**Maat for Peace’ submission to the Special Rapporteur on Rights to Development**

Right of Children and Future Generations to Development

**Introduction:**

The right to development of children and future generations continues to face significant challenges due to the adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, conflicts, economic crises, and violations of children's rights. The prevailing reality reveals that two-thirds (2/3) of the sustainable development indicators for children are far from achieving their goals. Consequently, more than 1.9 billion children in 140 countries worldwide are deprived of real development opportunities. This situation is particularly dire for children in African countries. In this context, Maat for Peace, Development, and Human Rights submits its written contribution to the Special Rapporteur on the right to development. The submission aims to provide a statistical and analytical overview of the state of African children's right to development, encompassing economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Additionally, the submission includes a set of recommendations derived from the analysis.

**First: Statistical Overview of African Children's Right to Development:**

The African continent bases its plans and efforts to achieve and ensure the right to development for its children and future generations on the Africa Agenda 2063 and the African Children's Agenda 2040. However, it is essential to note that the African continent faces numerous challenges that hinder the realization of children's and future generations' right to development. Approximately 70% of countries in different African regions lack clear and comprehensive frameworks and guidelines for child protection policies. The different dimensions of the right to development for future generations, particularly children, can be examined as follows:

1. **Economic Dimension of African Children's Right to Development:**

The economic sectors within the African continent encounter significant challenges that impede children and future generations from enjoying the economic benefits of development. Africa is home to over 32.1 million orphaned children and adolescents, and estimates indicate that by 2030, Africa will have 305 million poor children, accounting for 55% of the world's total.[[1]](#footnote-1) Hunger is responsible for 45% of child deaths in Africa, with 90% of children failing to meet the minimum dietary standards, and more than half of African children experiencing inadequate nutrition. Economic and security conditions, coupled with natural disasters, deprive over one-fifth of Africa's seven-year-old children of access to education, while 60% of young people between the ages of 15 and 17 are forced to interrupt their education due to crises.[[2]](#footnote-2)

1. **Environmental Dimension of African Children's Right to Development:**

The environmental reality in Africa poses significant challenges to the right of children and future generations to development. The continent is grappling with numerous climate and security crises, with five of its countries, namely Chad, the Central African Republic, Somalia, Eritrea, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, ranking highest in terms of vulnerability to climate change, particularly concerning children. These climate changes are threatening the lives of more than 500,000 million children under the age of 18 in 35 sub-Saharan African countries.[[3]](#footnote-3) Furthermore, it is projected that by 2050,[[4]](#footnote-4) one billion African children will be forcibly displaced due to these climate-related challenges, and floods will have severe consequences for 19 million African children, particularly in Chad, South Sudan, and Nigeria.[[5]](#footnote-5)

1. **Social Dimension of African Children's Right to Development:**

An examination of the social dimension of the right to development for African children and future generations reveals a distressing reality characterized by poor health, education, and cultural conditions on the continent. Malaria alone claims the lives of over 3,000 African children every day, and it is estimated that by 2030, the under-five mortality rate will reach 48 deaths per 1,000 live births, resulting in the loss of 31 million children before they reach the age of five. Additionally, Africa is home to nine out of the ten countries with the highest rates of child marriage, including Niger, the Central African Republic, Chad, Mali, Mozambique, Burkina Faso, South Sudan, Guinea, and Nigeria. The continent is home to 130 million child brides under the age of 18, making it one of the regions most affected by sexual exploitation. Furthermore, Central Africa accounts for 47% of child sex trafficking victims worldwide.[[6]](#footnote-6)

**Second: Right of African Children and Future Generations to Development in Southern and Eastern Africa:**

An examination of the right to development for children and future generations in southern and eastern Africa underscores the negative impact of a wide range of crises, including health emergencies, displacement, and malnutrition, with approximately 80 million people, including 45 million children, are in need of humanitarian assistance.[[7]](#footnote-7) The region is experiencing declining indicators in terms of the extent to which children and future generations can enjoy their right to development.

1. **Sudan:**

Sudan serves as a stark example of declining indicators in the enjoyment of the right to development for African children and future generations. The country grapples with a complex web of conflict, poverty, climate change, and fragility. In Sudan, over 13.6 million children need humanitarian assistance, with three million children displaced and over 700,000 children suffering from severe malnutrition. Additionally, more than 1.7 million children under the age of one are at risk of not receiving life-saving vaccines. The country also faces significant challenges in providing access to clean water, with over 7.4 million children lacking access. The conflict has also jeopardized the right to education for 19 million Sudanese children.[[8]](#footnote-8)

1. **Ethiopia:**

It is crucial to acknowledge that Ethiopia faces significant challenges in creating an environment conducive to the realization of children's and future generations' right to development. The country remains predominantly rural, with estimates indicating that extreme poverty and unemployment have rendered up to 600,000 children and youth homeless.[[9]](#footnote-9) Furthermore, Ethiopia is grappling with one of the most severe educational crises globally, with over 3.5 million children out of school. Moreover, twenty million people, including 15.4 million children and women,[[10]](#footnote-10) require humanitarian assistance within the country.[[11]](#footnote-11) The rights of future generations are at stake, as the number of Ethiopian children under the age of 18 is projected to reach 58 million by 2050, without a clear development roadmap to advance their rights.[[12]](#footnote-12)

