

THE BUJUMBURA DECLARATION ON CHILD RIGHTS AND WELLBEING IN THE EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY (EAC)

Preamble

Recalling all the relevant Conventions, Agreements, Declarations, Resolutions, Recommendations and other instruments pertaining to the comprehensive realisation of the rights of the child, including the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC),

Recalling also Article 7(2) of the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community (hereinafter the EAC Treaty), under which Partner States have agreed to abide by the principles of good governance, including adherence to the principles of democracy, the rule of law, social justice and, the maintenance of universally accepted standards of human rights,

Recognising Article 120(c) of the EAC Treaty under which Partner States undertake to closely co-operate amongst themselves in the field of social welfare with respect to the development and adoption of a common approach towards the disadvantaged and marginalised groups, including children and persons with disabilities,

Cognisant of the fact that, the recognition, promotion and protection of human and people's rights constitute one of the pillars of the EAC as per Article 6(d) of the EAC Treaty,

Taking note of the Fourth EAC Development Strategy (2011/2012-2015/2016) and the EAC Strategic Plan on Gender, Youth, Children, Persons with Disabilities, Social Protection and Community Development (2012-2016), which address child rights amongst other issues,

Acknowledging the effort made by the EAC Partner States in promoting international and regional standards on child rights, through the adoption, domestication and implementation of various instruments, laws, policies and programmes related to children,

Acknowledging also the role played by non State Partners such as the Inter-Agency Working Group on Child Rights in the EAC (The African Child Policy Forum, Elizabeth Glaser Foundation, Plan International, Save the Children and World Vision), UNICEF, and other international, regional and local partners,

Recognising the fact that children, who constitute more than 50% of the EAC population, are the future custodians of the EAC and therefore deserve to be treated equally, with dignity, love and care, having access to all the basic requirements for their full survival, development, protection and participation,

Recognising further that families and communities are at the heart of the wellbeing and protection of the child,

Concerned that various threats from natural and man-made disasters, such as, drought, floods, epidemics such as HIV/AIDS, armed conflict, have had an effect on our region, thereby directly impacting on the welfare and wellbeing of children,

Concerned also that children in the East African Community and across Africa, are faced with various challenges such as poverty, lack of adequate resources, inadequate child protection systems, insufficient

social protection, inadequate provision of and inequitable access to quality services, inadequate space for meaningful participation, and harmful practices, which negatively affect their lives,

Taking note of the peculiar circumstances of children in vulnerable and difficult situations such as internally displaced children (IDPs), refugee children, children in emergency, children living and working on the streets, children with disabilities, children in conflict with the law, children without parental care or in need of a family environment, children living with HIV/ AIDS, Albino children among others,

Bearing in mind that these issues, if left unaddressed, pose serious social and security threats, to the region as a whole, and to children in particular,

1. We, the EAC Partner States at the First Conference on Child Rights in the EAC, held in Bujumbura, Burundi, Commit as follows:

- a) To ratify, adopt and domesticate all international and regional treaties and other instruments related to children in order to foster their protection in the region.
- b) To harmonise children's laws with international and regional standards and put in place the necessary mechanisms and institutions for implementation, enforcement, monitoring and reporting.
- c) To develop a comprehensive EAC Child Policy.
- d) To enhance accountability in child rights by putting children on the public, political and development agenda, and making the sectors that have a stake on children a priority in resourcing for children.
- e) To build and strengthen the capacity of the social workforce, put in place and deliver effective social services for children and ensure a systems approach to child protection.
- f) To provide inclusive, free, compulsory and quality education and inclusive, free and quality health services for children, and expand social protection systems to increase access to integrated services to children at national, local government and community levels.
- g) To review the definition of a child and all minimum ages for children (such as criminal capacity, employment, marriage, sexual consent and recruitment into the army) and harmonise with the international and the African Union standards.
- h) To put in place national and regional management information systems for children and ensure continuous collection and documentation of evidence based and disaggregated data in all Partner States and make it available to all.
- i) To establish mechanisms for meaningful and substantive participation and representation of children on all issues affecting them at various levels
- j) To strengthen interstate collaboration, cooperation and coordination on issues that affect children within the EAC.
- k) To put in place preventive measures to ensure that vulnerable children, including, but not limited to children with disabilities, children on the street, children affected by harmful practices, are integrated in the provision of quality services and life skills.
- l) To ensure that all the children enjoy the right to citizenship by putting in place an effective and efficient birth and death registration system.
- m) To actively involve and consult children, families and communities in the formulation, implementation, enforcement, monitoring and reporting of children's laws and community based child protection mechanisms.

2. As individual governments, we further commit to collaborate with other stakeholders, including but not limited to United Nations Agencies, International Development Partners, the Inter-Agency Working Group on children, Civil Society Organizations, Faith Based Organizations to;

- a) develop, propose and recommend child friendly programmes and policies that could be adopted by the EAC.
- b) diligently conduct comprehensive research that will be used by the EAC to inform regional policies and any other efforts towards the realisation of child rights.
- c) provide substantive technical advice and resources to the EAC to address existing or current issues that hinder the, protection and realisation of child rights at community level.
- d) diligently cooperate with each other towards the attainment of an environment or community that advances child rights.

Therefore, we commit to undertake comprehensive follow-up and interventions towards the realisation of the outputs of this conference which include developing an EAC Child Policy which will be used to inform a common approach towards the realisation of children’s rights.

**Adopted in Bujumbura on 3rd September 2012
during The First EAC Child Rights Conference under the theme,
“Addressing the issues that negatively impact on the realisation of child rights in the EAC”**

Held at Royal Palace Hotel, Bujumbura, Burundi