



**EUROPEAN UNION
AFRICAN UNION**



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AU-EU joint statement on the International Day Against the Use of Child Soldiers

On 12 February, the International Day against the Use of Child Soldiers, the African Union and the European Union jointly call for promotion of peace, security and stability in Africa and Europe and for the strengthening of efforts at all levels to prevent conflicts and protect children from the effects of war, including being forced to serve as combatants, sex slaves or servants.

The AU and the EU welcome the progress made, including by the adoption of Security Council resolution 1882 that expands the triggers for the UN Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism to include two additional grave violations: killing and maiming of children and rape and other sexual violence against children. However, they remain deeply concerned about the situation of children affected by armed conflicts, which continue to deprive children in particular of access to education and health services and of a safe home and community. Growing up in conflict, children continue to face indescribable violence, to be recruited to fight, wounded or killed, separated from their families and emotionally as well as physically scarred for life.

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child prohibits the recruitment or direct participation in hostilities or internal strife of anyone under the age of 18. It calls upon States Parties to respect and ensure respect for rules of international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflicts which affect the child. It also requests that all necessary measures should be taken to ensure that no child shall take direct part in hostilities and refrain in particular, from recruiting any child. States Parties to the Charter shall, in accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law, protect the civilian population in armed conflict and shall take all feasible measures to ensure the protection and care of children who are affected by armed conflict. Such rules shall also apply to children in situations of internal armed conflicts, tension and strife. The AU will continue its efforts to promote and protect the rights and welfare of all African children.

P R E S S

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The EU is committed to addressing the short, medium and long term impact of armed conflict on children in an effective and comprehensive manner. More specifically, the EU promotes the implementation of international and regional human rights norms and humanitarian law, the fight against the use of children in armed forces and armed groups, the rehabilitation and reintegration of former child soldiers and ending impunity for crimes against children. In December 2010, the EU revised the implementation strategy to the EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflicts providing for enforced concrete actions as regard, inter alia, political dialogue, monitoring and reporting, training and awareness-raising and cooperation with other stakeholders to further advance the EU's actions in this field.

The AU and the EU support the campaign launched in May 2010 by the Office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict in cooperation with other partners with the purpose of achieving universal ratification of the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict by 2012, and call for all countries to ratify the Optional Protocol.

In line with their joint strategy and action plan, the AU and the EU promote the rights of the child as well as the empowerment of African and European young people, with special efforts made to assist children and young people in conflict and post-conflict situations.

The AU and the EU furthermore reaffirm their full support to the fight against impunity for the recruitment and use of child soldiers and the need to bring perpetrators of such crimes to justice.