

African Union, African Regional Bodies

Declaration on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child

Legislation as at 20 July 1979

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African Union

Declaration on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child

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The Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, meeting in its Sixteenth Ordinary Session of Monrovia, Liberia from 17 to 20 July 1979,

Considering the provisions of the Charter of the OAU affirming the responsibility of Member States to harness the natural and human resources of the continent for the total advancement of the peoples in all spheres of human endeavors;

Recalling various United Nations pronouncements, especially the 1959 Declaration on the Rights of the Child and resolution 1/31/169 of the United Nations General Assembly proclaiming 1979 as the International Year of the Child;

Conscious of the appeal by the said resolution for increased national, regional and international actions aimed at guaranteeing the rights and promoting the welfare of the Child;

Determined to implement at national, sub-regional and regional levels and together with the national and international organizations the programmes undertaken to promote child welfare by providing facilities in the fields of education, medical care, nutrition and other basic services;

Convinced of the need for Member States to take effective measures such as the development of simple and appropriate technologies in order to curb unnecessary child labor;

Aware of the deep concern of African States about the future of African children as inheritors and keepers of African cultural heritage;

Bearing in mind that the welfare of the African Child is inextricably bound up with that of its parents and other members of its family, especially the mother;

DECLARES that:

1. In order to focus attention on the problems of the child to make easier the coordination of efforts and mobilization of resources and for performing the advocacy role for the child on a permanent basis, Member States consider the desirability of making respective national commissions or machineries for IYC a permanent organ given the necessary legal powers;
2. Member States should undertake or continue their efforts to review the current legal codes and provisions relating to the rights of children, particularly by taking into account the UN Declaration of 1959 on the rights of the Child and by paying particular attention to the unequal status of female children in some parts of Africa;
3. Member States should thoroughly examine cultural legacies and practice that are harmful to normal growth and development of the child such as child marriage and female circumcision, and should take legal and educational measures to abolish them;
4. All Member States should take advantage of the deliberations on the IYC in the UN General Assembly to urge organizations of the UN system to intensify their co-operation and encourage them to continue carrying out those activities which have positive bearing on the situation of the child in Africa;
5. International and non-governmental organizations should actively participate in the activities undertaken by Member States at national level and strengthen and develop their own activities in co-operation with national organs set up in the framework of the IYC;

6. Those Member States who have not yet done so, should:
 - a) formulate and implement programmes in the field of health, nutrition and education as part of national development plans with a view to making these services universally accessible to all children within the shortest possible time;
 - b) give priority to the most deprived and vulnerable children, paying particular attention to disabled children in the expansion of essential services;
 - c) expand day-care facilities with priority in the most needy and economically disadvantaged families;
7. Where education services through conventional school system cannot be provided, alternative strategies for establishing educational facilities for African children should be explored and non-formal and out-of-school opportunities be exploited, based on the principle of self-reliance as far as local manpower, skills, resources and materials permit;
8. The OAU Secretary-General should, in collaboration with all UN Agencies, give Member States all necessary assistance to promote activities in favor of children and to implement their respective national programmes;
9. Member States, who have not yet ratified the International Labor Convention No. 138 concerning minimum age for admission to employment, should do so;
10. Efforts should be made to preserve and develop African arts, languages and culture and to stimulate the interest and appreciation of African children in the cultural heritage of their own countries and of Africa as a whole;
11. Member States should lay emphasis on the principle of meaningful participation of local communities and beneficiary populations in planning and management of basic services and programmes for children;
12. Particular attention should be paid to the needs of refugee and displaced children and that immediate measures should be taken to improve their lot.