Addis Ababa, 11 October 2023 - The Africa Platform on Children Affected by Armed Conflicts (AP CAAC) joins the world in commemorating International Girl Child Day. Girls face unique challenges and barriers in various societies, especially in conflict and post-conflict contexts, hence the urgent need to break down these barriers for their well-being and development.

In conflict situations, girls are subject to widespread and systematic violations that affect them mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and physically. These violations include illegal detention, abduction and forced removal from families and homes, disappearances, torture and other inhuman treatment, killing and maiming, lack of basic needs and essential services like nutrition, health care and education, forced recruitment into armed forces and groups, sexual exploitation, increased exposure to HIV/AIDS, and a wide range of physical and sexual violations, including rape, enforced pregnancy, forced prostitution, forced marriage and forced child-bearing.

Gendered patterns to the grave rights violations committed against children in conflict situations call to attention the extreme suffering that armed conflicts inflict on girls and the many roles girls play during conflict and its aftermath. The fact that children are not homogeneous demands a better understanding of the dynamics, including the gender dimensions, in analysing children's experiences in conflict situations. Such information and response mechanisms will support the strengthening and development of programmes towards preventing and addressing these grave rights violations.

In this regard, we call on AU Member States to renew their commitment to protecting the rights and welfare of girls and children at all times, particularly in conflict situations. AP CAAC further takes this opportunity to call upon AU Member States to take all necessary measures to ensure better documentation and monitoring along gender dimensions to ensure effective prevention and response to violations against children in conflict situations. Protecting the future and realization of the dreams of a girl child includes participation in leadership in line with the theme of this year’s International Girl Child Day, "Invest in Girls' Rights: Our Leadership, Our Well-being."

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