

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

30 November 2020

DCI-AFRICA

**Statement by DCI-Africa region on the 36<sup>th</sup> Session of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC)**

[Defence for Children International \(DCI\)](#) is grateful to the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child for the invitation to participate in its 36<sup>th</sup> Session.

DCI would like to congratulate and thank the Committee for the recently released General Comment on article 22 of the African Children's Charter regarding Children in Situation of Conflict.

However, DCI would like to draw your attention to the recurring threats and challenges faced by Africa's children including challenges to their survival and wellbeing. Currently, over 150 million African children<sup>i</sup> live in conflict areas and are therefore more likely to be killed, separated from their families, kidnapped, trafficked, sexually abused, and/or recruited by armed forces/groups. Consequently, these children are less likely to attend school and are more exposed to child labor.

In addition, many children in Africa, like those from other regions, now face additional threats to their rights amid the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, in Somalia, various child protection agencies, including DCI-Somalia have reported an increase in physical and sexual violence against children. During a recent [DCI online conversation with children human rights defenders](#), Paul, a young advocate from Ghana highlighted the impact of a shadow pandemic of violence against girls and boys. Similarly, Miatta from Liberia noted the increase of domestic violence and FGMs happening behind closed doors.

Furthermore, children continue to be deprived of their liberty in different contexts despite the numerous negative impacts this will have on them. Children who have been detained for their involvement in an armed conflict should be treated first and foremost as victims and be provided with the appropriate support. The violence that children deprived of their liberty face can be prevented by providing alternatives to detention, family and community-based care, and diversions away from the justice system.

[Defence for Children International \(DCI\)](#) therefore, requests the Committee to call upon Member States to:

1. Remove all current [reservations](#) to the ACRWC;
2. Promote the use of the Communications procedure of the Committee as an essential aspect of children's right to access justice;
3. Recognize children's unique risks and needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic, learn from it, and set appropriate mitigative measures in accordance with regional and international standards like the [Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty](#);
4. Set clear, coordinated, child-friendly standard procedures for documenting child right violations during the pandemic as indicated in the Committee's Guiding Note.



Thank you!

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<sup>i</sup> Save the Children. (2019). Stop the War on Children. <https://bit.ly/3kMZToZ>