



PRESS RELEASE

THE UNITED NATIONS WORKING TOGETHER WITH THE AFRICAN UNION TO PROTECT CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT

19 September, New York/ Addis Ababa – In an effort to better protect African children affected by armed conflict, the Peace and Security Department of the African Union Commission and the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict signed an agreement on 17th September 2013, to strengthen protection mechanisms in close partnership with UNICEF.

The declaration formalizes on-going efforts to ensure that child protection concerns are central elements for peace and security on the continent.

“We welcome this collaboration to ensure that protecting children is central to the work of the African Union” said Mr. El-Ghassim Wane, Director, Department of Peace and Security, African Union Commission. “We know that we cannot succeed in building a prosperous and just future for the continent if we do not do everything in our collective powers to protect them from the scourge of violence and war.”

Strengthening the cooperation with States and regional organizations to improve the protection of children has been a priority since the beginning of the mandate of the Special Representative.

“As the African Union is taking a larger role in the continent’s mediation and peacekeeping operations, it had become essential to make our partnership stronger,” said Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. “A significant number of children affected by armed conflict live on the African continent. With this agreement, my Office will work even more closely with the African Union and UNICEF to respond to their plight”.

Despite progress, grave child rights violations, including recruitment and use remain of concern in African countries affected by conflict.

“The consequences of armed conflict on children have implications for generations to come. This partnership is an opportunity to support the African Union in its efforts to protect children and build resilient communities for the future” said Elke Wisch, Deputy Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa.

The declaration outlined areas of collaboration between the African Union Department of Peace and Security, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, with the support of UNICEF:

- Including the protection of children in all African Union peace and security activities.
- The deployment of child protection specialists into the African Union Peace and Security Department,
- The joint development of a programme of work, including to align domestic legislation with regional and international child rights
- The development of guidelines to protect children affected by armed conflict.
- The development of improved and harmonized training programs on child protection for troop contributing countries to African Union Peace Missions.

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