

Plan International

Statement on the State of Human (Child) Rights in Africa to the 56th Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR): holding in Banjul, The Gambia. 21st April to 7th May 2015.



Protocols:

Honourable Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights;

Honourable Commissioners of ACHPR;

Excellences; Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

Plan International brings it complements to the people of The Gambia, the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR), the African Union Commission (AUC) and other human rights organs, institutions and activists hereby gathered on this occasion of the 56th Session of the ACPHR.

Honourable Chairperson and Members of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Plan International would like to thank and congratulate you for your unrelenting efforts and dedication to the protection and promotion of human and peoples' rights on the continent.

We note and welcome the increasing number of African Countries now reporting to the African Human Rights systems. The long list of State Party Reports that will be considered at this session serves as evidence. This is a positive feedback from Member States to our complementary calls on them to ratify, implement and report on the African human rights instruments. And it is very encouraging for us. However, we are not yet to shout victory. We are not there yet, because despite the increase, many African

Governments are still not living up to their obligations to report regularly; nor are they protecting the rights of their citizenry.

It is even more heart-breaking to note that some of the African Human Rights Treaties are yet to be fully ratified by African States. Plan International restates its commitments to supporting the African Human Rights system and especially the efforts for the full ratification of and reporting.

Honourable Commissioners, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen
We in Plan International will also like to thank and congratulate the Commission for its Interpretational efforts; we are particularly happy about the evolving General Comment on Child Marriages; we are committed in supporting the development and popularisation of this General Comment and many others to come.

After one year the Chibok Girls are still not back! And schools and Centres of Learning are nowadays increasingly targeted by terrorist attacks; the recent massacre of innocent students in Kenya is awfully another evidence for this reality. Plan International will like to join our voices and bring to the attention of the African Commission the unwelcome recrudescence of violence against children and young people in Africa in both emergency and non-emergency situations. We therefore urge the Commission to take all necessary actions and to collaborate with other AU organs and key pan-African policy makers, institutions and public to stop these attacks on the right to education of African children and young people.

Madam Chairperson and Honourable Commissioners, as you consider the State Party reports before you, we would like to bring to your notice other forms of education rights violations. We condemn the State restrictions of pregnant girls from attending schools and taking public examinations in Sierra Leone. Pregnant girls' exclusion from the education system violates their right to education and discriminates against them.

We also will like to bring to your attention the over privatization of education in Uganda which has tremendously lowered the quality of education in that country.

We would like to use this opportunity to also raise the issue of violence against children and more specifically that of corporal punishment of children. Corporal punishment of children breaches their rights to respect for human dignity and physical integrity and to equal protection under the law.

In light of relevant articles of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights as well as that of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the human rights imperative to prohibit and eliminate all corporal punishment of children, we hope that during this session, the Commission will raise the issue of corporal punishment of children in its review of State Party reports from Djibouti, Nigeria, Niger, Senegal, Ethiopia, Uganda, Sierra Leone, and Malawi; and recommend to these states to rapidly reform their legislations in order to prohibit corporal punishment of children in all settings, including the home, as a matter of priority.

We would like to conclude with a special request to the Commission. As we are all preparing for the commemoration of 2016 as the “African Year of Human and Peoples’ Rights, Particularly Women’s Rights”, we request that a special attention be given to the Girl Child in the commemoration. We call on the Commission and all State and Non-State actors to:

- 1. Put girls’ education, as a vital development strategy and at the centre of the political agenda**
- 2. Broaden the national and regional education agenda from access to primary education to the successful transition to, and completion of, quality secondary education**
- 3. Leverage national and regional institutions, governments and the private sector to increase funding for girls’ education**
- 4. End child marriage**
- 5. End gender-based violence in and around schools**
- 6. Enable girls and boys to participate in decision-making and inspire action in education**

Thank you for your attention and we wish the African Commission a fruitful deliberation at this 56th Session and we look forward to jointly celebrating the successful outcomes.

For more information, please contact: Chikezie Anyanwu, Head of Office and Pan Africa Program Specialist, Plan International, African Union Liaison & Pan Africa Program Office, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia – Chikezie.anyanwu@plan-international.org