

# 1<sup>st</sup> Child focused Civil Society Forum on and around the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC)

17<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> April 2009  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



Africa Wide Movement  
for Children



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## Acronyms

<b>ACHPR</b>	African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>OAU</b>	Organisation of African Unity
<b>ACERWC</b>	African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
<b>ACRWC</b>	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
<b>ACPF</b>	African Child Policy Forum
<b>AMC</b>	AfricaWide Movement for Children
<b>CLPC</b>	Children's Legal Protection Centre
<b>CSOs</b>	Civil Society Organisations
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisations
<b>ANPPCAN</b>	The African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect
<b>UNCRC</b>	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

## Presenters

<b>Dr. Abiola L. Thompson Tilley-Gyado</b>	Pan Africa Relationships Manager, Plan International
<b>Åsa Rapp Baro</b>	Regional Advisor Civil Society and Child Rights, Save the Children Sweden (WAF Office)
<b>Dr. Assefa Bequele</b>	Executive Director, African Child Policy Forum (ACPF)
<b>Hannah Forster</b>	Executive Director, African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS)
<b>Mrs. Helen Seifu</b>	Director, Children's Legal Protection Centre, African Child Policy Forum (ACPF)
<b>Mme Mariama Cissé</b>	Secretary to the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) and Acting Director for the Department of Social Affairs, AU commission
<b>Mme Seynabou Ndiaye Diakhaté</b>	Chairperson of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC)
<b>Wambui Njuguna,</b>	President, Africa Wide Movement for Children

## Summary of the Forum

### Overview and key recommendations

Throughout this first NGO Forum there was a clear sense of unified optimism towards a shared goal to have a united voice on behalf of Africa's children. Despite this being the first Civil Society Forum on the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), there was a sense of commitment, cooperation and collaboration. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) underpinned the concept and the entire discussions of the Forum.

The Forum covered a vast array of areas including:

- How the African Union (AU) developed
- The scope and focus of the AU department that is responsible for child rights issues
- How Civil Society can engage with the ACERWC
- Learning from experiences of the NGO Forum around the ACHPR
- Updating on research and events
- Issues that affect children in Africa
- Input into the ACERWC Plan of Action for 2010 - 2014
- Planning for the next Forum
- Developing Civil Society recommendations for the Forum to take forward as well as for the ACERWC

From presentations made by members of the ACERWC, to comments made by Civil Society - one element was absolutely clear: ***working together rather than individually is crucial and will ultimately deliver greater results for the children in Africa.*** It was strongly felt that it was crucial to harnessing this power of coming together and bringing about increased unified action for children, propelled the Forum towards reaching its goals. This Forum provided the opportunity for Civil Society in Africa to come together, discuss and strategize how they can collectively work together. It was clear throughout the Forum that ***all*** actors have a role to play in ensuring children's rights are realized, whether it is a State Party, a member of a Civil Society Organization (CSO) or the children themselves. All actors are of the utmost importance in order to support, to promote action, to monitor and provide grass roots information ensuring that children's rights are realized and are not violated.

Emerging from this Forum was a clear way forward with concrete and unanimously agreed recommendations for the ACERWC and for Civil Society.

<b>Recommendations for Civil Society Organisations include:</b>	<b>Recommendations for the ACERWC include:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Popularisation of the ACRWC</li><li>• Protection of the Rights enshrined in the ACRWC</li><li>• Monitoring the implementation of the ACRWC</li><li>• Contribute to strengthening the Institutional capacity of the ACERWC</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The CSO Forum recommended that the ACERWC puts in place a mechanism for reviewing and reflecting on its previous Plan of Action (and subsequent plans) to facilitate learning and input into future plans</li><li>• The ACERWC is encouraged to share the costed Plans of Action and progress indicators with relevant stakeholders to facilitate the exploration of the areas of collaboration</li><li>• ACERWC is encouraged to explore alternative ways of strengthening the staff capacity of its Secretariat beyond the African Union Commission</li></ul>
*For all recommendations please refer to appendix two.	

## Setting the Context

### Objectives of the Forum

#### The main objectives of the Forum included:

- To contribute to proper implementation and monitoring of the ACRWC and the Call for Accelerated Action for an Africa Fit for Children 2008-2012
- To foster closer collaboration and co-operation among Civil Society Organisations (CSOs); the AU Commission, its structures and organisations; ACERWC and other stakeholders for promotion and protection of children's rights and wellbeing in Africa
- To ensure Civil Society inputs into the ACERWC Strategic Plan for 2010 – 2014
- To educate, share and learn from one another on important child rights issues, mechanisms and processes
- To provide recommendations to the ACERWC on various important child rights topics
- To make recommendations on how Civil Society can support the ACERWC

## Setting the Context

### From the OAU to the AU, and the Department of Social Affairs

The context of this first NGO Forum was set by Mariama Cissé, Acting Director of the Department of Social Affairs of the AU, who gave an overview of the history and the transition from the OAU to AU. Through her informative presentation Madame Cissé detailed how the OAU was created in 1963 in Addis Ababa with the objective to liberate the African continent from apartheid and colonization. The underpinning vision of the OAU was to ensure one voice for the African continent to support the movement of liberation. Out of this newly created organization came the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, 1987. Having felt that the OAU had met its objectives, Heads of State in 1999 created the AU with the vision of one united, prosperous and peaceful Africa to be guided by its own citizens. The AU came into operation in 2002.

The Department of Social Affairs is situated within the AU. Highlighted as one of the biggest departments with ten programmes and six divisions, it hosts the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), responsible for overseeing the implementation of the ACRWC, which was adopted in 1990 and came into force in 1999.