**Third: Right of African Children and Future Generations to Development in West and Central Africa**

The West and Central African regions face a multitude of challenges, including conflicts, population movements, recurring public health emergencies, climate change-related disasters, and food and nutrition crises. These factors have resulted in a significant decline in development indicators for children and future generations. Currently, 48.4 million children require multi-sectoral assistance to achieve their goals, while more than 17.2 million people have been displaced. Additionally, 6.2 million children under the age of 5 are at risk of severe malnutrition, and more than 31 million people require assistance in water, sanitation, and hygiene.[[13]](#footnote-13) In light of these circumstances, Maat reviews the indicators of the right to development for children and future generations in the following countries:

1. **Central African Republic:**

Violence, population movements, and natural disasters continue to pose substantial challenges to the right to development for children and future generations in the Central African Republic. The country is home to 1.3 million children in need of humanitarian assistance in 2024. Infant mortality rates and water-related mortality rates in the Republic are among the highest globally and in Africa. Moreover, over 1 million children require humanitarian assistance in the fields of water, sanitation, and hygiene.[[14]](#footnote-14)

1. **Chad**

Chad faces numerous obstacles in ensuring the enjoyment of the right to development by children and future generations. These obstacles include conflict, natural disasters, persistent food insecurity, high rates of malnutrition, economic crises, and political instability. Consequently, Chad ranks as the second-worst country globally in terms of children's exposure to climate change. Half of its children are affected by multidimensional poverty, and approximately 2.1 million children between the ages of 6 and 59 months suffer from wasting and require treatment.[[15]](#footnote-15)

1. **Niger**

Forced displacement resulting from conflict, malnutrition, recurring health epidemics, periodic floods, and droughts has significantly hindered children's enjoyment of their right to development in Niger. In 2024, Niger is home to over 2.4 million children in need of humanitarian assistance, with 436,348 children under the age of five requiring treatment for severe wasting. Additionally, 1,085,458 children require child protection services.[[16]](#footnote-16)

**Recommendations:**

After a comprehensive assessment of the reality faced by African children and future generations in enjoying their right to development, and a review of regional facts in East, West, South, and Central Africa, as well as indicators in specific African areas, Maat presents the following vision for accelerating the right to development for African children and their future generations:

1. Maat calls on African governments, especially the governments of Ethiopia, Chad, and Sudan, to include the right of children and future generations in national protection systems and to mainstream it into all security, political, economic and social governance mechanisms, and processes, and to include it within the processes of conflict settlement, management, and resolution, peace support processes, and post-conflict reconstruction and development.
2. Maat encourages the Rapporteur to activate technical assistance steps under his mandate to African governments, especially Chad and Niger, and to cooperate with them to launch local strategies supporting the rights of African children and future generations, especially the right to development, and its settlement and implementation.
3. Maat stresses the need for the governments addressed in the report to formulate a strong continental framework for preparing reports, monitoring and evaluating negative or positive changes occurring in indicators of the right to development, in a way that helps provide accurate, reliable, and up-to-date information about children’s crises in situations of violent conflict, crises, disasters, political and security changes and how to address them.
4. Maat calls on the governments of the continent, especially Chad and Ethiopia, to invest in child safety and protection networks in a way that helps establish aid programs, support the provision of basic services to children affected by the climate, accelerate the humanitarian response, meet children’s needs for health, water, and food, and secure educational paths against the negative effects of climate change.
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2. SOS, New report shows an estimated 35 million children in Africa are without parental care, 10 November 2023, <https://shorter.me/VRKQ9> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Sudan Turbine, Rise up for climate justice, accountability to children in Africa, access date 13 march 2023, <https://sudantribune.com/article263741/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Global Center Adaptation, Four Ways that Climate Change Impacts Girls’ Education in Africa, 24 January 2023, <https://bit.ly/3TwO3SP> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Current Issue, Climate change will cause more African children to die from hot weather, 24 August 2022, <https://bit.ly/3n1AP49> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
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7. UNICEF, UNICEF’S Humanitarian Action for Children 2024, Access date February 2024, <https://shorter.me/WJ4ql> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. RW, Humanitarian Action for Children 2024 – Sudan, 11 DEC 2023, <https://shorter.me/4a9xA> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
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12. The Big Win, Ethiopia Early Childhood Development Program, <https://shorter.me/3qlC2> [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
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14. UNICEF, Central African Republic Appeal Humanitarian Action for Children, <https://shorter.me/8vrQ-> [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. RW, Humanitarian Action for Children 2024 – Chad, 11 DEC, 2023, <https://shorter.me/lDVJm> [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. RW, Humanitarian Action for Children 2024 – Niger, 11 December 2023, <https://shorter.me/gqzws> [↑](#footnote-ref-16)