

Editorial **Éditorial**

The year 2025 marks a defining moment in Africa's human rights trajectory as we commemorate the 35th anniversary of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (African Children's Charter or Charter), a transformative instrument that emerged from Africa's determination to articulate a child-rights framework rooted not only in universal norms but in the continent's historical experiences, identities, and socio-cultural specificities. Adopted in 1990, the Charter responded to the gaps and silences of the global framework by recognising challenges that were manifestly African: the lingering legacies of apartheid, internal displacement, harmful practices, systemic discrimination against girls, the plight of children in conflict, and the pervasive absence of legal identity. Many of us were children when the Charter came into being; others had not yet been born. Its journey over the past three and a half decades is therefore not merely institutional; it is generational.

The Charter's legacy is profound and its impact is undeniable. Fifty-one AU member states have now ratified it, embedding children's rights in national laws, policies, and constitutions. The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Committee) has evolved into a strong continental institution; undertaking a robust monitoring of the implementation of the Charter through its state party reporting mechanism, issuing authoritative General Comments, undertaking investigations, developing thematic guidelines, advancing child-rights jurisprudence, and generating foundational research on multitude of issues, including children affected by armed conflict, children on the move, digital harms, climate change, juvenile justice, family environment and parental care, harmful practices, and children with disabilities.

The relocation of the Secretariat to Maseru in 2021 ushered in a new phase of institutional growth, transforming it into a dynamic hub for continental child-rights expertise. Yet the Charter's anniversary also reminds us that this millstone co-exists with immense challenges; conflicts that destroy lives and uproot childhoods, birth-registration systems that render millions invisible, the climate crisis that deepens inequalities and multiplies all child protection concerns, pervasive harmful practices, widespread poverty, digital spaces that expose children to new risks, and national child-protection systems that remain underfunded and overstretched. The story of the Committee is therefore both an account of remarkable progress and a powerful call for renewed resolve, accountability, and collective action.