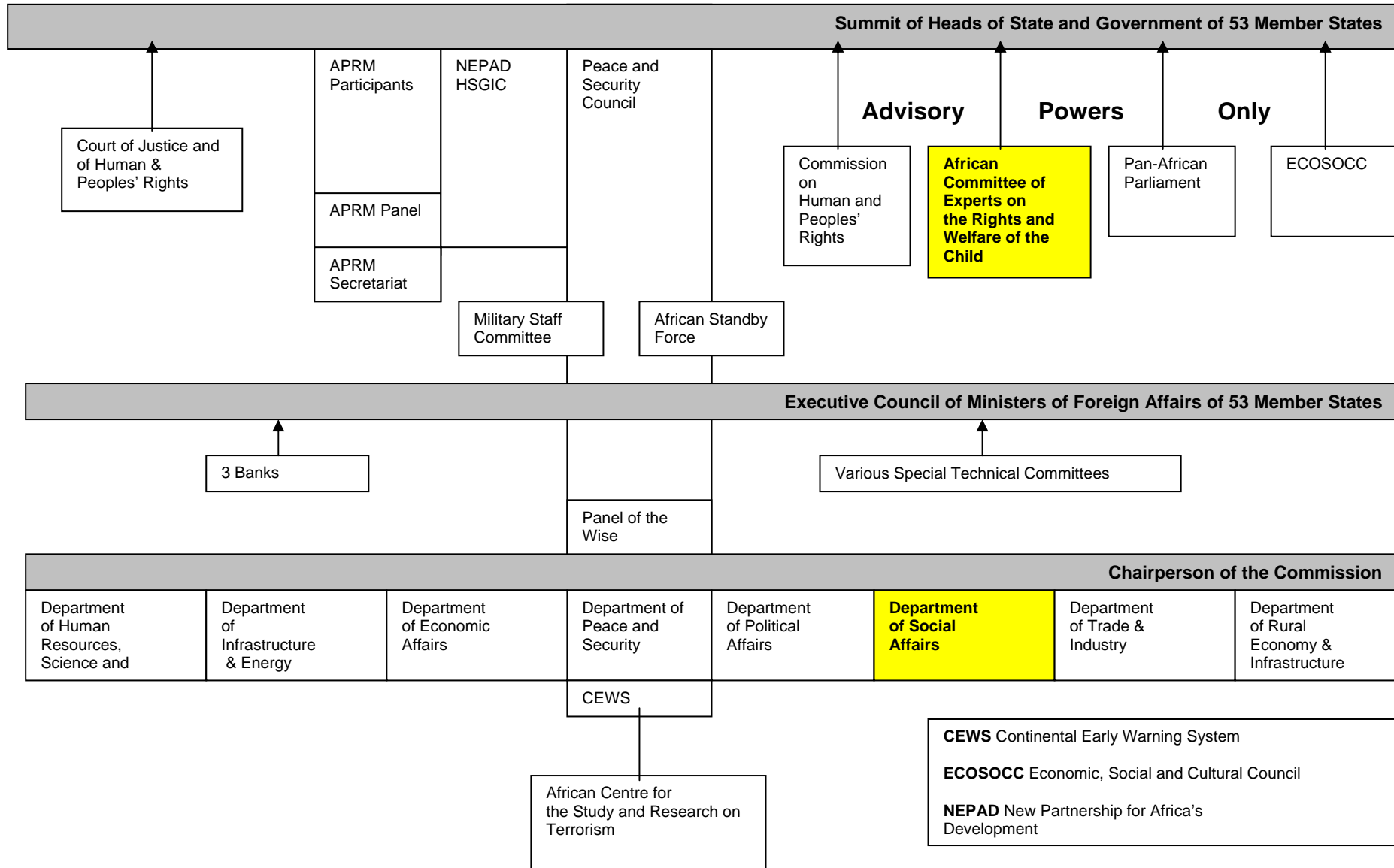
The ACERWC is in the processes of formulating a new Strategic Plan for 2010-2014. It is recognised by the Department of Social Affairs that if the new Strategic Plan is to be effectively implemented it must consider the wider engagement and views of Civil Society.

#### Summary of post presentation discussions

- A question was asked about the remaining countries that still need to ratify the ACRWC. Mariama Cissé indicated that the remaining countries to still ratify the ACRWC were mostly conflict countries. By following this link: <http://www.africa-union.org/root/AU/Documents/Treaties/treaties.htm> a full list of countries that have ratified the ACRWC can be obtained.
- Participants stressed concerns about the submission of reports from Uganda and Kenya, as they have been submitted but yet to be reviewed by the Committee. Mariama Cissé detailed why there had been a delay with these reports and specified that all reports should be sent electronically in a word document, so that the Committee can have the report translated.
- Questions were asked if Civil Society can input in the development of the new Strategic Plan of the Committee to which Mariama Cissé detailed that Civil Society will have an important role to play in the consultations for the development of this plan.

Figure 1

## The Structure of the African Union (AU)



## Setting the Context

### The ACERWC and how it is situated within the AU

A summary of a presentation made by Madame Mariama Cissé (ACERWC).

#### A brief history of the ACERWC

Following the Adoption of the ACRWC in 1990, the OAU was concerned that by 1997 the ACRWC had only been ratified by six Member States. Fifteen ratifications were needed if the ACRWC was to come into force. During a conference held by ANPPCAN and the OAU it was identified that if the ACRWC was to come into force, attention must be focused on the Member States that had not yet ratified the ACRWC. As a result of this conference a consortium of organisations gave their time, energy and expertise to visit and lobby the countries that had not yet ratified the ACRWC. By Governments and Civil Society embracing the spirit of collectively working together with the OAU achieved its deadline of obtaining fifteen ratifications by 1999. Thus, the **ACRWC** came into force in 1999. Subsequently, the **ACERWC** was established as a monitoring body for the ACRWC.

#### How the ACERWC fits within the AU structure

The ACERWC is situated within the Social Affairs Department of the AU. The Social Affairs Department was created to promote the welfare of the African population. The department has ten programmes, including, health, nutrition, sports, culture, social welfare of vulnerable groups, monitoring and evaluation and partnerships. Overarching these groups are several child rights focused priority areas, including: *the ACRWC, the Call for Accelerated Action for an Africa fit for Children, the Fight Against Child Trafficking and Vulnerable Groups and Especially Children.*

#### Current challenges faced by the Social Affairs Department

The major challenges the Social Affairs Department is currently facing are:

- 1) **Human resource constraints:** with ten programmes and six divisions and only three permanent staff members, human resources are a real issue.
- 2) **Financial constraints:** with States Parties reluctant to give the necessary funds, it is very difficult for ACERWC to achieve its objectives.

Despite these two major potential obstacles, the Committee remains optimistic that they will continue to move forward, work with Member States to secure increased funding, increase their capacity and fulfil their overall objectives.

Summary of post presentation discussions		
Concerns	Points for consideration	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If both ministries in country and the Social Affairs department are understaffed and under resourced, it is difficult to know where to start to lobby for an increase in resources</li> <li>• Issues of capacity and funding within the Social Affairs Department must be addressed otherwise this important department will not be able to move forward</li> <li>• Internal agendas of Civil Society cannot dominate as all the energy must be put into collectively engaging in a joint mandate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does it really mean for a Nation State to ratify the UNCRC and the ACRWC? Does it change anything?</li> <li>• The key policy makers who are being targeted and who are instrumental in making any change happen are not present in this forum. A mechanism needs to be developed to ensure key messages reach them.</li> <li>• We, the African people have elected these key people in ministries and departments, but have we demanded and ensured they are accountable to their mandate?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is important to consider children's participation and to ensure that key documents are child friendly.</li> <li>• Children need to be put high on the political and national agenda in terms of budgetary allocations</li> <li>• There should be a specific division within the AU, Department of Social Affairs that deals specifically with child rights issues</li> </ul>

## Examples of engagement

### How can Civil Society engage with the ACERWC?

Åsa Rapp Baro (Save the Children Sweden) and Dr. Abiola L. Thompson Tilley-Gyado, (Plan International) gave an overview of how Civil Society can proactively engage the ACERWC in their work. Their presentation was partly based on a new publication: “Advancing Children’s Rights – A Guide for Civil Society Organisations on how to engage with the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child”. This guide can be obtained by contacting the presenters (please see appendix three for contact details).

