



IX Cross-Regional Meeting for Advancing the Protection of Children from Violence

Addis Ababa, 26-28 February 2019

Conclusions and Call for Action

We, the participants at the Ninth Cross-Regional Round Table for advancing the protection of children from violence promoted by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Children (SRSG-VAC) and hosted with the African Child Policy Forum (ACPF) and the African Union (AU), coming from: the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child; the East African Community (EAC); the Council of Europe Secretariat; the Council of the Baltic Sea States Secretariat; the Inter-American Children's Institute of the Organization of American States (IIN-OAS); the League of Arab States; the Central American Integration System (SICA); the Latin American and Caribbean Movement for Children; the South Asia Coordinating Group on Accelerated Action to End Violence against Children (SACG); the South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children (SAIEVAC); UNICEF; the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child; the WePROTECT Global Alliance; ECPAT; and with contributions from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Institute for Public Policies and Human Rights of El Mercado Común del Sur (MERCOSUR);

Recognizing the critical role played by intergovernmental Regional Organizations and Institutions as catalysts of change in the promotion of enhanced accountability for children's rights, including their right to freedom from violence, and acknowledging the value of pursuing cooperation with civil society and child-led organizations;

Valuing the SRSG's support to the strengthening of regional commitment, processes and initiatives, and to enhancing cross-regional and South-South cooperation, as well as to the promotion and monitoring of regional progress towards the full implementation of the recommendations of the UN Study on Violence against Children and towards the elimination of all forms of violence against children, as pledged by the international community in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

Noting with appreciation the platform for dialogue and communication led by the SRSG with Regional Organizations and Institutions as an important mechanism, in the framework of the United Nations, to share knowledge and good practices, facilitate cross-fertilization of experiences, coordinate efforts, enhance synergies, identify trends and anticipate future challenges and contribute to accelerating progress in children's protection from violence;

Welcoming the SRSG's leading advocacy to promote, in cooperation with Regional Organizations and Institutions, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and accelerate progress towards the elimination of all forms of violence against children;

Stressing the strategic opportunity presented by the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its specific targets on violence against children (4.7, 4a, 5.2, 5.3, 8.7, 11.7), and especially target 16.2 towards ending all forms of violence against children, as well as its targets on ensuring children's access to justice and to accountable and child-friendly institutions, to mobilize increased commitment, action and resources for the safeguarding of children's right to freedom from violence and from fear, and the key role of intergovernmental Regional Organizations and Institutions in promoting regional support and national action;

Reaffirming our strong commitment to further accelerate and assess progress achieved in the implementation of the recommendations of the UN Study on Violence against Children in our respective regions, and to reinforce our co-operation in the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against children and the importance of ensuring children's participation in this process;

Having examined the follow-up provided to the conclusions and recommendations of the eighth Cross-Regional Round Table, held in Bhutan in 2018, and recalling the significant developments promoted over the past year, including the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration of the 2018 High-Level Political Forum which reaffirmed the commitment to invest in all children, adolescents and youth, to support their meaningful participation, to safeguard their rights and to ensure that from early childhood they grow up in a safe environment, free from all forms of violence, including neglect, abuse and exploitation, and through the elimination of all harmful practices;

Recognizing that 2019 is a year of opportunity towards ensuring children's freedom from violence, with the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the review of progress by the High-level Political Forum on sustainable development of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including violence-related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals; the Summit in September at the UN General Assembly devoted to reviewing implementation of the whole 2030 Agenda and providing guidance for the years ahead; and further recognizing important opportunities promoted at the regional and national levels to accelerate action for the prevention and elimination of violence against children;

Further recalling that 2019 marks the first year of implementation of the Global Compacts on Migration and on Refugees and has been identified by the African Union as the "Year of Refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons in Africa: towards durable solutions to forced displacement," and that the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child is undertaking a study on mapping children on the move within Africa;

Expressing serious concern that displaced, migrant, stateless, asylum-seeking and refugee children face a high risk of violence in countries of origin, in countries of transit and in countries of destination, and that ending violence against children on the move will help to achieve the SDGs;

Expressing commitment to ensure the protection from violence of children affected by migration and refugee situations and the safeguard of their rights, including through the promotion of social protection measures that support the most vulnerable children and families, and help prevent the risk of violence in children's lives;

1. **Welcome the significant progress made over the past year** towards the protection of children from all forms of violence, including the increased number of:

· ratifications of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other

international and regional child rights legal instruments;

- countries adopting a comprehensive national policy agenda on violence against children, enacting legislation to prohibit physical, psychological and sexual violence, and to protect child victims and fight impunity and strengthening national research and data systems on the scale and nature of violence in childhood and effective prevention strategies;
- regional baseline studies and national surveys conducted across different regions;
- information and awareness-raising campaigns to build a culture of respect for children's rights and freedom from violence;
- initiatives led by children and young people to advocate for children's protection from violence and to inform the development of policies and legislation to prevent and eliminate violence against children;
- regional plans to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against children aligned with the 2030 Agenda, as well as political commitments and initiatives promoted at the regional level to achieve this end, including the second African Girls Summit on ending child marriage in November 2018 and the decision adopted at the AU Summit in February 2019 on "Galvanising Political Commitment Towards the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation in Africa";
- global initiatives to promote a culture of prevention of violence and safeguarding the protection of children from violence, as well as to consolidate evidence to advance and monitor progress ;

