and weak enforcement of child protection and social protection laws, policies, and programs. These factors are exacerbated by socio-economic challenges and crises, such as protracted armed conflicts and natural disasters, which push vulnerable families to resort to child labour as a survival strategy. Notably, agriculture, mining, and domestic work are among the sectors where child labour is most prevalent, often depriving children of their right to education and exposing them to significant health risks.

Nevertheless, the continent has recorded significant progress in the fight to eradicate child labour. Some countries have created National Units for Combatting Child Labour, harmonized their national legal frameworks with the international and regional standards on child labour, adopted national plans of action for eliminating child labour, and established local vigilance committees responsible for monitoring and reporting child labour cases. Initiatives such as the implementation of free primary education in many countries has significantly increased school enrolment rates, reducing the number of children exploited for labour. Successful interventions, such as community-based child protection programs and initiatives that provide vocational training for at-risk youth, have demonstrated positive outcomes in the fight against child labour. These programs not only rescue children from exploitative labour but also equip them with skills for a better future.

Despite these interventions, there exist gaps and barriers calling for immediate interventions. Insufficient resources hinder the effective implementation of child labour eradication programs. Enforcement of existing laws is often weak, with limited capacity in justice systems to monitor and prosecute violations. Social and cultural norms, which sometime view child labour as a necessary contribution to family income, further complicate efforts to eliminate the practice. In Africa, agriculture accounts for over four of every five children in child labour, and while child labour is far more likely to take place in domestic and informal economies, there is evidence that it is frequently linked to global supply chains.

A significant share of child labour occurs in the upstream reaches of the supply chain, in the production of raw materials, commodities and other inputs used to manufacture final export products. It is crucial that trade and economic growth does not come at the expense of our children.

With the advent of Agenda 2063, Agenda 2040, and Agenda 2030, the continent is driving towards the elimination of child labour. We urge African governments to enforce child labour laws rigorously and invest more in education and social protection programs to address its root causes. Ending conflicts and crises, including those exacerbated by climate change, is crucial to preventing forced migration and protecting children from labour exploitation. We encourage aligning efforts to end child labour with Sustainable Development Goal 8.7 and other relevant goals, such as poverty reduction, education, decent work, and gender equality.

We urge development partners and donors to increase funding and technical support, enhancing international cooperation and adherence to global legal frameworks to combat child labour. Additionally, civil society, media, and local communities are crucial in raising awareness and challenging societal attitudes. We call on all stakeholders to mobilize against child labour, supporting families to keep children in school and out of the workforce through social protection measures like cash transfers and improved access to education and resources.

We emphasise the critical role that businesses play in preventing child labour through ethical practices and responsible business conduct. We therefore urge companies to adopt fair labour practices, conduct due diligence in their supply chains, and invest in community development, and child protection programs that support child welfare.

The impact of technology and innovation in combatting child labour cannot be

disputed. We urge all stakeholders, where applicable, to leverage innovative technologies and digital platforms in the fight against child labour. This includes increased use of digital education platforms, mobile monitoring tools, and data analytics to effectively track, report, and address child labour cases.

As reflected in the Durban Call to Action on the Elimination of Child Labour, the fight against child labour requires a coordinated, multi-stakeholder approach. The AU, Governments, Regional Economic Communities, international organizations, NGOs, the private sector, children themselves, and all other key stakeholders must work together to develop and implement comprehensive strategies.

Today, we reaffirm our unwavering commitment to eradicating child labour. The ACERWC's Working Group on Children's Rights and Business and the Consortium on Children on the Move and Child Labour stand united in our vision for a future where child labour is eliminated, and every child enjoys their rights. Together, we can create a world where every child is free from exploitation and can realize their full potential.

***Let us act now, with determination and solidarity, to make child labour a thing of the past!!!***