

**DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION**

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**The African Union Ten Year Action Plan on Child Labour plan moves toward implementation**

The African Union (AU) is initiating discussions with stakeholders on the implementation of African Union's Ten Year Action Plan to Eradicate Child Labour, Forced Labour, Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery (2020-2030) adopted during the AU Summit held in February 2020. This initiative resonates well with the International Labour Organization (ILO) convention 182 on Worst Forms of Child Labour which is reaching its universal ratification.

When children are trapped in slavery, forced labour and trafficking, forced to participate in armed conflict, and all types of illicit activities, or in hazardous work, we must act urgently to protect their rights and restore their childhood as worst forms of child labour are unacceptable and an affront to our common values.

The AU Ten Year Plan is implemented in juxtaposition with the ILO Convention 182, an instrument that emphasizes the subset of worst forms of child labour requiring immediate action, while listing other forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances; and the use, procurement or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in relevant international treaties.

The move to implement the strategic pillars of the Ten Year Plan provides a big push toward eradicating the issue as it establishes a clear legal framework. Countries in Africa still need to enforce and ensure effective implementation through labour inspection and other means and provide decent work for adults and young people of legal working age.

The Ten Year Regional Action Plan, adopted by Africa heads of states during the African Union Summit in February 2020 and Ministers of Labour and Social Development in December 2019, is a comprehensive action plan for achieving SDG Target 8.7 which calls on all, to take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of all forms of child labour as an essential step to achieving decent work for all, full and productive employment and inclusive and sustained economic growth. Through the Action Plan, African leaders recognise the magnitude of the challenge they face and set the ground for positive policy experiences in a number of African countries that will help to guide efforts in the region moving forward. The AU is committed to accelerating the achievement of SDG 8.7 in line with its policy

frameworks and legal instruments, and to using its political and convening capacities to drive greater coordination of implementation efforts across the continent.

“Africa faces obstinate and multifaceted challenges, however I wish to submit to you that, with more effort and adoption of robust policies such as the Ten Year Plan to combat Child Labour, we shall overcome and we shall surely arrive to the “Africa We Want”, said Her Excellency Amira Elfadil, AU Commissioner for Social Affairs while thanking the sector Ministers for their dedication and commitment in Abidjan, 2019.

In a bid to create a continental consensus on child labour, the AU working with partners has a plan to intensify continent-wide consultations with its stakeholders and social partners in Africa on the implementation of the Ten Year Plan, identifying areas of collaboration in order to build stronger partnerships and scaling up action against child labour. The Ten Year plan aims to assist stakeholders across the continent in scaling up efforts in this regard. It targets the elimination of these forms of exploitation among both adults and children.

According to the latest ILO global estimates, about 152 million children, 64 million girls and 88 million boys, are in child labour worldwide.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, a total of 72.1 million African children are still involved in child labour, including 31.5 million children engaged in hazardous work. According to the ILO’s global estimates on child labour published in 2017, sub-Saharan Africa witnessed a rise in child labour from 2012 to 2016, in contrast to other regions where child labour continued to decline.

The term child labour refers to the subset of children’s work that is injurious, negative or undesirable to children and that should be targeted for elimination.

In line with Agenda 2063 aspirations, the Ten Year Plan also draws inspiration from another ILO Convention, the C138 on Minimum Age which calls on Member States to set a general minimum age for admission to work or employment of at least 15 years of age. The Convention further enjoins countries to set a higher minimum age of not less than 18 years for employment or work which by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out is likely to jeopardise the health, safety or morals of young persons, i.e., hazardous work (Art. 3.1).

The AU Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) upon which the Ten Year Plan is anchored, recognise the child’s right to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development (Art. 32.1)

The Commissions’ call is three fold: Take care of implementation; accelerate implementation; and appeal for action.

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<sup>1</sup> Child Labour Global Estimates: results and trends 2012-2016. International Labour Organization (ILO), Geneva, 2017

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