



## **ECOWAS Permanent Observer to UN engages with UN Special Rapporteur on the Sale, Sexual exploitation and Sexual Abuse of Children**

The ECOWAS Permanent Observer to the United Nations, Ambassador Kinza Jawara -Njai on Monday 9th October 2023 received in audience Madam Mama Fatima Singhateh, UN Special Rapporteur on the Sale, Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse of Children at the ECOWAS Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations in New York. The meeting which held following presentation of the UN Special Rapporteur's Report on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children to the UN General Assembly on 5th October 2023, discussed progress and challenges associated with the status of children at the International level and on the African continent in particular with a view to foster collaboration between ECOWAS and the Office of the UN Special Rapporteur to advance the important undertakings of her mandate in the West African Region.

The ECOWAS Permanent Observer in welcoming Madam Singhateh, thanked her for her visit and congratulated her on her reelection for a 2nd term of office. She seized the opportunity of the visit to inform the UN Special Rapporteur of ECOWAS' initiatives in the area of Child rights and welfare including the development and adoption of several normative and legal frameworks such as the ECOWAS Child Policy and Strategic Plan of Action (2019 -2030), crafted to ensure the wellbeing and protection of children as well as several programmatic efforts geared towards strengthening child protection and development in the ECOWAS region.

The UN Special Rapporteur in turn informed the ECOWAS Permanent Observer that the key priority of her mandate is tackling sale, sexual exploitation and abuse of children and her present report to the Assembly also highlights a study on the exploitation and sexual abuse of children in the context of travel and tourism including a closer look at the phenomena of Voluntourism. Madam Singhateh further expressed the importance of showcasing the progress made thus far in the ECOWAS region as well as exploring avenues for addressing the negative impacts of child early and forced marriage, school dropout, child trafficking and child labour. The two also agreed to further exchanges on the subject and strengthen outreach and collaboration with the ECOWAS Commission and in particular with the Department of Gender and Social Affairs.

Following the courtesy call, the ECOWAS Permanent Observer, Madam Jawara Njai on 10th October 2023 participated in the high-level panel discussions on the findings and recommendations emanating from the report of the UN Special rapporteur. The objective of the panel discussion organized by ECPAT International, and the office of the UN Rapporteur centered on strengthening collective action by intergovernmental bodies, governments, businesses, and civil society organizations to regulate the issue of tourism and travel related child exploitation by sending and receiving countries, based on the recommendations from the report, evidence from



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**Page 2 / 2**

Directorate of Communication

the ground, existing practices, and experience. In her intervention, The ECOWAS Permanent Observer commended the quality of the report and reiterated ECOWAS' commitment to further the pertinent recommendations therein and that the specific recommendations forwarded to counter the ills associated with International and Domestic Voluntourism shall be reflected in ECOWAS Child Protection Policies, Programmes and Initiatives. She further assured that keen attention will be borne in regional efforts aimed at strengthening child protection and education systems and ensuring effective regulations are in place for adequate response to child's rights and protection issues in West Africa.

At close of engagements, the ECOWAS Permanent Observer and the UN Special Rapporteur expressed their respective resolve to foster stronger collaboration between their two Agencies in areas of mutual concern discussed, including intensifying awareness creation and sensitization amongst stakeholders on child rights issues at local community, national and regional levels.