



**The Second International Policy Conference on the African Child: Violence Against Girls in Africa, May 11-12, 2006, United Nations Conference Center, Addis Ababa
The African Child Policy Forum.**

The Africa Declaration on Violence against Girls

We, the participants of the Second International Policy Conference on the African Child: *Violence against Girls in Africa*, held in Addis Ababa 11-12 May, 2006 drawn from 25 countries, including over 400 participants from national, regional and international organisations and 22 children from six African countries, call for action by all African governments and other stakeholders¹ to take immediate steps to end all forms of violence against children.

All children, without discrimination, have fundamental human rights. Violence against children whether it is physical, psychological or sexual is a gross violation of these fundamental human rights. We believe that the pervasive violence directed against children globally and in Africa, in their homes, schools, communities, places of care and other settings is preventable, intolerable and must stop.

Violence against children has incalculable costs to present and future generations and it undermines human development. We recognise that virtually all forms of violence are linked to entrenched gender roles and inequalities, and that the violation of the rights of children is closely linked to the status of women.

The situation of African girls is especially critical as a result of discriminatory and patriarchal practices, inequality, exclusion, inadequate legal protection, lack of educational opportunities, the disproportionate impact HIV and AIDS has on them, as well as the persistence of poverty. Failure to address these situations constitutes not only a grave violation of human rights, but threatens the very fabric of society.

We are inspired by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, the ILO Convention no. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, international humanitarian laws and human rights instruments as well as the African Union Common Position on Children: Africa Fit for Children (Cairo). We are profoundly concerned that the rights enshrined in these Conventions and agreements are not adequately integrated into domestic laws, policies and practices and therefore have not yet had a meaningful impact on the everyday lives of African girls and boys.

¹ All African Governments, civil society organisations, families, children, parents and custodians, the African Union, the African Inter-Parliamentary Union, United Nations agencies and other international development and human rights organisations.

We believe that governments and civil societies are all individually and collectively responsible and mutually accountable to ensure that every child lives in a world free from violence. We also believe that governments have the primary responsibility and obligation to take concrete and immediate action to end all forms of violence against children, particularly girls.

We therefore strongly urge the Member States of the African Union:

(a) to take all necessary measures for the effective prohibition of all forms of violence against children, including developing and implementing comprehensive National Plans of Action to protect children, which are supported with adequate human and financial resources by 2010.

(b) to immediately enforce the actions recommended under (a) above, especially with regard to the following conditions that constitute a grave violation of the rights and fundamental freedoms of girls:

- Rape/defilement and other forms of sexual violence in the home, in schools, in places of care, in communities and other settings.
- Gender inequality which leads to violence against girls, discrimination, and the disproportionate spread of HIV and AIDS among girls and young women.
- Harmful traditional and cultural practices including but not limited to female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM) and honour crimes.
- Trafficking, abduction and commercial sexual exploitation including prostitution and pornography.
- Conscription of girls into armed conflict and their sexual exploitation in conflict and post-conflict situations.
- Child marriage, forced marriage and marital rape.
- Corporal punishment and other humiliating forms of punishment.
- Worst forms of child labour including harmful domestic work.
- Migration for unsafe illegal work which affects safety and security of children.

(c) to establish effective and easily accessible complaints mechanisms for children, which respect their privacy, with appropriate guarantees of confidentiality; and effective monitoring of the rights of the child to be protected against all forms of violence via country, regional and international monitoring mechanisms.

(d) to provide all children, especially girls, who experience violence with multi-disciplinary services including counselling and other resources that they need for full recovery and reintegration in their communities, and with legal support (including provision for compensation), and to ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice and rehabilitation.

We urge all governments and other stakeholders:

To take all necessary measures conducive to creating a safe, violence-free, non-discriminatory environment for the full and harmonious survival, development and participation of girls; and to institutionalise the following specific actions:

- Build a culture of peace and prevent violence through promoting positive, non-violent, non-discriminatory forms of child rearing, teaching and conflict resolution.

- Promote gender equality and take immediate measures to reform the laws, policies, attitudes and practices which discriminate against girls and women and fail to protect them.
- Support the capacity of families to adequately protect their children.
- Create safe spaces for girls and provide anti-bullying programmes in schools and communities.
- Promote the full participation of children, developing their skills and potential, and promote the right of girls to express their views and have them taken seriously.
- Support the participation of boys and men, as well as children's organisations, as part of the solution to end violence against girls.
- Promote a culture of peace, respect for human dignity, non-discrimination and non-violence through mobilising local governments, communities, the media, faith-based organisations and traditional leaders.
- Conduct research to deepen understanding of the causes and impact of violence against children, especially girls, and build strong relationships with research institutions/organisations in the quest to impact policy and practice.
- Ensure the integration of actions called for in this declaration into existing national, regional and international campaigns and events such as February 6, the International Day on Zero Tolerance Against FGM and other Harmful Traditional Practices; June 16, the Day of the African Child; November 25 to December 10, Sixteen Days of Activism on Violence against Women and Children; as well as the agenda of the African Union Common Position on Children: Africa Fit for Children (Cairo Declaration 2001).

We further urge the Member States of the African Union to:

- Place the issue of violence against children, especially girls, on the African Union Summit's agenda as soon as possible and to link it to the follow-up of the Cairo Plus 5 agenda on the African Union Common Position on Children: Africa Fit for Children.
- Ratify all the relevant international human rights and international humanitarian instruments, including ILO Convention no. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and those pertaining to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.
- Recognise and give priority follow-up attention to the recommendations of the regional consultations in the context of the United Nations Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children.

We strongly recommend that the African Union:

- Strengthen the capacity of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and facilitate the participation of children and young people.
- Obtain agreement from Member States to report to the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child on their implementation of the recommendations of the Regional Consultations and the final report of the United Nations Study on Violence against Children, before the end of 2010.
- Support the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child to draft and adopt guidelines for the content and review of these reports.
- Establish a Special Envoy on Violence against Children to serve as a mechanism for preventing, reporting and monitoring violence against children, in collaboration with the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

- Promote and support the development of a structural cooperation between the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in order to establish a practice of monitoring that most efficiently contributes to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

We request that the United Nations Secretary General's studies on violence against children and women give special attention to eliminating violence against girls in Africa, and note their specific vulnerabilities.

Building on the Security Council Resolution 1325, **we call on the United Nations Security Council** to adopt a Resolution on Violence against Girls and Women in Armed Conflict, which addresses impunity and enhances State accountability.

Our Collective Commitment

We, the participants of this conference both adults and children, have a vision of an Africa that is humane and free from violence, that promotes a culture of rights, and nurtures its children to achieve their full potential. We have a vision of an Africa in which girls enjoy equal rights and freedoms, respect and dignity without fear of gender-based violence.

We pledge to commit ourselves individually and collectively, including both girls and boys, to eliminate violence against children in general and girls in particular.

We hereby undertake to ensure rigorous follow-up actions pertaining to the resolutions of this Conference including disseminating the proceedings within each of our organisations and to conduct ongoing national campaigns such as the Day of the African Child and the Sixteen Days of Activism on Violence against Women and Children.

We urge the organiser of this Conference, The African Child Policy Forum, to forward this Declaration and the Children's Declaration to all concerned bodies as soon as possible and to put in place an operational mechanism to follow-up the outcomes of this conference.

Adopted in Addis Ababa on May 12, 2006