



The East African Centre for Human Rights
Enhancing the Realisation of Economic and Social Rights in East Africa

STATEMENT BY EACHRights FOR THE 39th ORDINARY SESSION OF AFRICA COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON THE RIGHTS AND WELFARE OF CHILDREN (ACERWC)

Honourable Chairperson, distinguished members of the ACERWC Committee, distinguished guests, CSO colleagues and all protocols observed, greetings from the East African Centre for Human Rights (EACHRights). We thank you for according EACHRights this opportunity to address you, and further take this chance to congratulate the members of the Committee, State Parties, CSOs and children in attendance today for making 39th session of this meeting possible.

Honorable Chairperson, on this 39th Ordinary Session of the African Committee on the Rights and Welfare of Children, we, the East African Centre for Human Rights (EACHRights) affirm our commitment to continue to work closely with the committee, to support its mandate of achieving even greater heights in safeguarding the rights of the African child, especially in light of the ever-shrinking CSO space.

Whilst acknowledging that this year's theme of the Committee Session is the impact of Climate Change and Nutrition on children's rights and that several colleagues have already addressed this noble issue, EACHRights brings to the attention of the committee the plight of children caught up in family feuds; children that become objects of violence or collateral damage to the extent of being hurt or murdered when their parents fight or divorce. This is becoming common in Kenya. It is a challenging situation mainly because children are harmed by the very people who ought to protect them. Often these incidences happen abruptly, making it difficult to intervene before they happen.

We also bring to the attention of the Committee the issue of school re-entry policy, especially within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. This has become all the more important since millions of girls were affected across the African continent, some became teenage mothers. Whilst acknowledging that most State Parties have passed education policies into law, we seek the honourable committee's intervention to urge State Parties to uphold and implement their school re-entry policies to ensure that girls have a second chance at life.

As EACHRights, we have sensitized education stakeholders, especially in regions that



registered a high rate of teenage pregnancies like Homabay county. We built their capacity to engage with legal provisions by the government of Kenya that encourage teenage mothers to realize their right to education. Case in point, Bishop Okullu Magare Girls' Secondary School in Homabay County, Kenya, is a success story that stems from our advocacy efforts on school re-entry policy. The school administration has re-admitted teenage mothers in a bid to ensure their right to education is achieved despite the circumstances.

Honorable Chairman, violence against women and girls has also been on the rise within the pandemic, this includes sexual violence, FGM, early marriage. This state of affairs is made worse by the changing climatic factors, for instance, many children are dropping out of school to graze their parents' animals far and wide, and girls are dropping out of school to attend to domestic chores such as walking long distances fetching water and firewood among others. We are cognizant of the fact that these circumstances particularly enhance the vulnerability of the girl child. While we take note that most State Parties have put in place laws, to uphold child rights, enforcement remains a challenge. We urge the Committee to urge State Parties to take steps to enforce laws that uphold and prioritize children's right to education; protect them from all forms of violence, and enable the children of this great continent to thrive and live their lives to the fullest.

EACHRights reassures the committee of her continued support and wishes the honourable Committee members and all participants fruitful deliberations going forward.

Thank you.



DR. JUDITH OLOO
Chief Executive Officer

