

Press Release No:

Date: 8 June 2022

Venue: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

The Africa Platform on Children Affected by Armed Conflict welcomes the African Union's adoption of two significant policies on child protection

The Specialized Technical Committee on Defence, Safety and Security (STCDSS) of the African Union, during its Fourteenth Ordinary Meeting held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 9 to 13 May 2022, adopted two significant policies for the protection and enhancement of the welfare of children in situations of armed conflict in Africa. These are (i) The Policy on Child Protection in African Union Peace Support Operations; and (ii) the Policy on Mainstreaming Child Protection into the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).

These instruments are a significant milestone in responding to the severe violations of children's rights in conflict situations in Africa. They aim to mainstream child protection into African Union (AU) institutional responses, from peacemaking to peacebuilding, and ensure child protection in AU mandated, authorized or endorsed peace support operations towards preventing violations against children in armed conflict and promoting accountability in mission areas.

At the adoption, H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security and co-convener of the Africa Platform on Children Affected by Armed Conflict (AP CAAC), highlighted that "These instruments underscore the commitment of AU policy organs such as the Assembly and the Peace and Security Council, which have adopted decisions calling for the enhanced protection of children in conflict situations and the promotion of children's rights in Africa's peace, security and development agendas".

H.E Ambassador Jainaba Jagne, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Gambia and co-convener of AP CAAC, added that "The policies also contribute to achieving the commitments outlined in the African Union Agenda 2063, which is firmly committed to building an Africa that is fit for its children and also to investing in childhoods that are fit for a peaceful, prosperous and fully integrated Africa."

Before the STCDSS, the Peace and Security Council (PSC), at its 1070th meeting, held virtually on 29 March 2022, considered both policy documents and recommended them for adoption by the relevant STC. The PSC underscored that the adoption of the policy instruments would contribute to efforts by the AU to address the impact of protracted conflicts and the scourge of terrorism on children, including killing, abduction, separation from families, trafficking,

sexual exploitation and abuse, recruitment into armed forces and armed groups, malnutrition, diseases and attacks on schools and healthcare facilities.

It is against this backdrop, therefore, that the Africa Platform on Children Affected by Armed Conflict (AP CAAC), in collaboration with Save the Children International, in its capacity as the secretariat of the Platform, jointly welcome the STCDSS' adoption of these critical policies, regarding it as a landmark and a step in the right direction. They call for full and effective implementation of these policies with commensurate resources.

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