



Statement of the Africa Albinism Network on the rights and welfare of children with albinism in Africa at the 43rd Ordinary Session of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC). Maseru, Lesotho

15th April 2024.

Honourable Chairperson, Members of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, representatives of member states, AU Organs, UN Agencies, The UNIE on Albinism, CSOs, and representatives of children.

My name is Kwame Andrews Daklo. I am honoured to address the committee representing Under The Same Sun and Africa Albinism Network, which include over 200 albinism groups across Africa, regarding the challenges facing children with albinism across our continent. I was much excited to hear many speakers during the opening session making remarks regarding Children with Albinism. Thank you for recognising the challenges of children with albinism in Africa.

Honourable Chair, children with albinism encounter multifaceted barriers that impede the enjoyment of their fundamental human rights, including access to education and healthcare.

Discrimination within educational institutions often results in exclusion, limited opportunities for learning, and low academic achievement. For instance, in Namibia, a report published by the Office of the Ombudsman in 2022 indicates a high rate of school dropout amongst children with albinism due to mistreatment by teachers, name-calling, bullying and lack of reasonable accommodation in the classroom.

Similarly, inadequate access to healthcare services, including dermatological care and vision support, further exacerbates the health disparities experienced by children with albinism across Africa. Due to lack of melanin in the skin and eyes, children with albinism are more vulnerable and susceptible to skin damage and skin cancer.

Moreover, the right to family life is frequently compromised due to societal misconceptions and stigma surrounding albinism, leading to family rejection and social isolation. These children are often denied the fundamental right to experience love, care, and belonging within a supportive family environment. In addition, discrimination, stigmatisation and misconceptions by the society drive families of children with albinism to opt to place them in orphanages, shelters, boarding schools, and other forms of institutional care.

Furthermore, the right to play, essential for physical and emotional development, is curtailed by safety concerns arising

from targeted physical attacks and abuses directed at children with albinism.

The escalating levels of UV radiation linked to climate change significantly compound the challenges faced by children with albinism. Research indicates that children as young as one year old, are exhibiting visible signs of sunburn and skin damage merely from engaging in outdoor play.

Moreover, deeply entrenched harmful practices, such as physical attacks, inflict lasting trauma and irreparable harm upon children with albinism. Since the year 2020, 61 cases of attacks targeting persons with albinism have been documented. Tragically, more than half of these attacks involved children with albinism whose body parts are erroneously believed to possess mystical properties. For instance, on January 31st 2024, a child with albinism's body was found in a wooded area of Morrumbala in Mozambique with the eyes, heart, arms, and legs removed. Both parents of this child also sustained knife wounds during their home invasion by the attackers. Such acts not only violate the inherent dignity and rights of these children but also perpetuate a culture of fear and discrimination within society.

We call upon member states of the African Union to implement inclusive education policies and awareness campaigns to combat discrimination and ensure equal access to quality and accessible education for children with albinism.

We also urge member states to strengthen healthcare systems to provide comprehensive services tailored to the specific needs of children with albinism, including dermatological care, vision and psychosocial support and most importantly the provision of sunscreen.

We encourage all African countries to adopt national action plans on albinism in line with the AU plan of action on albinism in Africa.

In addition, we call on African states to enact and enforce legislation to combat discrimination, violence, and harmful practices targeting children with albinism, ensuring their safety and security in all spheres of life.

We commend the Committee for recognizing the unique challenges faced by children with albinism and for providing a platform to discuss and seek solutions to these pressing issues.

We wish to encourage other human rights mechanisms both at the AU and UN levels, as well as member states, to replicate this commendable initiative for persons with albinism.

By dedicating specific attention and resources to address the challenges faced by persons with albinism, we can foster a more inclusive and equitable society where every individual, regardless of their physical characteristics, can fully enjoy their rights and participate meaningfully in society.

I thank you.