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Joint written statement submitted by International Catholic Child Bureau, Defence for Children International, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status*

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[26 January 2026]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Remobilizing States and Other Stakeholders Involved in Restorative Justice in Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Togo

1. In the framework of its «Enfance sans Barreaux 3» (Childhood without Bars 3) project (2023-2026), The International Catholic Child Bureau (BICE) and its implementing partner organizations (Dignité et Droits pour les Enfants en Côte d'Ivoire (DDE-CI), Bureau National Catholique de l'Enfance en RDC (BNCE-RDC) and Bureau National Catholique de l'Enfance au Togo (BNCE-Togo)), organized a regional conference on restorative justice and the sustainable reintegration of children in conflict with the law in Lomé, Togo, from 8 to 12 December 2025. The conference resulted in the “Lomé Declaration” echoing accepted recommendations by Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Togo during their review under the Universal Periodic Review mechanism.

I. The “Lomé Declaration”

2. Co-signed by some experts of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, renowned personalities and civil society organizations, its objective is to remobilize States and give new impetus to the implementation of the relevant treaty obligations of States under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, as well as the non-legally binding instruments relating to restorative justice. The Declaration also aims to recall the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 16 and its Target 16.3, which calls for “Promoting the rule of law and providing access to justice for all on an equal basis”. In addition, the Declaration calls on States to redouble their efforts to implement the relevant recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review, treaty bodies, and special procedure mandate holders, as well as those formulated by the Global Study on the Deprivation of Liberty of Children (A/74/136), whose 5th anniversary was celebrated in 2025.

II. Contents of the “Lomé Declaration”

3. Besides recalling principles such as the best interests of the child as the primary consideration, deprivation of liberty as a measure of last resort for the shortest possible period of time with periodic review, as well as the prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman, humiliating, or degrading treatment or punishment, the Declaration calls upon States to take new and further steps on the following issues:

A. Strengthening alternatives to deprivation of liberty and mechanisms for implementation and monitoring

4. States renew their pledges to raising awareness and strengthening the capacity of justice actors involved in the juvenile justice system to apply alternative measures to deprivation of liberty and socio-educational measures, as well as their implementation and monitoring, from their initial training and throughout their careers. In addition, they further promise to focus on strengthening, in law and in practice, including through implementing legislation, the use of alternatives to deprivation of liberty and their socio-educational monitoring. They also pledge to encouraging juvenile judges to make greater use of them. Finally, States aim at ensuring the consolidation of operational mechanisms, by allocating the necessary human, technical, and financial resources, an objective to be achieved in order to ensure the effective application and monitoring of alternative measures, in particular the community-based service mechanism.

B. Sustainable reintegration

5. In this area, the renewed pledge of the three States is based on four key pillars:

a. Initiate the reintegration process from the moment the child first contact with the justice system through socio-educational resocialization programs and continue this process with the child and their family after release by developing practical support and community-based services, both in residential facilities and in the community.

b. Facilitate access to education, apprenticeships, and vocational training for children who have committed offenses and have been acquitted or released as a measure of sustainable reintegration, as well as for children at risk as a preventive measure.

c. Adapt judicial measures to the age and needs of each child and ensure continuity of support beyond the age of majority, when such support began during childhood.

d. Take into account the gender-specific needs of children and ensure their equal access to all necessary training, rehabilitation, and sustainable reintegration opportunities.

C. Strengthening partnerships

6. Its aims to encourage traditional and online media to commit to and respect the principles of restorative justice in their programming and broadcasts and to serve as channels for disseminating good and promising practices. It also aims for enhanced collaboration between States and civil society, public and private vocational training centers, social services, social safety net programs supporting family resilience, and alternative care initiatives with a view to consolidating guarantees for the sustainable reintegration of children in conflict with the law and ensuring effective follow-up.

D. Data collection and analysis

7. With regard to data collection, the Declaration calls on Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Togo to compile and analyze disaggregated quantitative and qualitative data on the police, judicial, prison, and social treatment of children, including alternatives to deprivation of liberty and reintegration measures. Finally, the three States undertake to identify good and promising practices and adapt policies and resources based on an assessment of their impact.

III. Signature and Pledges

8. The authorities of Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Togo have signed the Lomé Declaration, thereby reaffirming their political will to strengthen efforts towards effective restorative justice system that prioritizes alternatives to deprivation of liberty and the sustainable reintegration of children in conflict with the law. This pledge should be translated into concrete steps through the strengthening of existing services and mechanisms, better coordination, enhanced synergy between stakeholders, dedicated budgets for the juvenile justice system, and improved tools for collecting and analyzing disaggregated data on juvenile justice. This is important to informing relevant public policies.

IV. BICE, its partners, and the NGO Panel on the Deprivation of Liberty of Children available to support and monitor this new momentum

9. BICE and its partners remain “watchdogs” of treaty-based and programmatic commitments in Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Togo in the area of juvenile justice. They are steadily committed to providing support to government initiatives.

10. In addition, the NGO Panel on Children Deprived of Liberty, of which BICE is a member, has developed a Roadmap on Children Deprived of Liberty 2025-2030, which aimed at working towards effective implementation of the recommendations of the 2019 United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty. This Roadmap, inter alia, calls for the promotion of alternatives measures to deprivation of liberty and for legal safeguards, independent oversight, and access to justice. The NGO Panel remains committed to supporting State efforts and providing the necessary technical assistance whilst continuing to monitor progress and challenges.

Dignité et Droits pour les Enfants en Côte d'Ivoire (DDE-CI), Bureau National Catholique de l'Enfance en République démocratique du Congo (BNCE-RDC) et Bureau National Catholique de l'Enfance au Togo (BNCE-Togo),, NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.

See previous strategic roadmap : Children deprived of liberty, 2023-2024 Roadmap for Action.