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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL 1101st MEETING 18 AUGUST 2022 ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

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Adopted by the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) at its 1101st meeting held on 18 August 2022, on Children Affected by Armed Conflicts in Africa:

The Peace and Security Council,

Recalling all previous decisions and pronouncements of AU Policy Organs, in particular, the Decision [Assembly/AU/Dec.753(XXXIII)]¹ adopted by the 33rd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, held in February 2020; as well as Communiqué [PSC/PR/COMM.(CMXCIV)]¹ adopted by the 994th PSC meeting, held on 11 May 2021;

Deeply concerned by the continued prevalence of violent conflicts in their various manifestations on the Continent, which continue to adversely undermine the fundamental rights and welfare of children;

Determined to ensure effective child protection on the Continent, particularly in contexts of armed conflicts and full adherence, by all stakeholders, with the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, as well as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the UN General Assembly Resolution 44/25;

Noting the opening remarks by H.E. Ambassador Jainaba Jagne, Permanent Representative of the Republic of The Gambia to the AU in her capacity as the Chairperson of the PSC for August 2022 and Co-chair of the Africa Platform on Children Affected by Armed Conflicts (AP CAAC), and the statement by H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security and Co-chair of the AP CAAC, as well as Honorable Robert Nanima, Special Rapporteur on Children Affected by Armed Conflicts and member of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC);

Also acknowledging the statements by representatives of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; Ms. Doris Mpoumou, Director and AU Representative of Save the Children International AU Liaison and

Pan Africa Office; the United Nations International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF), the European Union Delegation to the African Union; as well as by other AU partners, international organizations and institutions;

Particularly noting with grave concern, the graphic illustrative presentations by invited representatives of children affected by armed conflict in Africa from various parts of the Continent; and;

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

1. **Strongly condemns** all forms of violations against children and the destruction of the related social support infrastructure, including education and health facilities, as well as military use of schools, in parts of the Continent, particularly, in the contexts of armed conflicts;
2. **Firmly denounces** the denial of humanitarian assistance, the wanton killing and maiming of children, the continued recruitment, indoctrination and enrolment of children by armed groups and sexual and gender-based violence, abductions and attacks against schools and hospitals;
3. **Takes note** of the critical recommendations proposed by the representatives of children affected by armed conflicts in the Continent who addressed the Council;
4. **Strongly urges** all warring parties on the Continent to grant unfettered humanitarian access, especially to children, in line with international humanitarian law and international human rights law; and **calls upon** the Member States to facilitate the full and swift reintegration of children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups into society through comprehensive psycho-social support programmes;
5. **Reiterates** the need to comprehensively address the root causes of conflict as a sustainable solution for the protection of children in situations of armed conflict, as well as the need for mainstreaming child protection in early warning mechanisms and conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding processes and post-conflict reconstruction;
6. **Also reiterates** the key role of the registration of refugees, including births, as an essential tool for the protection of children, particularly in refugee camps, as well as the enjoyment of their fundamental rights;
7. **Commends** the ACERWC for the continued efforts aimed at ensuring enhanced child protection and promotion of the rights and welfare of children on the Continent;
8. **Especially commends** the refreshing role being played by the Africa Platform on Children Affected by Armed Conflict (AP-CAAC), as a multi-stakeholder advisory and supportive mechanism to the AU agenda on child protection in situations of conflict by focusing on eliminating the six grave violations against children's rights; **while calling on** the Member States and development partners to intensify their support for the work of the Platform;
9. **Also commends** all partners, including the UN agencies, the EU, and humanitarian and civil society organizations for supporting the AU and the Member States in the protection of children in contexts of armed conflicts and post-conflict situations;
10. **Directs** the AU Commission to continue its engagements with the relevant national and regional stakeholders on the effective incorporation of the six grave violations against children in the national school curricula of the Member States to further enhance the awareness at the grassroots on the violations of the rights of children and also to develop a repository of exemplary child protection practices on the continent for shared learning;
11. **Underscores the need** for further enhancement of the advocacy for the safety and security of children living in conflict settings, so that they may live, go to school and have a childhood free from fear, as well as access quality and safe education and mental health and psycho-social support for children suffering from war and, in this vein, **reiterates the call** for the Member States to endorse, domesticate and implement the Safe Schools Declaration in the promotion of

education for children affected by armed conflicts in Africa;

12. **Welcomes** the adoption of the Policy on Child Protection in African Union Peace Support Operations, the Policy on Mainstreaming Child Protection into the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the related monitoring mechanisms adopted by the Specialized Technical Committee on Defence, Safety and Security (STCDSS) at its 14th Ordinary meeting held in Addis Ababa,

Ethiopia, from 9 to 13 May 2022; and **directs** the AU Commission to create and support the requisite collaborative ecosystems for the effective implementation of these policies;

13. **Requests** the AU Commission to provide the necessary support to the Member States in the development and effective implementation of their national child protection agenda including the timely provision of psycho-social and post-conflict therapeutic support to children affected by armed conflicts;

14. **Welcomes** initiatives of AU member states dedicated to research into the prevention of the phenomenon of child soldiers and tasked to carry out academic, qualitative and quantitative studies in order to raise awareness on the situation and process of recruiting child soldiers, and **reaffirms** its full support for similar innovative initiatives;

15. **Reiterates the urgent call** on the Member States, that have not yet done so, to sign, ratify and domesticate the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and other related international instruments;

16. **Stresses the importance** of robust and multi-stakeholder implementation of the continental child protection agenda as an indispensable prerequisite for the success of the Continent's sustainable peace, security and development agenda, including the strengthening of the efforts and the mainstreaming of child protection policies in the national, regional and continental development agendas;

17. **Reaffirms the essence** of fighting impunity and of further strengthening mechanisms to end child sexual abuses and exploitation, and ensure that accountability mechanisms are in place to bring perpetrators to justice;

18. **Calls upon** the Member States in conflict settings to treat children, formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups, as victims, instead of offenders, and to provide them with necessary psycho-social support, to facilitate their successful rehabilitation and re-integration;

19. **Decides** that the representatives of the children affected by armed conflicts should be regularly invited to attend and share their experiences in all future PSC sessions dedicated to the AU child protection agenda and, in this regard, **requests** the AU Commission, to urgently develop guidelines for the participation of children in PSC sessions to ensure systematic engagements;

20. **Reiterates the request** for the Chairperson of the Commission to urgently appoint a Special Envoy for Children Affected by Armed Conflicts in Africa, to facilitate effective implementation of the AU child rights protection agenda, **while further stressing** the involvement of the African Youth Peace Ambassadors in championing the AU peace and security agenda, in general, and child protection in particular and;

21. **Decides** to remain actively seized of the matter.

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Communique of the 1101st Meeting of the Peace and Security Council held on 18 August 2022 on Children Affected by Armed Conflicts in Africa.

Peace and Security Council

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