STATEMENT
BY
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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

ON BEHALF OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT
COMMUNITY (SADC)

ON

AGENDA ITEM 65 (A): PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF THE
RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

AT THE THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE 68TH SESSION ON THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

New York, 16 October 2013

Please check against delivery
Mr. Chairman,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Member States namely, Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and my own country, Malawi.

Mr. Chairman,

SADC member States have committed themselves to the promotion and protection of the Rights of Children anchored on the common values, principles and the historical and cultural affinities that exist between the peoples of Southern Africa.

SADC recalls the historic special session of the General Assembly on children held in 2002, when 190 countries adopted the Declaration and Plan of Action entitled “A world fit for children” and re-affirm our commitments to the time-bound set of goals for children and young people, with particular focus on: a) promoting healthy lives; b) providing quality education; c) protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence; and d) combating HIV/AIDS.

SADC welcomes the 11th update of the progress that we have collectively made in the follow-up to the special session of this Assembly on children.

It is with respect to this that I can reportthat all SADC member States have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Children and acceded to the African Charter on the Rights of Welfare of the Child and have enacted various legislative and other measures to give effect to the provisions of these instruments.

Therefore, we take note of the progress made on the children and armed conflict agenda, particularly in combating impunity and to end the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. Furthermore SADC acknowledges the consultations undertaken by the Special Representative on Violence against Children, as they contribute towards strengthening regional and national engagements on the protection of the rights of children.
SADC takes the opportunity to thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representatives on Violence against Children and for the Children in Armed Conflict for the comprehensive reports on the agenda item under consideration.

Special mention must be made on the Secretary-General’s report on the Girl Child focusing on child-headed households. This is of growing concern to the group and we will be introducing our bi-annual resolution on the Girl Child whose focus will be paving the way ahead in mitigating the challenges faced by the girl child.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The Assembly may wish to recall that as part of the measures to promote and protect the rights of the children, the region adopted the *SADC Business Plan on Orphans, Vulnerable Children and Youth* for the period of 2009-2015, with the vision to *ensure that the rights and basic needs of all children and youth in the region are fully met, enabling them to grow up well and to realize their full human right potentials.*

Under this regional Plan, SADC member States have been taking measures aimed at consolidating the commitment to prevent and eliminate violence against children. To date, most of SADC member States have included specific programs on their national Poverty Reduction Strategies, focusing on health, education and food security, which are being implemented in a more integrated manner.

Consequently, I am pleased to inform the Assembly that there has been a significant improvement in the access to primary school education, health and sanitation and improvement of nutrition levels among children. SADC member States believe that healthy and well educated children stand a better chance of becoming adults who can improve living conditions for themselves and contribute towards achieving lasting and sustainable development in the region.

**Mr. Chairman,**

In the face of these improvements on the implementation of the rights of the children and in aspiring to make the world fit for children, we note with sadness that there are still enormous challenges to overcome, such as hunger, malnutrition, communicable and non-communicable diseases, sexual exploitation, violence and human trafficking.
SADC member States have consequently aligned themselves with the commitment to implement the goals of the Second Decade of Education in Africa, 2006-2015 so as to ensure safety of boys and girls in schools, universal access to comprehensive quality basic education and strengthen the Education Management Information Systems. We are also committed to developing sports infrastructure and promoting extra-curricula activities for children.

Mr. Chairman,

SADC member States support the findings contained in the annual report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against children that critical partnerships have helped in maximizing the engagement with Governments and in developing policy platforms to promote cross fertilization of experiences and thereby sustaining and further consolidating national action for children’s protection from violence. This has enabled groups such as SADC to mobilize support for overcoming persistence challenges and the steady pursuit of the implementation of this critical agenda.

To that end, SADC Member States have acceded to multilateral, regional and bilateral agreements for the prevention, detection and investigation of cases of sexual exploitation involving children and support for the victims. The region has coordinated its actions through Southern African Region Police Chief’s Coordination Organization (SARPCCO), a body established to, among other duties, policing trans-border crime, including violence against children.

Mr. Chairman,

With regard to HIV and AIDS, SADC member States are facing a high burden of the pandemic, which greatly affects children in one way or another. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has been made worst by the prevalence of tuberculosis and malaria. SADC nations have seen an increase in child headed households as a result of this scourge. In recognition of this challenge facing the region's children, some SADC member States have begun implementing programmes to ensure child headed households benefit from some social protection initiatives.

SADC has adopted a multi-sectoral HIV and AIDS strategic framework of action aimed at intensifying concrete measures and specific actions to address
the devastating and pervasive impact of this deadly pandemic in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. The strategic framework focuses on key areas of policy development, through the mainstreaming of HIV and AIDS in all areas of the SADC's development agenda to facilitate the efficient use of technical and institutional capacities and resources available in the region and those provided by our partners.

Mr. Chairman,

SADC member States are still concerned with the growing phenomenon of trafficking in persons, especially women and children. This phenomenon is a criminal offence that requires clear and comprehensive national, regional and international legislations and cooperation for its prevention and combat.

SADC agrees with the calls for good data and research systems to enable better national planning, effective policymaking and adequate resource allocation to prevent violence and secure the protection of children. In this context, allow me to voice SADC's appreciation to UNICEF and all other UN bodies that have provided support to national efforts in dealing with the human trafficking scourge.

SADC has adopted and is implementing a 10 year *Strategic Plan of Action on Combating Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children*. The Plan of Action lays out methods and areas of cooperation to combat all forms of human trafficking and further addresses trafficking from a comprehensive perspective, as outlined in the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, the African Union Plan of Action, and the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development.

Mr. Chairman,

SADC member States are aware that the full implementation of all legal instruments addressing the promotion and protection of the rights of children will require resources. In this view, SADC countries will continue to work with their partners in mobilizing and leveraging resources and allocating them to
structures created to address the issues related to orphaned and vulnerable children, including children with disabilities.

**Mr. Chairman,**

At this juncture, permit me to speak in my national capacity for my own country, Malawi. My government realizes that children often go through abuse, exploitation and human trafficking as a result of poverty. To circumvent these activities, the Malawi Government has, through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare instituted programs with the aim of uplifting the welfare of children, among these are social cash transfers and the school feeding program.

Police units throughout the country have special child friendly units where people are encouraged to report incidents of abuse. Furthermore, recently the government has established an initiative that is using the local traditional leaders to combat social challenges such as child marriages and other harmful practices.

The Assembly may wish to note that with the success of using local leaders to get women to deliver babies at health centers, thereby reducing maternal mortality rates, the government has also resorted to using local leaders to champion children’s rights. The traditional leaders are no longer viewed as custodians of harmful practices.

My Government would like to thank all cooperating partners for their assistance in uplifting the welfare of children in Malawi.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Let me conclude by reiterating SADC commitments to implementing the existing legal instruments adopted at national, regional, continental and global levels on the promotion and protection of the rights of children.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.