Their presentation included an explanation of the reporting and communication procedures of the Committee. There was also the recognition that as both the UNCRC and the ACRWC are mandatory for countries to report on, there is a need to harmonise the reporting process of African countries.

#### Summary of the reporting process to the ACERWC

- Within two years of a country ratifying the ACRWC, the initial State Party report is supposed to be submitted. The Committee of Experts has identified key thematic areas for countries to report on.
- Civil Society is encouraged to write a complementary report to that of the State and to present this report to the Committee during a pre-session. The pre-session is the opportunity for the ACERWC to gather as much information as possible and clarify any issue with CSOs and other stakeholders such as UN agencies. ***It was noted by the presenter that the ACERWC really encourages Civil Society to participate, to communicate and be present at this stage.***
- The Plenary Session with the State Party will be held during the following ACERWC meeting. After the State session, the Committee will develop Concluding observations and recommendations. Any subsequent reports to the Committee from a State Party would have to detail how previous recommendations have been taken into account.
- Civil Society has a key role to play in ensuring a continued follow-up and monitoring of the implementation of the Concluding observations and recommendations.

#### Summary of how to submit a Communication to the ACERWC

- A communication is a written complaint on a child rights violation.
- Communications can be submitted by individuals and CSOs, children as well as adults
- Before a submission to the ACERWC can be made all domestic remedies must have been exhausted.

It was stressed that CSOs are able to identify what is really happening on the ground and that they should fulfil the important moral obligation to engage. The presentation concluded with a plea for the emerging group of this first CSO Forum for Child Rights Organisations in Africa to work together in a joint lobby and put pressure on the remaining eight countries to ratify the ACRWC, to advocate for the fulfilment of the ACRWC, to put forward Civil Society reports, to ensure that credible persons are on the Committee of Experts and most importantly to harness the collective vision for children in Africa.

#### Summary of post presentation discussions

Concerns	Points for consideration	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we assess implementation of the ACRWC in each country that has ratified?</li> <li>• Even if there is an ACERWC at the AU we have never received communication from this Committee.</li> <li>• How can we communicate ALL information from this Forum and the ACERWC to all CSOs?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It must be ensured that information from a high level is disseminated to colleagues and partners at grass root level</li> <li>• All this effort in working and engaging with governments and having faith in the Committee comes to nothing if results are not seen.</li> <li>• Can the UNCRC and the African Children’s Charter be brought closer together?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ACERWC should put in place communication channels to keep people informed.</li> <li>• The secretariat of the Social Affairs Department should propose a separate division specifically for child rights</li> <li>• There should be clear key performance indicators for the ACERWC.</li> </ul>



## **Suggested Contributions from Civil Society Organisations to the Work of the ACERWC**

### ***Objective 1: Popularisation of the ACRWC***

- Intensify advocacy work with states parties that have not ratified the ACRWC.
- Use various communication channels to raise awareness on the ACRWC and the work for the ACERWC.
- Celebrate and popularize events such as the Day of the African Child, etc.
- Popularise and disseminate the already developed child friendly version of the ACRWC.

### ***Objective 2: Protection of the Rights enshrined in the ACRWC***

- Regularly organise the CSO forum on and around the ACERWC to further strengthen collaboration between CSO and the ACERWC.
- Disseminate the new publication “Advancing Children’s Rights – A Guide for Civil Society Organisations on how to engage with the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child”
- Organize training workshops on the African Children’s Charter and the ACERWC to equip relevant stakeholders.
- Carry out in-country advocacy to muster governmental support for investigation missions by the ACERWC.
- Disseminate the ACERWC’s guidelines for conducting investigations.

### ***Objective 3: Monitoring the implementation of the ACRWC***

- Establish a liaison unit/secretariat for a better information flow and collaboration between the ACERWC and CSOs.
- Monitor the implementation of the ACERWC including producing CSO reports.
- Popularise the Concluding observations on the state party reports and advocate for the recommendations to be implemented.

### ***Objective 4: Strengthening the Institutional capacity of the Committee***

- Contribute to an annual review and reflection mechanism for the ACERWC.
- Contribute to a review of the ACERWC 2005-2009 Plan of Action and to the planning process for the ACERWC 2010 – 2014 Plan of Action.

\*For all recommendations please refer to appendix two.

### How Child Friendly Are African Governments?

**“Three things matter: politics that value children, laws that protect them and budgets that provide for them”**

Dr. Assefa Bequele, Executive Director, ACPF gave an overview of the recently published African Child Policy Forum Report “The African Report on Child Wellbeing 2008: How child friendly are African governments”. The report provides insight into the wellbeing of children in Africa and assesses the extent to which governments meet their obligations through a child friendliness index. Dr Assefa Bequele set the context by drawing attention to the situation of children in Africa highlighted that: 51% of Africa’s population is below the age of eighteen. This can be considered a blessing but if unattended it can be considered a curse. Therefore, Dr Assefa Bequele argued it is essential that African governments protect their children for the interest of the continent. A healthy well fed child is an essential foundation for economic development and modernisation. The report ranks fifty-two African Governments by ensuring the concept of child wellbeing underpins the methodology and by including a “child friendly index”. Highlights from the report include:

- The way we treat our children from our own homes to schools to the community is fundamental for the establishment for an advanced economy and for the onset of a culture of peace and rights within the region
- There is not yet a significant voice that speaks out for the rights of children not to be violated in Africa
- There is a need to address African issues in the context of an African environment
- There is a need to for independent monitoring mechanisms that can name and shame governments but also voices that can engage in constructive dialogue

The report measures in detail the extent to which African Governments are child friendly, by looking in detail whether:

- Children are provided protection through appropriate legal mechanisms
- Governments are providing adequate financial resources for children
- Children are involved in matters that affect their well being

Out of the fifty-two African countries, the countries that performed consistently highly were the countries that did two things: 1) implemented child friendly law mechanisms, and 2) implemented juvenile courts and universal primary education. The trends emerging for countries that scored low were 1) the lack of provision of laws that protect children; especially girls 2) the budget allocations for children were minimal.

The ACPF is going to keep on updating the information in the report to ensure it reflects the most up to date picture of how child friendly African Governments really are. The report will be relised bi annually and the next report will focus specifically on the issue of child budgeting.

#### Summary of post presentation comments on the report

- An informative and innovative piece of work
- The participation of children to be more visible, it is not recognised enough in the report
- Issue of equity are not clear
- Whilst it is good to see the vast amount of legal data, the budgetary data is limited
- What is the way forward for the countries that didn’t perform well?
- How can this project sustain itself in the future?
- There was no benchmark for expenditure

## Parallel Sessions

### Group work: developing Civil Society recommendations for the ACERWC

Participants of the forum broke away into the following groups:

<p><b>Communications</b>  <i>Develop recommendations on:</i>  <b>a)</b> How to ensure official Communications (which are complaints of child rights violations) they are reviewed by the ACERWC  <b>b)</b> Brainstorm on possible other Communications that should be submitted</p>	<p><b>Reports and concluding observations</b>  <i>Develop recommendations on:</i>            How state reports, alternative reports and concluding observations can be made more effective</p>	<p><b>Rules of procedure</b>  <i>Develop recommendations on:</i>  <b>a)</b> Observer Status of NGOs  <b>b)</b> Communications and link to the African Court  <b>c)</b> Report obligation of Committee to Heads of States</p>
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Each of the groups was tasked to come up with recommendations on a specific procedural, but very important, area in which Civil Society can engage. Each of the groups was facilitated by experts in that particular area.

