

AFRICAN UNION
JUHI

UNION AFRICAINE

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, P.O. Box: 3243 Tel.: (251-11) 5513 822 Fax: (251-11) 5519 321
Email: situationroom@africa-union.org

PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL 1070™ MEETING 29 MARCH 2022 ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/COMM.1070(2022)

COMMUNIQUE

COMMUNIQUE

Adopted by the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) at its 1070th meeting held on 29 March 2022, on the update on the policies on child protection in African Union Peace Support Operations (AU PSOs) and mainstreaming child protection in the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA):

The Peace and Security Council,

Recalling the decision of Assembly [Assembly/AU/Dec.753(XXXIII)] adopted at the 33rd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, held on 9-10 February 2020, that requested the AU Commission to develop a comprehensive policy on child protection in African Union Peace Support Operations (AU PSOs); **also recalling** the PSC communique PSC/PR/COMM. (CMXCIV) of the 994th meeting held on 11 May 2021 that requested the AU Commission to institutionalize a child protection architecture within the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and develop a policy aimed at mainstreaming child protection at all the stages of the intervention process - from conflict prevention, through mediation, to conflict management - as well as integrating a child protection component into armed conflicts and post-conflicts situations in the AU Policy on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD);

Noting the opening remarks by the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Lesotho to the AU and the PSC Chairperson for the month of March 2022, Ambassador Prof. Mafa Sejanamane, and the presentation by the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, as well as the statement by the representatives of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC); United Nations Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the Save The Children International;

Cognizant of the persistence of violent conflicts and the severe consequences of conflicts on the rights and welfare of children, the need to implement integrated approaches and to effectively mainstream the protection of children in conflict situations in pursuit of Agenda 2063 and the Silencing the Guns Initiative;

Faithful to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child which recognizes the need to take appropriate measures to promote and protect the rights and welfare of the African child and, in this regard, **reiterating its adherence** to its provisions and principles contained in the Assembly Declarations and Decisions of the AU as well as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; and

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

1. **Takes note with serious concern over** the increasingly asymmetrical nature of armed conflicts on the Continent, including the rise in violent extremism and terrorist attacks, as well as emerging unconventional threats to peace and security on the Continent resulting in increased vulnerability of children to displacement, separation from their parents, families and communities, exploitation and other forms of abuses which infringe on their rights and welfare;
2. **Expresses grave concern** over the adverse impact of armed conflict on children's personal, social and cognitive development, as evidenced by continued violations and abuses of their rights, as well as violence perpetrated against them, including gender-based violence, forced marriages, child labour, exploitation, recruitment as child soldiers and members of armed militias, a situation which further erodes their welfare and deprives them of their human dignity;

3. **Expresses its deep concern** over the growing number and vulnerability of children who are refugees and internally displaced on the Continent; and **calls upon** Member States and the international community to prioritize these vulnerable categories of children in conformity with the continental and international normative frameworks for protection of children, refugees and IDPs; in this regard, **stresses** the need to address the structural causes and drivers of armed conflicts, supported by a strong political will in order to consolidate peace and stability, in line with the principles and obligations of the AU Constitutive Act;
4. **Welcomes** the progress made by the AU Commission towards the development of the Policy on Integration of Child Protection into the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the Policy on Child Protection in African Union Peace Support Operations (AU PSOs);
5. **Commends** the Member States for their participation in the drafting processes of the two policies, particularly by attending the validation workshop and providing feedback for the improvement of the drafts;
6. **Also commends** the AU Commission for leading the drafting process of the Policies and validation, as well as the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child for its technical guidance; **expresses its gratitude** to partners' support, particularly Save the Children International and Training for Peace Programme for their support;
7. **Recognizes** the role played by the Africa Platform on Children Affected by Armed Conflicts in supporting the development of the Policies and advocating the mainstreaming of the protection of children agenda in peace and security matters in the continent;
8. **Emphasizes** that the policies contribute towards promoting a shared vision within the APSA and AGA for the consistent analysis, handling and integration of child protection principles and practices throughout the institutions, including in the AU Peace Support Operations, as well as a provision for standardized training programmes in the protection of children;
9. **Reiterates** its call to all Member States and the international community to ensure that protection of children becomes a central and cross-cutting issue in all peace and security matters at the national, regional and continental levels;
10. **Encourages** Member States to continue advocating for the protection of children, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, through the reopening of schools; safe return of children to school; facilitation of access and provision of humanitarian assistance to children affected by armed conflict, as well as other measures to alleviate the suffering of children;
11. **Stresses** the importance for the Member States to enhance efforts to establish rehabilitation centres/programmes for children from conflict situations;
12. **Supports** the adoption of the Policies and, in this regard, **requests** the AU Commission to submit the Policies to the Specialized Technical Committee for Defence, Safety and Security for consideration;
13. **Decides** to remain actively seized of the matter.