

Ending crimes and extreme violence against children A Call for Action

We, the participants of the 7th International Policy Conference on the African Child, held in Addis Ababa on 7-8 November 2016, under the theme of crimes and extreme violence against children.

Recognise that all forms of violence against children are unacceptable and must be eliminated.

Also acknowledge that millions of children in Africa suffer from brutal forms of violence and harmful practices.

Note that most crimes and extreme cases of violence against children take place in secret within families and closely-knit communities and hence remain unaccounted for by official statistics.

Also note that these forms of violence may have some cultural, social or religious underpinning, with devastating consequences on the child's life, development, health, education and protection.

Acknowledge that governments, as the principal duty bearers of children's rights, have made efforts to formulate laws and to develop programmes to protect children from crimes and extreme violence

However, we recognise that, despite some progress, many children are still in grave danger and waiting for action. It is in this spirit that we urge all relevant actors to take swift measures on three fronts:

- **At the national level**, we call upon governments, civil society, traditional and religious leaders and all other relevant actors to take the following action:
 - Strengthen **data and research** and **evidence-based advocacy** on crimes and extreme violence against children
 - Ensure that all domestic laws and policies are harmonized with international and regional human rights instruments, especially the UN CRC and its Optional Protocols, the ACRWC, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, and the African Women's Protocol.
 - Ensure that legislation includes a clear and comprehensive prohibition of all forms of violence, including harmful practices.

- Develop multi-stakeholder **child protection systems** to provide psychosocial support, and ensure the recovery and reintegration of victims, with greater emphasis on preventing violence from happening in the first place.
- Strengthen the **skills and economic capacity of families**, including by promoting child-friendly parenting values and practices
- Promote **social change** through sustained public sensitisation, constructive engagement with traditional and religious leaders and positive media messaging
- **At the pan-African level**, we call upon:
 - the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
 - a) to put the issue of crimes and extreme violence against children on its agenda;
 - b) to develop a protocol for national action; and
 - c) to recommend the AU to put the issue on the agenda of a future summit of African Heads of state and government
- **At the international level**, we call upon:
 - the UNCRC Committee, the Office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Violence against Children, the Global Partnership to End violence against Children and other major players to support national and pan-African efforts to consider measures that could guide national and international actions against crimes and extreme violence against children.

We conclude by saying that, more than any other region of the world, Africa's children lie at the heart of its demographic and social transition. The destiny of Africa is in their hands and we commit to upholding the right of every child to live free from all forms of violence.

Adopted in Addis Ababa on 8 November 2016