2. **Reaffirm our determination to further promote individual and joint initiatives to:** invest in a culture of prevention of violence against children that addresses the underlying drivers of violence, including the specific challenges faced by both girls and boys, and which has a high return for society and for the wellbeing of children; to review progress made within and across regions; to consolidate achievements made and address the significant challenges that continue to hamper the realization of children's rights and their protection from all forms of violence, with a particular emphasis on vulnerable children;

3. **Express deep concern at the social tolerance, pervasiveness and severity of violence against children,** its long-lasting impact on child victims and high cost for society, and recognizing that this phenomenon remains hidden, concealed and unreported and is surrounded by stigma and by a deep sense of impunity;

4. **Commit to further enhance strategic partnerships to accelerate progress in this endeavour,** including with States, national institutions, Ombuds for children, parliamentarians, civil society, professional associations, faith-based organizations, traditional leaders, academia, the media, the private sector, as well as children themselves;

5. **Commit to mobilize support for the realization of the vision in the 2030 Agenda for peaceful, just and inclusive societies,** and particularly towards the achievement of SDG Target 16.2 to end all forms of violence against children, and the other violence against children related targets by promoting a cross-sectoral approach and strengthening implementation of comprehensive national strategies for violence prevention and elimination supported by adequate resources; strengthening and enforcing national legislation; promoting cross-sectoral cooperation guided by the best interests of the child among professionals working for and with children to ensure effective access to child-friendly services, including access to justice and to child-sensitive counselling, complaint and reporting mechanisms, and to universal birth registration of children; and by enhancing data systems, with high-quality, timely and reliable disaggregated data;

6. **Commit to engage in the follow-up and review processes of the 2030 Agenda,** including through strengthened accountability mechanisms at the national, regional and global levels; supporting Voluntary

National Reviews to ensure that children's protection from violence is front and center, including through the distinct attention given to SDGs 4, 8 and 16.2; mobilizing national level support for the inclusion in VNRs of children's voices and experiences and the inclusion of children in the official delegations to the HLPF in July; and encourage Heads of State and Government to address children's protection from violence as a core concern in their contribution to the Agenda 2030 Summit at the General Assembly, in September;

7. **Express commitment to continue to build upon the opportunities and momentum provided by the UN Study on Violence against Children and the process of implementation of the 2030 Agenda** to trigger urgent political action and public support to:

- safeguard children's protection from violence and accelerate progress towards achieving the SDG targets on violence against children, especially target 16.2, including by promoting high-level policy fora, as well as the development and implementation of regional plans aligned with the 2030 Agenda;
- collect, analyse and publicize data on violence against children;
- address priority areas of concern and accelerate progress in this area;
- document and consolidate positive developments and report on progress achieved.

8. **Express commitment to create a culture of children's empowerment and the genuine and ethical participation of children and adolescents in all matters affecting them**, including in the process of implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda;

9. **Welcome the significant initiatives promoted at the regional level to support child participation and empowerment, and express commitment to further pursue initiatives that prioritize violence prevention;**

10. **Welcome the valuable work of the SRSB to consolidate knowledge on children's protection from all forms of violence and for her influential advocacy;**

11. **Reaffirm our commitment to continue to support the SRSB in her efforts** at the global, regional and national levels to strengthen children's protection from violence and to promote cooperation across sectors and institutions;

12. **Welcome the Global Thematic Report on Violence against Children promoted by the SRSB in collaboration with regional organizations and other partners**, and commit to seize the opportunity of its launch and dissemination to enhance global, regional and national advocacy and policy action for the prevention of violence against children;

13. **Express commitment to accelerate progress in children's protection from all forms of violence, including for children on the move**, and to promote the implementation of the Global Compacts on Migrants, and on Refugees;

14. **Welcome the inclusion of the protection of children on the move, including refugee and migrant children, in the agenda of regional organizations and regional human rights bodies**, and the important efforts made towards: ensuring that the principle of the best interests of the child guides all actions in this area; providing to migrant, asylum-seeking and refugee children child-friendly information to safeguard their rights and ensure their protection from violence; enhancing the capacity of national child protection systems and local authorities to meet the needs of refugee and migrant children, including through effective cross-border cooperation; ensuring protection from discrimination, marginalization and violence, including xenophobic attacks, for refugee and migrant children; and upholding the rights of

unaccompanied and separated children, including through the promotion of effective systems of guardianship and the provision of child-friendly services of quality;

15. **Agree to report back on the progress achieved at the 2020 Cross-Regional meeting;**
16. **Express profound gratitude to the African Child Policy Forum** for co-organizing with the SRSG the 2019 Cross-Regional meeting on Violence against Children in cooperation with the African Union Commission and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and thank all other partners for their support to the meeting;
17. **Welcome the invitation extended by the Central American Integration System to host the 2020 Cross-Regional Meeting of Regional Organizations and Institutions.**

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