The Communications group was facilitated by Sheila B. Keetharuth, Executive Director of the Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA). She introduced the concept of a 'Communication' and shared her organisation's experience in submitting them. A Communication, which is a formal complaint of a child rights violation, can be submitted by anyone to the ACERWC. So far two Communications have been submitted but none have been reviewed.

The group on reports and concluding observations was co-chaired by Biniam Mezmur of the University of Western Cape and Sadio Camara of CONAFE Mali. They looked into how to produce civil society reports and State reports.

The group on Rules of Procedure was facilitated by Remember Miamingi of the Africa Wide Movement for Children. They developed recommendations on how to change the procedures so that observer status is more inclusive and to ensure that the recommendations from the ACERWC are heard within the wider AU structure.

#### Recommendations

##### **General Functions (Article 42 ACRWC):**

- Continue in its efforts to forge a progressive and sustained relationship with the ACHPR in order to create a common platform for the promotion and protection of children's rights;
- Communicate at least three months in advance the identified themes to mark the Day of the African Child not only to Member States, but also to NGOs/CSOs and other partners;
- Participate actively with all stakeholders in the celebration of the Day of the African Child;
- Use its influence and position as an institution of the AU to initiate discussions on the need for countries to create a conducive environment for the operations of NGOs/CSOs.
- Use all available channels and means, including promotional missions, to ensure that the African Children's Charter reaches full ratification status in line with the African Union Heads of State and Government's Report for complete ratification by December 2008;
- Circulate the Session's agenda four weeks in advance as per the Rules of Procedure of the ACERWC;

##### **Communications (Article 44 ACRWC):**

- Develop a template or a form that any person, group or NGO/CSO planning to forward a

communication to the ACERWC can use for that purpose

- Amend its guidelines for the consideration of Communications to include a timeframe of six weeks for the ACERWC to acknowledge receipt of a Communication, to make a decision on admissibility within six months from the date of receipt, and finally to give its decision on the merits of the Communication within one year from the date of admissibility to ensure that victims are not left without redress
- Take provisional measures, in cases of urgency, to prevent any harm to the child or children who would be victims of violations, as provided for in the Guidelines for the Consideration of Communications
- Include a progress report on Communications as a standing agenda item for each ACERWC Session.

***Reporting Procedure (Article 43 ACERWC):***

- Amend the guidelines for initial State Party Reporting to take into account the specificities of the African Children's Charter;
- Set the maximum number of pages for State reports (excluding the attached annexes) so as to favour a standardized format to expedite consideration of reports;
- Put in place mechanisms to improve the flow of information between the ACERWC and NGOs/CSOs by periodically circulating information on State Party Reports and communications, among others, through the Committee's own regularly updated webpage and through partners' websites;

***Participation & Representation:***

- Provide a progress report on applications they have received from NGOs/CSOs seeking Observer Status to the applicants;

**State Parties to the African Children's Charter to:**

- Proceed with the domestication and application of the provisions of the African Children's Charter;
- Submit, in a timely manner, initial and periodic state reports in accordance with the African Children's Charter;
- Call on Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, São Tomé & Príncipe, Somalia, Swaziland and Tunisia to ratify the African Children's Charter without any further delay to comply with the African Union Heads of State and Government's Report for complete ratification by December 2008;
- Jointly plan and implement activities to mark the Day of the African Child in collaboration with the ACERWC, parent ministries and NGOs/CSOs and other partners;
- Respect their obligations under human rights treaties they have ratified by ensuring that NGOs/CSOs are able to work without restrictive conditions to curtail their operations.

\*For all recommendations please refer to appendix two.

## Setting the Context

### The ACERWC Strategic Plan

Madame Seynabou Ndiaye Diakhaté the Chairperson, ACERWC detailed in her presentation that areas in the ACERWC 2005 – 2009 Strategic Plan have not been achieved. Thus, the new Strategic Plan for ACERWC 2010 – 2014 in part focuses on the areas that have not been achieved in the previous strategic plan. The objectives of the Strategic Plan that still need to be addressed are as follows:

- 1) Ratification of the ACERWC through negotiations with Members States
- 2) To ensure observer status is granted to civil society for the ACERWC
- 3) To ensure the implementation of the ACRWC
- 4) To build the capacity of the ACERWC

The last Strategic Plan had seven different thematic areas of focus, including violence against children, child soldiers, children affected by HIV and AIDS, trafficked children and children with disabilities.

Madame Diakhaté appealed to the representatives of Civil Society at the Forum to help the Committee take “positive steps” in achieving the Committee’s objectives. Through her presentation she made it clear that a solid partnership with Civil Society will help them achieve its goals - **“we have to work in synergy so that our fight is achieved collectively”**.

After the presentation, time was spent discussing implications of the strategy, this included:

- **Budget:** Whilst some participants felt that if the committee does not achieve its objectives, it is because of financial constraints, other participants were clear that the resources will be available if there is a sound and Strategic Plan in place for the ACERWC.
- **Funding sources:** Questions were raised about the funding sources for the department (whether this was just from the AU itself or from wider partners), if any strategies are in place to increase funding for the department and how to ensure that children become higher priority within budget allocation of the AU. It was highlighted that funding for the department should primarily come from Member States, because funding from CSO’s could compromise advocacy initiatives with the AU.
- **Evaluating the Strategic Plan:** It was pointed out that an evaluation of the previous Strategic Plan should take place before a new plan is implemented.

#### Recommendations from the CSO Forum for the ACERWC Plan of Action (2010-2014)

- In order to strengthen the work of the ACERWC, the CSO Forum recommends that the ACERWC puts in place a mechanism for reviewing and reflection of its Plans of Action to facilitate learning and input into subsequent plans.
- As a matter of urgency, the CSO Forum recommends that the ACERWC reviews the 2005-2009 Plan of Action.
- The ACERWC is encouraged to share the costed Plans of Action and progress indicators with relevant stakeholders to facilitate the exploration of areas of collaboration.
- ACERWC is encouraged to explore alternative ways of strengthening the staffing capacity of its Secretariat beyond the African Union Commission.

