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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
1368TH MEETING

2 SEPTEMBER 2026
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/COMM.1368 (2026)

COMMUNIQUE



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Adopted by the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) at its 1368th meeting held on 2 September 2026, dedicated to an Open Session on the theme: "Protection of Child Soldiers in Africa (UNSCR 1612 (2005))".

The Peace and Security Council,

Recalling Assembly Decision [Assembly/AU/Dec.718(XXXII)] adopted by the 32nd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in February 2019, which, inter alia, endorsed the strengthening of AU and Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) mechanisms for the protection of children in situations of conflict and the development of a Child Protection Architecture as a sub-aspect of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA); and Assembly Decision [Assembly/AU/Dec.753(XXXIII)] adopted in February 2020, which encouraged the Union, Member States and RECs/RMs to redouble efforts to mainstream child protection in their programmes;

Also recalling its previous decisions on the prevention of the recruitment and use of children in situations of conflict and protection of children in conflict situation, particularly Communiqués [PSC/PR/COMM.1262 (2025)] adopted at its 1262nd meeting held on 20 February 2025, [PSC/PR/COMM.1290.1 (2025)] adopted at its 1290th meeting held on 22 July 2025, and [PSC/MIN/COMM.2(DCLXI)] adopted at its 661st meeting held on 23 February 2017, among others;

Making reference to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, particularly Article 22; the AU Policy on Mainstreaming Child Protection in the African Peace and Security Architecture; the AU Policy on Child Protection in African Union Peace Support Operations; and the Revised AU Policy on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development;

Recognising that the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups is both a grave violation of children's rights and a peace and security concern that can sustain armed actors, prolong cycles of violence, weaken family and community protection systems, and undermine disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), security sector reform (SSR), post-conflict recovery and sustainable peace;

Cognizant that protracted and fragmented conflicts, violent extremism and terrorism, forced displacement, attacks on and military use of schools, poverty, food insecurity, school exclusion, weak birth and civil-registration systems, cross-border recruitment networks and other structural and immediate vulnerabilities can increase children's exposure to recruitment and re-recruitment;

Underscoring the importance of relying on credible and verified information coming from sources recognized by the AU in order to ensure acceptance by Member States concerned and their contribution to the process of protecting children in armed conflicts;

Taking note of the opening remarks by H.E. Ambassador Hervé Djokpe, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Benin to the African Union and Chairperson of the Peace and Security Council for September 2026; the introductory statement delivered by H.E. Ambassador H.E. Ambassador Losi Nancy Nonceba, Permanent Representative of South Africa on behalf of H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security and H.E. Ambassador Rebecca Amuge Otengo, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Uganda to the African Union, in their capacities as Co-Chairs of the African Platform on Children Affected by Armed Conflicts (AP-CAAC); and the presentations by H.E. Ambassador Jainaba Jagne, African Union Special Envoy for Children Affected by Armed Conflict, and Honourable Robert Doya Nanima, Member

of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) and Special Rapporteur on Children in Conflict Situations;

Also taking note of the statements by H.E. Ms. Vanessa Frazier, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; H.E. Dr Laila Omar Gad, UNICEF Representative to the African Union and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa; Ms Chantal Mutamuriza, African Union Lead, Save the Children International Pan Africa Office, representing the Save the Children Pan-Africa and AU Liaison Office in its capacity as Secretariat of the AP-CAAC; and

Acting under Article 7 of its Protocol, the Peace and Security Council:

1. **Welcomes** the progress made by Member States, AU Commission, ACERWC, AP-CAAC and other relevant actors on the implementation of the previous PSC decisions on protection of children in conflict situations; **takes note** with appreciation the implementation matrix; and **encourages** those concerned to redouble efforts to ensure that children are protected from any form of violence;
2. **Expresses deep concern** over the continued recruitment and use of children in whatever capacity by armed forces and armed groups, including terrorist organisations, in conflict situations across the Continent, and over the persistence of conditions that expose children to recruitment, exploitation and re-recruitment; **calls upon** Member States, with the support of the AU Commission, RECs/RMs and partners where required, to address the structural and immediate drivers that heighten children's exposure to recruitment and re-recruitment; while **underscoring** that the continued recruitment and use of children undermines their rights and protection, fuels cycles of violence and weakens prospects for durable peace and recovery;
3. **Strongly condemns** the recruitment and use of children by all parties to conflict, **demanding** the immediate cessation of such practices and the unconditional release of all children associated with armed forces and armed groups; and **calls on** all parties to armed conflict to comply fully with their obligations under applicable international humanitarian law and international human rights law, as well as relevant AU legal and policy frameworks;
4. **Reaffirms** the AU principle of "children as victims first" and, in this regard, **underscores** that children associated, or allegedly associated, with armed forces and armed groups, including groups designated as terrorist organisations, must be approached as children in need of protection, irrespective of the nature of the role they performed or the circumstances of their association; **and stresses** that, where age is uncertain, the presumption of childhood be applied;
5. **Calls upon** Member States, particularly those affected by conflict, to establish or strengthen child-sensitive screening, age-assessment, referral and handover procedures so that all children associated, or suspected to have been associated, with armed forces and armed groups; and **encourages** Member States, which have not done so, to introduce comprehensive amnesty programmes which will support vulnerable children and young people to leave armed groups and discourages continued recruitment;
6. **Underlines** the importance of prevention and early action and, in this regard, **calls upon** the AU Commission, Member States and RECs/RMs to integrate child-protection risks relating to recruitment and use into national, regional and continental early warning and early response systems; and, in this regard, **calls** for enhanced regional cooperation and information-sharing including sharing best practices, to prevent the recruitment and exploitation of children by terrorist and armed groups, while investing in education, community resilience, psychosocial support, and other preventive measures that address the conditions that make children vulnerable to recruitment;

