

STATEMENT OF THE AFRICAN COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON THE RIGHTS AND WELFARE OF THE CHILD ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ZERO TOLERANCE FOR FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION 2026

The Special Rapporteur on Child Marriage and Other Harmful Practices, Hon. Hermine Kembo Takam Gatsing of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC/the Committee), joins the global community in marking the International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM under this year's theme, 'Towards 2030: No End to FGM Without Sustained Commitment and Investment'.

FGM remains one of the most widespread harmful practices affecting girls across Africa and constitutes a serious violation of children's rights. It causes irreversible harm to girls' physical and mental health, bodily integrity and autonomy, dignity, and their rights to survival and development. This International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM serves as a moment of collective accountability, calling on all stakeholders to assess whether current approaches to eliminate FGM reflect sustained commitment and investment, are sufficiently resourced, and are capable of protecting progress achieved to date.

As 2030 approaches, the continued prevalence of FGM across the continent underscores the need for renewed political will. The Committee recalls that regional normative frameworks are aligned with SDG 5.3, calling for the elimination of all harmful practices by 2030. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa place binding obligations on States Parties to protect girls from harmful practices, including FGM. These obligations require the adoption of legislative, administrative, and other measures, as well as multi-sectoral responses that integrate survivor-centred support, prevention, protection, and accountability. These obligations are reinforced by continental policy frameworks, particularly the African Union Saleema Initiative on Eliminating FGM, Africa's Agenda for Children 2040, and Agenda 2063 The Africa We Want.

The Joint General Comment on FGM of the Committee and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights affirms that the elimination of FGM cannot be achieved solely through the enactment of laws. States are required to address the social, cultural, economic, and structural drivers of the practice through sustained, coherent, and adequately resourced action.

On this International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM, the Committee calls upon all African Union Member States to:

- i. Ensure sustained and adequate budgetary allocations to institutions responsible for the prevention of and response to FGM, including law enforcement authorities, the judiciary, and child protection and social welfare services, in order to ensure that existing laws and policies are effectively enforced;
- ii. Strengthen prevention efforts by providing sustained financial, technical, and mentorship support to girl-led organisations, youth advocates, and community-based initiatives, recognising their central role in addressing the social and cultural drivers of FGM and achieving durable change;
- iii. Review and, where necessary, reform existing legislation and policy frameworks to ensure that eliminating FGM goes beyond criminalisation of the practice, and is accompanied by effective prevention, protection, access to justice, and survivor-centred health, psychosocial, and social support services;
- iv. Strengthen accountability by ensuring regular reporting to the ACERWC on progress made towards the elimination of FGM, including information on budgetary allocations, and measures taken to meet continental aspirations under the Saleema Initiative, Agenda 2040, and Agenda 2063.

Done in Maseru, Kingdom of Lesotho

06 February 2026