For all recommendations please refer to appendix two

## Challenges faced by Civil Society

### The new NGO law in Ethiopia

#### A summary of a presentation made by Mrs Helen Seifu (African Child Policy Forum).

Despite the thrust of the meeting being about the positive role of an active Civil Society and how it can help to ensure children's rights across Africa, Mrs Helen Seifu from the Children's Legal Protection Centre (CLPC) of the ACPF gave an in depth presentation about the case of Ethiopia and the current obstacles to Civil Society engagement. Attention was drawn to the example of Ethiopia and how the State is trying to control and minimise the work of Civil Society Organisations. It was highlighted that this could be a growing trend across Africa and the recent legislative developments can be expected in other African countries.

#### Brief history of the regulation of Civil Society in Ethiopia

NGOs have been regulated by the laws that govern associations, which were enacted in the early and mid fifties. These laws, however, are not adequate to govern NGOs and CSOs in Ethiopia. Hence the need for new legislation has remained for a long time. Recently a law came into affect entitled "the proclamation for the registration of charities and societies year 2009". According to this new proclamation there are two forms of organisations 1) charities and 2) societies. Under this proclamation charities and societies are divided into 3 categories

- Ethiopian charities or societies
- Ethiopian resident charities or societies
- Foreign charities

The proclamation affects charities or societies that operate in one or more regional states of Ethiopia, foreign charities and Ethiopian Resident Charities and Societies, Charities or Societies operating in the City Administration of Addis Ababa or Dire-Dawa. The Proclamation does not affect religious organisations or international organisations that are operating in Ethiopia with the permission of the Ethiopian Government, societies governed by other laws. Organisations receiving more than 10% of their income from foreign sources (Ethiopian Residents Charities or Societies and Foreign Charities) cannot engage in the promotion of child rights, human rights, advocacy good governance.

Under this proclamation organisation are not permitted to carry out activities that fall under the following areas:

- The advancement of human and democratic rights
- The promotion of the equality of nations, nationalities, gender and religion
- The promotion of the rights of the disabled and **children's rights**
- The promotion of conflict resolution or reconciliation
- The promotion of the efficiency of the justice and law enforcement services

The proclamation restricts the operation and the very existence of NGOs in Ethiopia, in particular NGOs working on advocacy, human rights and good governance.

#### Summary of the discussions following the presentation

As this Proclamation has significant consequences for NGOs and CSOs in Ethiopia and indeed other countries in Africa, participants felt strongly that there needs for a common Civil Society voice to ensure that this issue is taken forward. Civil Society should collectively stand-up and make themselves heard at both national and international level. Ethiopia has ratified international legislation, they must therefore apply it and be accountable. Civil Society can play the role of helping to ensure this accountability. They can collectively stand up, to make themselves heard at the AU and international level, as this is no longer just an Ethiopian issue.

### The Day of the African Child, and the AU summit on food security

Forum participants divided into two groups. One looked at themes for the Day of the African Child and ways in which organisations can inspire and learn from each other on and around this event. The second group was tasked with the responsibility of producing a joint statement that emphasizes the importance of having children and children's issues on the agenda at the next AU Summit.

#### Update on the Day of the African Child

##### Summary of planned events around the 2009 Day of the African Child:

- In countries such as Kenya and Uganda there is a national platform to bring organizations together to coordinate activities. It was felt that such a platform would be beneficial across Africa/ pan Africa.
- Some countries have a week of action around the Day of the Africa Child. Activities include child participation at national level for awareness raising, vaccination campaigns for children, exchanges between parents, children and local religious leaders.
- ACERWC members are invited to participate in all events in country to raise awareness of the Day of the African Child, and also of the ACERWC itself.

##### Developing a theme

It is suggested that the Committee writes a letter to both coalitions and governments informing them of the theme of this year's Day of the African Child. It was suggested that there must be a proactive way of informing **all** Governments and coalitions about the planned activities and theme of the Day of the African Child.

To develop a theme the participants suggested that a call for themes should be launched. Each suggested theme should include a rationale as to why it should be the theme for the Day of the African Child. The Committee would choose a theme and then share the topic of the theme with all key stakeholders. A coalition platform should be the focal point for collecting all information about the planned activities and be responsible for disseminating this information. This platform should also have a list of past themes to avoid replication in future years.

#### Developing a joint statement and plan for dissemination on how agriculture and food security affects children

Through group work the participants looked at when the best time to influence and engage the Heads of State at the upcoming AU Summit at which the theme is 'Agriculture and Food Security'. As the planning for this AU meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture will take place in the following week, it was felt that this would be a key opportunity to lobby at the meeting and ensure that issues concerning children are included. A small team of people was formed to take forward a plan to disseminate a jointly-agreed statement to share with respective members of government from throughout Africa who will be attending the AU Summit, other important AU meetings and those responsible for developing agendas of these important meetings.

For further information please contact either:

Nina Nepessova, World Vision, Kenya: [nina.nepessova@worldvision.org.uk](mailto:nina.nepessova@worldvision.org.uk) , or  
David Mugawe African Child Policy Forum Ethiopia [mdavid@africanchildforum.org](mailto:mdavid@africanchildforum.org)

### African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)

Ms Hannah Forster from the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS), detailed how the Centre developed the NGO Forum as a way for NGOs to access the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. The goal of this session was to inform this embryonic NGO Forum with lessons and suggestions from a very vibrant NGO Forum of more than several hundred participants that happens before each African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights sessions. Initially it was felt that NGOs needed to know more about the Commission and how they could interact so they could influence the direction and decisions of the Commission. Specifically the ACDHRS ran a programme that looked at:

- What the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights was about.
- What were the procedures of the African Commission?
- How do we get people interested and engaging with the Commission?

It is these three areas that constitute the Advocacy and networking for Human Rights in Africa and is the main programme which the ACDHRS operates under. The main objective is to ensure that the ACDHRS creates a bridge among other NGOs, intergovernmental organisations and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

As the ACDHRS developed it defined its objectives as follows:

- Providing platforms for NGOs to meet together and speak with one influential voice
- Identifying evolving issues relating to the field of human rights and democracy
- Act as an early warning to the Commission and to States
- Fostering collaboration, cooperation and encouragement to governments to implement the international instruments that they have ratified.

The ACDHRS designed and organised training courses for NGOs prior to the sitting of the African Commission. The Commissioners themselves attend these training courses to make presentations about the work of the Commission and the ACHPR itself. This enables the participants to link up with the Commission directly.

There are however challenges facing the NGO forum, such as the NGO Forum becoming too influential and therefore seen as a threat by States. Attention was also brought to the fact that when a Forum such as the ACDHRS talks about violations, there must be accompanying evidence to substantiate the violations. It was also stressed that the Forum had to be owned by all the contributors in order for it to work. Often there is a lot of negotiation that goes on among participants and a need for diplomacy and negotiation. Other areas that were key to the success of the ACDHRS include:

- Civil Society having a common objective and to support the states, but not take on their role
- Uniting in a professional manner is the best way to bring about change and to pressure governments and treaty bodies
- If there are key allies sympathetic to a cause, make good use of them



## The way forward

### Planning the agenda for the next Forum in November 2009

There was unanimous consensus that there should be a subsequent NGO forum. Suggested areas for the next Forum to focus on include:

- To have a theme set by the ACERWC to guide the agenda of the CSO Forum
- How the Committee of Experts can interface with the UNCRC Committee.
- Issues arising from States parties that have had comments from the Committee of Experts about their reports.
- Looking in detail how organisations can obtain observer status.
- Information about the communications procedures of the Committee.
- How members of the Committee are selected and how Civil Society can promote candidates and lobby States for new members.
- The next Forum meeting could be tied into the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Charter coming into force which is in November.
- Updates about the Day of the African Child.
- Capacity building workshops on the ACRWC and the ACERWC

It was agreed that all present members of the organising committee, ACPF, AMC, Plan International and Save the Children would continue to organize the next forum. The organizing committee should now also include IHRDA and World Vision. These organisations were formally mandated to organise the next NGO Forum that will take place in November 2009.