7. **Emphasises** the need to integrate the protection of children into mediation, ceasefire negotiations and peace processes from the earliest stages; and **requests** the AU Commission and all those concerned to ensure that peace agreements expressly prohibit the recruitment and use of children, facilitate humanitarian and child-protection access, provide for the identification and unconditional release of associated children, and include child-specific provisions for rehabilitation, reintegration and prevention of re-recruitment;
8. **Encourages** Member States to strengthen national legal and accountability frameworks, investigate and prosecute alleged perpetrators of recruitment and use of children, in accordance with applicable law, and ensure effective command and institutional accountability; and **calls for** child-sensitive procedures that protect child victims and witnesses throughout justice processes;
9. **Reminds** the AU Commission and Troop and Police Contributing Countries to establish and strengthen child-protection focal points, and to integrate the AU Policy on Child Protection in AU Peace Support Operations into military and police doctrine, standard operating procedures, pre-deployment and in-mission training, command directives, incident reporting, civilian handover procedures, conduct and discipline, and compliance and accountability arrangements;
10. **Reiterates** the need to mainstream child protection into DDR, SSR and Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development processes, ensuring child-specific procedures for identification, release, rehabilitation and reintegration, and aligning national programmes with the AU Policy on Mainstreaming Child Protection in APSA/AGA and the Revised AU Policy on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development;
11. **Directs** the AU Commission to identify specific measures to support girls associated with armed forces and armed groups, including girl mothers and survivors of sexual violence, as well as children with disabilities and children used in support and other less visible roles; including through psychosocial support, addressing stigma, discrimination and other barriers that may prevent such children from being identified or accessing appropriate services and community-based reintegration;
12. **Appeals** to Member States concerned to protect schools and learning environments and facilitate continuity and re-entry into education for conflict-affected children; **encourages** Member States that have not yet done so to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration;
13. **Encourages** Member States to allocate adequate and sustainable domestic resources for prevention, release, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes, and **appeals** to international partners to support the efforts of the AU and its Member States, including through technical and financial support;
14. **Commends** Member States that have ratified and are implementing the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child; **encourages** those Member States that have not yet done so to ratify and domesticate the Charter; as well as to strengthen its effective implementation through translating it into national legal, policy, institutional and operational measures for the prevention of recruitment and use, and the protection of affected children;
15. **Directs** the AU Commission, in coordination with the ACERWC and relevant partners, to strengthen regular monitoring, analysis and knowledge generation on the recruitment and use of children and the implementation of Council decisions; and **reiterates its request** to the ACERWC to advance the comprehensive study and annual reporting on children in situations of conflict and submit it to the Council for consideration;

16. **Instructs** the AU Commission to continue updating and consolidating the implementation matrix for Communiqué [PSC/PR/COMM.1262 (2025)], taking into account Communiqué [PSC/PR/COMM.1290.1 (2025)] and the present decision, as the basis for periodic progress reporting to Council;
17. **Commends** the efforts of the AU Special Envoy for Children Affected by Armed Conflict, in promoting AU's agenda on protection of children in conflict situations, including political engagement with concerned Member States, and follow up on implementation of relevant Council decisions;
18. **Commends** the role of the African Platform on Children Affected by Armed Conflicts in sustaining advocacy, coordination and knowledge exchange; and **reiterates** the importance of the Banjul Process as a continental platform for implementation review, peer learning and high-level political engagement on children affected by armed conflict; and
19. **Decides** to remain actively seized of the matter.