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Joint Statement of the African Union Commission and the Africa Platform on Children Affected by Armed Conflicts, on the Day of the African Child 2022

On the Day of the African Child, the co-conveners of the Africa Platform on Children Affected by Armed Conflicts (AP-CAAC), H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union Commission and H.E Ambassador Jainaba Jagne, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Gambia to the African Union, strongly condemn all the violations against children in situations of conflict. They further encourage Member states to take systematic and targeted steps to protect children against violations of their rights in conflict situations including the violations which are caused by harmful practices. They remind partners at global, regional and national levels of the need to accelerate efforts and increase resources for the protection of children in situations of conflict.

“We must protect children’s rights because childhood is not only the beginning of life but its basis. It is also the foundation of survival and development. A healthy and happy childhood is a pre-condition for every child to reach their full potential, which is the base for peaceful and prosperous societies. Therefore, if Africa wants to be peaceful and prosperous, it must ensure the welfare, safety and protection of its children today,” stressed the co-conveners of AP-CAAC.

Globally, armed conflicts have claimed the lives of millions of children, either as forced participants or victims. Millions more children are physically maimed, sexually abused and psychologically traumatised, while others are held hostage, abducted or trafficked. Furthermore, conflicts also aggravate social inequities, endangering children to harmful practices.

The multifaceted drivers of harmful practices exist in societies before the conflict occurs, but the crisis may exacerbate some of them. In particular, faced with insecurity, breakdown of the rule of law, and disruptions in social networks and family routines, families and parents may see harmful practices such as child marriage as a coping mechanism that deals with increased economic and other hardships associated with conflict situations.

The theme of the day of the African Child for this year 2022 is “Eliminating Harmful Practices Affecting Children: Progress on Policy & Practice since 2013.” Harmful practices affecting children include genital mutilation/cutting, forced and early marriages, taboos that prevent girls and women from exercising their sexual and reproductive health, nutritional taboos of women and girls, virginity testing and honour-based killings. Therefore, this year’s theme proffers an opportunity to reflect on the progress achieved in addressing harmful practices and carve a way forward toward eliminating harmful practices against children.

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