It was felt that it was very beneficial to have representatives from the AU attend the Forum, and this should be replicated at the next meeting. It was also felt that this Forum must endeavour to ensure wide inclusion of all child rights Civil Society representatives from across Africa, so that more and more organizations participate. Further, it is important to remain aware that that partners and smaller Civil Society members are not left out.

## Major Outcomes

### From the CSO forum

#### One:

- Two sets of recommendations to the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child that were officially presented at the 13<sup>th</sup> session of the ACERWC. The first set of recommendations was Civil Society input into their Plan of Action for 2010- 2014. These recommendations included some ideas for the Committee as well as a long list of areas in which Civil Society is willing to support the Committee to achieve its goals.
- The second set of recommendations was a culmination of the discussions that took place at the Forum. This list of recommendations was our plea to the Committee to ensure solid cooperation and partnership between civil society and the ACERWC.

#### Two:

- A draft statement to be sent to country delegations planning on attending the AU Summit in July 2009. The theme of this summit is: "Investing in Agriculture for Economic Growth and Food Security". The Forum developed a statement they will finalize highlighting the areas in which children are positively or negatively impacted in the area of food security. The statement also urged decision makers to remember how best to ensure children's needs and rights are addressed in this area.

#### Three:

- The Uganda state report was put on the agenda of the 2nd pre-session. The Uganda report to the ACERWC has been ready for a long time as has an alternative report done by civil society. However, because of administrative hiccups, the report has not been reviewed. Once again this year, the report was in jeopardy of being postponed for yet another year. A strong delegation of civil society from Uganda attended the Forum and lobbied the Committee to review the report. After some logistical alterations, the Committee agreed to review the Uganda report at this session. This is very important for Ugandan civil society and the Committee because it legitimises their hard work.

## Recommendations

### For the CSO Form

#### The CSO Forum to:

- Urge Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, São Tomé & Príncipe, Somalia, Swaziland and Tunisia to ratify the African Children's Charter without any further delay;
- Encourages NGOs/CSOs and other partners in countries affected by restrictive legislation to collaborate with national and international networks and other human rights organisations to collectively advocate for the continuance of a conducive environment for the operation of NGOs/CSOs in Africa.

\*For all recommendations please refer to appendix two

## Appendix one - Agenda

***1<sup>st</sup> Child focused Civil Society Forum on and around  
the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC)  
April 17-19, 2009  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Venue to be determined***

### Day 1- Friday, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2009

Time	Title of the session	Presenter	Facilitator
9:00- 9:30	Welcome and introduction of the 1 <sup>st</sup> NGO Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Assefa Bequele, Executive Director, African Child Policy Forum,</li> <li>• Dr Abiola L. Thompson Tilley-Gyado, Pan African Relationships Manager, Plan</li> <li>• Wambui Njuguna, President, Africa Wide Movement for Children</li> <li>• Dennis Walto, Africa Area Director, Save the Children US</li> </ul>	Susan Wambui Mbugua, Legal Officer, African Child Policy Forum
9:30- 10:00	Setting the context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• History from OAU to the AU</li> <li>• Presentation of the AU legal instruments that impact children</li> <li>• Presentation of the Call for Accelerated Action Towards an Africa Fit for Children</li> </ul>	Mme. Mariama Cissé, Secretary to the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child/Acting Director, Department of Social Affairs, AU Commission	Susan Wambui Mbugua
10:00-10:30	Discussion		Susan Wambui Mbugua
10:30-11:00	Tea break		
11:00-11:30	<u>Setting the context: Panel discussion</u> Presentation of the Social Affairs Department- where are they going and what do they expect from civil society  Presentation from the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child of their key priorities for 2010- 2014 and what do they expect from civil society	Mme. Mariama Cissé, Secretary to the African committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child/Acting Director, Department of Social Affairs, AU Commissions  Moussa Sissoko, member ACERWC, President, Coalition Nationale des Associations et ONG en Faveur de l'Enfance (CONAFE)	UNICEF AU Liaison Office
11:30-12:00	Discussion		UNICEF AU Liaison Office
12:00-12:30	How can civil society engage with the ACERWC?	Åsa Rapp Baro, Regional Advisor Civil Society and Child Rights, Save the Children Sweden  Dr Abiola L. Thompson Tilley-Gyado Pan African Relationships Manager, Plan	UNICEF AU Liaison Office
12:30- 1:00	Discussion		UNICEF AU Liaison Office
1:00- 2:00	Lunch		

2:00- 2:20	How Child-friendly are African Governments?: Priorities for Action	Dr. Assefa Bequele, Executive Director, African Child Policy Forum	Amanda Lloyd, University of Surrey
2:20- 2:45	Discussion		
2:45- 4:15	<p>Parallel sessions: <u>Communications</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation: Communications to the ACERWC: Panel presentation of the already-submitted communications (30 minutes)</li> <li>• Group work: develop recommendations on a) how to ensure they are reviewed by the ACERWC and b) brainstorm on possible other communications that should be submitted (1 hour)</li> </ul> <p><u>Reporting (State reports, alternative reports and concluding observations)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation from NGOs on how they advocated for the state to submit its report and how they did the alternative report: process and challenges (30 minutes)</li> <li>• Group work: discuss and make recommendations on: how state reports, alternative reports and concluding observations can be more effective</li> </ul> <p><u>Rules of Procedure</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observer Status</li> <li>• Communication and link to the African Court</li> <li>• Report obligation of Committee to Heads of State of AU</li> </ul> <p>Stay in one group and discuss and make recommendations for the ACERWC on these issues</p>	<p>Sheila B. Keetharuth, Executive Director, Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA) and Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria</p> <p>Mr Clement Mashamba, Executive Director, National Organization for Legal Assistance, Tanzania and Mr Sadio Camara, Coordinator of the Child Rights Coalition Conafe-Mali</p> <p>Remember Miamingi, Senior Advocacy Officer, Africa-Wide Movement for Children</p>	<p>Main facilitator: Amanda Lloyd</p> <p>Group work facilitators: Sheila B. Keetharuth Executive Director, IHRDA</p> <p>Representative from the Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria</p> <p>Clement Mashamba and Sadio Camara</p> <p>Remember Miamingi</p>
4:15- 4:30	Tea break		
4:30- 5:30	Report back from the group discussions		Åsa Rapp-Baro, Regional Advisor Civil Society and Child Rights Save the Children Sweden
5:30- 6:00	Nomination of a small group to pull together a draft communication to: 1) submit to the ACERWC and 2) to inform further NGO involvement		Åsa Rapp-Baro

