



**A STATEMENT OF
THE NETWORK OF AFRICAN NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS
(NANHRI)
DURING THE 41ST ORDINARY SESSION OF THE AFRICAN COMMITTEE OF
EXPERTS ON THE RIGHTS AND WELFARE OF THE CHILD**

**Presented by Ms. Roseline Odede- Kenya National Commission on
Human Rights (KNCHR) Chairperson, on behalf of Mr. Gilbert
Sebihogo- NANHRI Executive Director**

28th April 2023

Your Majesty, Queen of the Kingdom of Lesotho

Hon Joseph Ndayisenga, the Chairperson of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and Honourable Members of the Committee

Ms. Mikiko OTANI-The Representative of the UNCRC

Dr. Najat Maalla M'jid- UN SRSG-VAC

H.E Minata Cessouma Samate- Commissioner of Health, Humanitarian and Social Affairs

Hon. Joseph Nyadisenga, the Chairperson of the ACERWC

Ms Felistus Motimedi, the Representative of the CSO Forum

GIZ representative, UNICEF representative, Representative of Children

Delegates of the African National Human Rights Institutions;

Delegates of CSOs, NGOs and other actors present;

Children;

Honorable Delegates and Distinguished Guests,

On behalf of the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI), it is with great pleasure that I address this august gathering of the 41st Ordinary Session of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (the Committee).

I am honored to be present at the session once again with members eager to address concerns of the African child. As one John F Kennedy once said, "Children are the world's most valuable resource and its best hope for the future." Therefore, we have no choice but to place our best foot forward to achieve the dream of an Africa that addresses children's challenges effectively and fairly.

NANHRI acknowledges that despite important progress over the past decades to ensure broad ratification and implementation of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, many African Children are still denied their fundamental rights such as education, health and still face other discriminatory barriers such as child marriage and teenage pregnancy. We must attest to the recent COVID-19 pandemic that literally paralysed the education system and amplified the risks of vulnerable children to trafficking, sexual exploitation and abuse.

Honorable Delegates and Distinguished Guests,

The invitation to address this opening ceremony reaffirms the importance of the relationship between National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and the Committee. NHRIs generally refer to bodies established by governments to aid in the promotion and protection of human rights within their respective jurisdictions through handling complaints, conducting investigations, and conducting research, advocacy and educational programmes in line with the [Paris Principles](#). NANHRI is the regional

umbrella organisation that brings together 46 African NHRIs. NANHRI seeks to support and strengthen NHRIs in Africa as well as to facilitate coordination and cooperation among themselves and between them and other key human rights actors at the regional and international level. Our vision is a continent with effective NHRIs; contributing to an enhanced human rights culture and justice for every African.

As one of our goals is to strengthen the relationship between NHRIs and the Committee as mandated by Article 42 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, we highly appreciate the granting of affiliate status to 17 NHRIs and are optimistic about the remaining 4 applications due for consideration in this session. With reference to the Guidelines for Granting Affiliate status to NHRIs that were adopted in 2018, we understand that this collaboration is critical for the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. Further, the Paris Principles endow NHRIs with a broad human rights mandate extending to advisories, legislative recommendations, preparation of reports on the situation of human rights, promoting ratification of instruments, and human rights education among others.

It is our utmost desire that the NHRIs granted affiliate status will leverage on their influence as the bridge between the regional and the national level. This is important because they are key when it comes to assisting the committee in the promotion of human rights at the national level. In the same vein, as they play a significant role in enhancing the protective and promotional activities of the committee, they will particularly play a major role in the promotion, protection and enforcement of children's rights in Africa.

Honorable Delegates and Distinguished Guests,

Allow me to appreciate the jointly convened workshop on implementation of decisions of the ACERWC that occurred in Nairobi, Kenya on the 23rd and 24th of February. The recommendations from this workshop were geared towards collaborations with CSOs working on children's rights, establishing child rights structures and ensure that children's issues are implemented and documented, submission of alternative/independent reports and briefings of children's rights to be considered by the ACERWC, encourage their states to submit their reports to the ACERWC to ensure proper monitoring of laws and practices in relation to children's rights, among others. Since NANHRI remains a focal point when it comes to offering the requisite coordination and support, we will continue to urge NHRIs to mainstream these recommendations in their workplans.

