The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child is a group of individuals of high moral standing, integrity, impartiality and competence in matters of the rights and welfare of the child which are mandated to monitor and report on the fulfilment of child rights in Africa. The term of six out of the eleven members of the Committee is coming to an end in July 2010. This fact sheet has been produced to inspire and inform civil society organizations (CSOs) on the election process and how they can get involved in the process of nominating competent candidates in their respective countries for the six open positions.

When do elections take place?

- The next elections will be held in July 2010 when six of the current members will complete their term.
- In theory, the nominations must be received by the AU Commission’s Office of the Legal Counsel no less than six months before the AU Summit—therefore by the end of January 2010. For this election, it seems the deadline will be prolonged for at least a month.

Who is eligible to be a Committee member?

- Article 33 of the Charter provides that any African of ‘high moral standing, integrity, impartiality and competence in matters of the rights and welfare of the child’ is eligible for nomination. Since the Charter does not offer additional criteria, the following is suggested:
  i. Nominees should have recognized competence in children’s rights and welfare issues in Africa and internationally. A minimum educational qualification at postgraduate level and/or 10 years of progressive professional experience in children’s rights is desirable.
  ii. Track record of excellent analytical, drafting, reporting and advocacy skills in the areas of children’s rights and welfare are invaluable and desirable assets that should be considered.
  iii. The need for professional diversities: Nominees should be from a variety of professional backgrounds, such as lawyers, psychologists, social workers etc.
  iv. Willingness and ability to commit sufficient time without remuneration to the work of the Committee is recommended.
- Only candidates from countries which have ratified the African Children’s Charter can be elected.
- The Committee is made up of eleven members who serve five year terms.
- Members serve on a voluntary basis in their personal capacity, and not as representatives of their State.

What does the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child do?

The Committee is mandated by the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child to do the following:

- receive and consider individual complaints of violations by State Parties of Charter rights and express its views as to the presence or absence of a violation or violations.
- undertake investigative or fact-finding missions in countries which are State Parties in the context of systematic or gross violations of child rights.
- interpret the provisions of the Charter and set rules, principles and standards governing children’s rights and welfare in Africa through general comments, resolutions and declarations.
Committee members must not be part of any intergovernmental organization, UN agency or hold any politically binding position such as Cabinet Minister, Deputy Minister, Member of Parliament or Ambassador.

States can only have one national sitting on the Committee at one time.

Committee members can only serve one five-year term and cannot be re-elected.

Individuals from Nigeria, Madagascar, Benin, Burkina Faso and Egypt are NOT allowed to be nominated for this round of elections as those countries already have members on the Committee.

How are Committee members nominated?

Each State Party can nominate a maximum of two candidates. However, when two candidates are nominated by a State, one of them shall not be a national of that State.

The Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the Permanent Representatives to the AU are asked to submit the names and CVs of their nominated candidates to the AU Commission’s Office of the Legal Counsel at least six months before the election is to be held.

The process of candidate election varies from state to state and the best way to find out who your country is planning to nominate (if anyone) is to contact your Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Permanent Mission to the AU in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Nominees should complete biographical information indicating their judicial, practical, academic, activist, professional and other relevant experience in the field of children’s rights. In addition, nominees have to submit statements indicating how they fulfill the criteria for eligibility contained in the Charter.

How are Committee members elected?

Elections are held by secret ballot.

Their decision is then passed to the AU Assembly for final approval and adoption.

All nominations must come from governments.

How much time must Committee members devote?

Committee members will be expected to spend at least two full weeks in session another two weeks or more for inter-session activities such as missions, representational activities, networking and capacity building experiences, and another two weeks or more of additional demands on their time and expertise to study and analyze numerous documents in advance of Committee sessions.

How much do Committee members get paid?

Committee members are not remunerated for their work.

Airfare to and from Addis Ababa for each Committee session and a daily subsistence allowance while in Addis Ababa to cover expenses is provided by the AU.

What role can civil society organizations play in the election process?

Although CSOs cannot nominate candidates, they can identify suitable candidates and suggest them to their Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They can do this by:

1. Identifying qualified candidates and lobbying them to consider serving on the Committee.
2. Seeking support for the proposed candidate from government officials working on children’s issues or within the Ministry responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Charter.
3. Sending a letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with clear, convincing arguments as to why this person would be a good candidate.
4. Lobbying their governments to make the nomination process truly transparent in which the State Parties select candidates on the basis of merit rather than for political considerations.
5. Lobbying their governments to nominate competent and credible candidates of their choice.
Who are the current Committee members?

Those whose terms are ending in July 2010:
- Ms. Seynabou Ndiaye Diakhaté, Senegal – Chairperson
- Ms. Koffi Appoh Marie Chantal, Côte d’Ivoire – Deputy Chairperson
- Ms. Boipelo Lucia Seithlamo, Botswana – Rapporteur
- Hon. Lady Justice Martha Koome, Kenya
- Ms. Mamosebi T. Pholo, Lesotho
- Mr. Moussa Sissoko, Mali

Those members remaining:
- Ms. Dawlat Ibrahim Hassan, Egypt, Term of Office complete January 2011
- Mr. Cyprien Adébayo Yanclo, Benin, Term of Office complete July 2013
- Ms. Agnès Kabore, Burkina Faso, Term of Office complete July 2013
- Mr. Andrianirainy Rasamoely, Madagascar, Term of Office complete July 2013
- Ms. Maryam Uwais, Nigeria, Term of Office complete July 2013

How can I get more information?

The Secretariat of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child is based within the Department of Social Affairs of the Commission of the African Union in Addis Ababa. The Committee can be reached on the following contact details:

1) Office of the Legal Counsel
   African Union Commission
   P.O. Box 3243
   Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
   Tel.: + (251) 1 51 35 22
   Fax: + (251) 1 53 57 16

2) Secretariat of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
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   African Union Commission
   P.O. Box 3243
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   www.africa-union.org/child

This fact sheet was prepared by the members of the organizing committee of the CSO Forum on the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Members of the Committee are:
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