## Day 2- Saturday, April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2009

Time	Title of the session	Presenter	Facilitator
9:00- 9:20	Recap of yesterday's proceedings	Representative from the drafting committee	Chikezie Anyanwu, Africa Advocacy Advisor, Save the Children
9:20- 9: 45	Presentation on the ACERWC Strategic Plan (2005- 2009)	Mme Ndiaye Diakhate, Chairperson of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child	Chikezie Anyanwu
9:45-12:00	Group work (4 language groups) Analyze the gaps and strengths of the current plan and recommend what should be incorporated into the new plan (using the Call for Accelerated Action as the guide)		Chikezie Anyanwu 4 Committee members to facilitate each of the groups
	Tea and coffee to be taken during group work		
12:00- 1:30	Report back from the four groups and discussion and consolidation of the recommendations		Chikezie Anyanwu
1:30- 2:30	Lunch		
2:30- 3:00	Panel on current issues affecting children in Africa <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NGO expulsion in Sudan</li> <li>• NGO law in Ethiopia</li> </ul>	Yasir Salim, Sudan Child Rights Institute Helen Seifu, Director, Children's Legal Protection Centre, African Child Policy Forum	Stella Ayo Odongo, Executive Director, Uganda Child Rights NGO Network
3:00- 3:30	Discussion and development of a position to recommend to the ACERWC		Stella Ayo Odongo
3:30- 4:30	Brainstorming and strategic thinking. Two groups Day of the African Child <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update on what we are all doing this year and development a recommendation for next year's theme</li> </ul> AU Summit in July <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing a joint statement and plan for dissemination on how the agriculture and food security affects children</li> </ul>		Main facilitator: Stella Ayo Odongo  Facilitator of Group work on Day of the African Child: Nancy Kanyango, Plan  Facilitator of AU Summit group: David Mugawe, Deputy Executive Director, African Child Policy Forum
4:30- 5:00	Tea break		
5:00- 5:30	Reporting back		Sheila B. Keetharuth, Executive Director, Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA)
5:30- 6:00	Nomination of a small group to pull together a draft communication from the day's proceedings to: 1) submit to the ACERWC and 2) to inform further NGO involvement		Sheila B. Keetharuth

**Day 3- Sunday April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Title of the session</b>	<b>Presenter</b>	<b>Facilitator</b>
9:00- 9:15	Recap of yesterday's proceedings	Representative from the drafting committee	Professor Julia Sloth-Nielsen and Benyam Dawit Mezmur , University of Western Cape
9:15- 9:45	Presentation by the NGO Forum before the ACHPR: learning from their experiences	Hannah Foster, Executive Director, Africa Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ADCHRS)	Julia Sloth- Nielsen and Benyam Dawit Mezmur
9:45- 10:15	Discussion		
10:15- 11:00	Brainstorming session for the agenda of the next NGO Forum		Julia Sloth- Nielsen and Benyam Dawit Mezmur
11:00- 11:15	Tea and coffee break		
11:15- 12:30	Presentation and endorsement of the final communication that goes to the ACERWC		Julia Sloth- Nielsen and Benyam Dawit Mezmur
12:30- 1:00	Closing session	Moussa Sissoko, President, CONAFE  Sophie Mosko, Regional Advocacy and Institutional Relations Manager, Save the Children	Julia Sloth- Nielsen and Benyam Dawit Mezmur

## **Appendix Two – Recommendations**

### **First Child Focused Civil Society Forum on and around the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, 17-19 April, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

#### **Preamble:**

Recognizing the child's "unique and privileged position in the African society" as reaffirmed in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child [African Children's Charter];

Reaffirming the adherence to the principles of the rights and welfare of the child contained in the declarations, conventions and other instruments of the African Union, in particular the Call for Accelerated Action for an Africa Fit for Children (2008-2012), as well as in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;

Acknowledging the crucial work which the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child [ACERWC] carries out while monitoring implementation of the African Children's Charter;

Recognizing the work the ACERWC has already undertaken as it watches over State Parties' compliance with their obligations deriving from their ratification of the African Children's Charter in order to ensure the respect, protection, promotion and fulfilment of child rights;

Commending the ACERWC and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights [ACHPR] for creating ways to promote closer links between these two treaty bodies;

Commending the African Union for putting in place a Communications Procedure under the African Children's Charter to ensure that State Parties are held accountable for the protection of the rights of children in Africa;

Appreciating the efforts the ACERWC has put in while discharging its mandate regarding the consideration of communications and stressing that time is of the essence in performing this task;

Commending the ACERWC for developing criteria for granting observer status to NGOs/CSOs;

Noting the importance of the observer status for a fruitful collaboration between the ACERWC and NGOs/CSOs for the advancement of the rights and welfare of African children;

Recognizing the value of the free flow of information in the realization of child rights on the African continent;

Taking note the role played by the ACERWC and NGOs/CSOs in the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and the need to use the APRM to promote and monitor children's rights in Africa;

Observing with concern that several State Parties are yet to fulfill their implementation and reporting obligations under the African Children's Charter;

Noting with regret that eight Member States of the African Union have not yet ratified the African Children's Charter;

Deeply concerned by the enactment of restrictive legislation which may negatively impact on the work of NGOs/CSOs, and taking note of the enactment in January 2009 of such a law in Ethiopia;

Welcoming the celebration of the Day of the African Child, marked on 16 June every year since 1991, as it draws attention to the lives and the plight of children in Africa,

We, the participants to First Child Focused Civil Society Forum on and around the 13<sup>th</sup> Session of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 17 and 19 April, 2009, make the following recommendations to:

**A) The ACERWC to:**

***General Functions (Article 42 ACRWC):***

- Continue in its efforts to forge a progressive and sustained relationship with the ACHPR in order to create a common platform for the promotion and protection of children's rights;
- Communicate at least three months in advance the identified themes to mark the Day of the African Child not only to Member States, but also to NGOs/CSOs and other partners;
- Participate actively with all stakeholders in the celebration of the Day of the African Child;
- Use its influence and position as an institution of the AU to initiate discussions on the need for countries to create a conducive environment for the operations of NGOs/CSOs.
- Use all available channels and means, including promotional missions, to ensure that the African Children's Charter reaches full ratification status in line with the African Union Heads of State and Government's Report for complete ratification by December 2008;
- Circulate the Session's agenda four weeks in advance as per the Rules of Procedure of the ACERWC;

***Reporting Procedure (Article 43 ACRWC):***

- Amend the guidelines for initial State Party Reporting to take into account the specificities of the African Children's Charter;
- Set the maximum number of pages for State reports (excluding the attached annexes) so as to favour a standardized format to expedite consideration of reports;
- Put in place mechanisms to improve the flow of information between the ACERWC and NGOs/CSOs by periodically circulating information on State Party Reports and communications, among others, through the Committee's own regularly updated webpage and through partners' websites;