We would also like to commend the jointly commissioned studies on Assessment of the impacts of COVID-19 on the Rights and Welfare of children with Disabilities in Ghana, Kenya, Malawi and Ethiopia, including the jointly convened implementation meetings with NHRIs. One major outcome from these meetings was the revelation to participating NHRIs that their complaint handling systems were not child/disability friendly. However,

they committed to effecting the relevant changes to ensure substantive inclusion of children with disabilities (CWDs) and organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs).

Gladly, the NHRIs also agreed on a strategy for the dissemination of the reports through publication and uploading of the report on the respective websites of the NHRIs, national level launch involving OPDs and CWDs, production of versions of the report that are child friendly particularly in relation to CWDs, translation of the report into local languages and finally presentation of the report before the ACERWC. We however acknowledge that this needs time and a little patience due to resource constraints. We are also grateful to the Secretariat for accommodating our request for a slot to present the findings of the reports during this esteemed gathering.

NANHRI recognizes the adoption of the 2023 theme of the Africa Union as ‘Acceleration of AfCFTA implementation’, a flagship project of Agenda 2063 aimed at creating a single African market for goods and services facilitated by free movement persons, capital, investment to deepen economic integration, promote and attain sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development, gender equality, industrialization, agricultural development, food security, and structural transformation. In light of this, NANHRI is particularly excited about the adoption of the resolution on mainstreaming human rights in the implementation of the AfCFTA, as it calls for the recognition and protection of the role of workers, women, people living with disabilities, youths and other vulnerable groups who are likely to be left behind, like children.

Honorable Delegates and Distinguished Guests

With this year’s theme on the International Day of the African Child, which is the Rights of the Child in the Digital Environment, NANHRI reckons that among 590 million internet users in Africa includes children, who represent a third of all internet users in the world and are increasingly exposed to the virtual environment.

As much as it offers tremendous benefits to children, creating opportunities for education, creativity and social interaction it is also a platform that presents serious risks such as cyberbullying, child trafficking, sextortion and risks to privacy.

NANHRI is therefore ready and willing to work hand in hand with ACERWC, NHRIs and other relevant partners to establish the necessary conditions for a safer digital environment and in the event ensure children have the desired digital skills to mitigate the exacerbated risks it poses.

Honorable Delegates and Distinguished Guests,

We cannot ignore the effects of climate change that have affected children, leading to extreme hunger especially in the East African region. The number of children suffering severe drought across Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia has risen rampantly, as over 20 million children are now facing the threat of severe hunger, thirst and diseases exacerbated by malnutrition due to severe drought.

This has led to further indirect effects such as internal displacement, lack of school, child labour and child marriages, brought about by increased stress within families.

As much as climate change isn't entirely the root cause of hunger within the region, it breaks foundations that are already weak and makes it harder to repair and refortify while the ground is continually shaking.

I therefore think that we could begin by plucking the low-hanging fruits, addressing poor agricultural conditions such as improper land use as we also find strategic ways to mitigate geopolitical instability in Africa.

Honorable Delegates and Distinguished Guests,

We must also acknowledge that Adolescent substance use continues to be a growing major public health concern in Africa. The World Health Organisation in 2022 warned that many young Africans are turning to substance abuse and that by 2030, the number of drug users in Africa will have increased substantially. Unfortunately, this phenomenon still lacks adequate documentation across the continent, despite the knowledge on negative health and social consequences on the affected individuals and their communities.

I therefore urge all of us in this session today to come up with a systematic review that will explore the determinants and associated factors that influence adolescent substance use in Africa.

Honorable Delegates and Distinguished Guests,

In conclusion, allow me to assure the Committee of our commitment towards our common goal of promoting and protecting the rights and welfare of the African Child. We appreciate the rich agenda on the promotion and protection of the rights and welfare of the child that will guide deliberations at this esteemed gathering. We look forward to cooperating in the dissemination and implementation of the outcomes.

I wish you fruitful deliberations.

Thank you!