***Communications (Article 44 ACRWC):***

- Develop a template or a form that any person, group or NGO/CSO planning to forward a communication to the ACERWC can use for that purpose;
- Amend its guidelines for the consideration of Communications to include a timeframe of six weeks for the ACERWC to acknowledge receipt of a Communication, to make a decision on admissibility within six months from the date of receipt, and finally to give its decision on the merits of the Communication within one year from the date of admissibility to ensure that victims are not left without redress;
- Take provisional measures, in cases of urgency, to prevent any harm to the child or children who would be victims of violations, as provided for in the Guidelines for the Consideration of Communications;
- Include a progress report on Communications as a standing agenda item for each ACERWC Session;

***Participation & Representation:***



- Provide a progress report on applications they have received from NGOs/CSOs seeking Observer Status to the applicants;

**B) State Parties to the African Children's Charter to:**

- Proceed with the domestication and application of the provisions of the African Children's Charter;
- Submit, in a timely manner, initial and periodic state reports in accordance with the African Children's Charter;
- Call on Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, São Tomé & Príncipe, Somalia, Swaziland and Tunisia to ratify the African Children's Charter without any further delay to comply with the African Union Heads of State and Government's Report for complete ratification by December 2008;
- Jointly plan and implement activities to mark the Day of the African Child in collaboration with the ACERWC, parent ministries and NGOs/CSOs and other partners;
- Respect their obligations under human rights treaties they have ratified by ensuring that NGOs/CSOs are able to work without restrictive conditions to curtail their operations.

**C) The CSO Forum to:**

- Urge Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, São Tomé & Príncipe, Somalia, Swaziland and Tunisia to ratify the African Children's Charter without any further delay;
- Encourages NGOs/CSOs and other partners in countries affected by restrictive legislation to collaborate with national and international networks and other human rights organisations to collectively advocate for the continuance of a conducive environment for the operation of NGOs/CSOs in Africa.

Produced in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 19 April 2009

## **Contributions from Civil Society to the implementation of the ACRWC and to ACERWC Activities**

We, the participants to First Child Focused Civil Society Forum on and around the 13<sup>th</sup> Session of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 17 and 19 April, 2009, commit to support the ACERWC in fulfilling its mandate along the following areas (based on the objectives set in the 2005-2009 Plan of Action):

### ***Objective 1: Popularisation of the ACRWC***

- Intensify advocacy work with states parties that have not ratified the ACRWC.
- Use various communication channels to raise awareness on the African Children's Charter and the work for the ACERWC.
- Celebrate and popularize events such as the Day of the African Child, etc.
- Popularise and disseminate the already developed child friendly version of the ACRWC.

### ***Objective 2: Protection of the Rights enshrined in the Charter***

- Regularly organize the CSO forum on and around the ACERWC to further strengthen collaboration between CSO and the ACERWC.
- Disseminate the new publication "Advancing Children's Rights – A Guide for Civil Society Organisations on how to engage with the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child"
- Organize training workshops on the African Children's Charter and the ACERWC to equip relevant stakeholders.
- Carry out in-country advocacy to muster governmental support for investigation missions by the ACERWC.
- Disseminate the ACERWC's guidelines for conducting investigations.

### ***Objective 3: Monitoring the implementation of the Charter***

- Establish a liaison unit/secretariat for a better information flow and collaboration between the ACERWC and CSOs.
- Monitor the implementation of the African Children's Charter including producing CSO reports.
- Popularise the Concluding observations on the state party reports and advocate for the recommendations to be implemented.

### ***Objective 4: Strengthening the Institutional capacity of the Committee***

- Contribute to an annual review and reflection mechanism for the ACERWC.
- Contribute to a review of the ACERWC 2005-2009 Plan of Action and to the planning process for the ACERWC 2010 – 2014 Plan of Action.

**Recommendations from the CSO Forum for the ACERWC Plan of Action (2010-2014):**

1. In order to strengthen the work of the ACERWC, the CSO Forum recommends that the ACERWC puts in place a mechanism for reviewing and reflection of its Plans of Action to facilitate learning and input into subsequent plans.
2. As a matter of urgency, the CSO Forum recommends that the ACERWC reviews the 2005-2009 Plan of Action.
3. The ACERWC is encouraged to share the costed Plans of Action and progress indicators with relevant stakeholders to facilitate the exploration of areas of collaboration.
4. ACERWC is encouraged to explore alternative ways of strengthening the staffing capacity of its Secretariat beyond the African Union Commission.

### Appendix Three

## List of Participants who attended the 1st NGO Forum for Child-Rights Organizations in Africa

Surname	First Name	Organisation	Country	E-mail
Amberber	Habtamu	Professional Alliance for Development in Ethiopia	Ethiopia	<a href="mailto:padet@ethionet.et">padet@ethionet.et</a>
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Assegahegn	Mesfin	ANPPCAN Ethiopia	Ethiopia	<a href="mailto:haimesfin@yahoo.com">haimesfin@yahoo.com</a>
Atibuni	Rose	NACWOLA Arua	Uganda	<a href="mailto:atibunirose@gmail.com">atibunirose@gmail.com</a>
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Chege	Thomas	Save the Children Sweden	Kenya	<a href="mailto:cheget@ecaf.savethechildren.se">cheget@ecaf.savethechildren.se</a>
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Diakhaté	Seynabou	ACERWC	Burkina Faso	<a href="mailto:seynabound@sentoo.sn">seynabound@sentoo.sn</a>
Fani-Matenga	Johnson	Save the Children Norway	Zimbabwe	<a href="mailto:johnson.matenga@reddbarna.org.zw">johnson.matenga@reddbarna.org.zw</a>
Forster	Hannah	African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS)	Gambia	<a href="mailto:acdhrs@acdhrs.org">acdhrs@acdhrs.org</a> , <a href="mailto:hansforster@yahoo.com">hansforster@yahoo.com</a> , <a href="mailto:admin@acdhrs.org">admin@acdhrs.org</a> , <a href="mailto:edir@acdhrs.org">edir@acdhrs.org</a>
Fufa	Gudina	Oromia Regional State Social Affairs Office	Ethiopia	<a href="mailto:gdinaf@yahoo.com">gdinaf@yahoo.com</a> , <a href="mailto:kandigudina@gmail.com">kandigudina@gmail.com</a>
Gansonre	Zoénabo	COBUFADE	Burkina Faso	<a href="mailto:cobufade@fasonet.bf">cobufade@fasonet.bf</a> , <a href="mailto:gansonrezoenabo@yahoo.fr">gansonrezoenabo@yahoo.fr</a>
Gebre-medhin	Tigabu	CBM	Ethiopia	<a href="mailto:tigabu@cbmeth.org.et">tigabu@cbmeth.org.et</a>
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