



**MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL PROTECTION
OFFICE OF THE CABINET SECRETARY**

**REMARKS FOR THE CABINET SECRETARY, MINISTRY
OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL PROTECTION
MR. SIMON K. CHELUGUI, EGH**

**DURING THE INTER RELIGIOUS CONFERENCE ON
ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN KENYA,
AT THE CHRISTIAN STUDENTS' LEADERSHIP CENTRE
(UFUNGAMANO HOUSE)**

9 TH JULY 2021

Religious Leaders,

Development Partners,

Child Protection Organizations,

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning

Let me start by thanking all the participants for finding time to come and dialogue on issues of Ending Violence Against Children in Kenya. I feel honored for the invitation to preside over this closing ceremony of the three-day Inter Religious Conference, because Children matters are very close to my heart. In the book of Psalms 127 and verse 3, the bible declares that Children are a heritage from the Lord and a reward from him. This is a very profound statement and if we all believed this, then we must all take care of our children because they are truly a reward from God.

Our Government, in collaboration with its partners, is determined to raise awareness on Violence Against Children and voice our commitment towards reducing prevalence of Violence Against Children by 40% by the year 2023. For this to happen, everyone must actively play their role.

It is important to point out that, all of us here today, are who we are because somebody somewhere, be it a parent, or a community took care of us. If not for anything else, let us take care of the children today, just to pay back a little of what was invested in us by others.

As the Ministry responsible for Children matters, am calling upon all of us to take up our responsibility to protect children and when we spot violence against them, to speak up as we are called to do in proverbs 31 verse 8-9, which calls on us all to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, speak up for the rights of all who are destitute, to speak up and judge fairly, and to defend the rights of the poor and needy. So, by stopping violence against children whenever we spot it, we are answering to God's call.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our country is a young fast-growing Nation, with children and young people accounting for over a half of its population. Report from the 2019 national census show that the top ten Counties with the largest number of children below 18 years were Nairobi, Nakuru, Kakamega, Bungoma, Kiambu, Kilifi, Narok, Meru, Kisii and Migori, in that order. Among these, Kilifi is one of the hotspots in Violence against Children. These statistics should help you in programming your activities.

Children hold our present and future, as they mirror the image of the society and therefore should be given the greater attention in planning, prioritization and provision. The Government of Kenya recognizes the importance of children in the society and embraces a value that cherishes a holistic child rights-based approach.

In this respect, our government is committed to protect children from all forms of violence as demonstrated through development of various policy and legal frameworks; and programmes meant to safeguard the rights and welfare children in our country. These include;

- Article 53 of our constitution which is very explicit on the protection of the child from all forms of exploitation and abuse;
- the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, (UNCRC);
- ratification of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child;
- the Children Act 2001, which is now before parliament for amendment;
- the Family Promotion and Protection Bill;
- the Counter Trafficking in Persons Act 2010;
- the Employment Act 2007;
- Sexual offense Act;
- the anti FGM Act among others.

It is therefore, very sad that we are still witnessing Violence Against Children in our country, even though we have very many laws meant to safeguard the interest of our children.

Data from my Ministry Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS), for the period January to June 2021, shows that, we have so far received **105,759** cases of Violence Against Children, out of which **93 percent** relate to **Neglect** of children, with **2 percent** being Cases of **physical abuse**. Other cases reported include, Early marriages, Defilements, emotional Abuse, FGM, harmful cultural practices, sexual exploitation and sodomy.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In the year 2019, a Violence Against Children Survey was conducted and data from the survey indicated that, boys and girls experienced unacceptably high rates of violence during childhood. This includes direct experiences of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, as well as indirect experiences such as witnessing violence in homes, schools, and communities. It is very disheartening to note that such violence is perpetrated by the immediate family and members of the society well known to children, the very people who should be protecting children from harm.

My Ministry also launched report on census of street families in Kenya, which was conducted in the year 2018. From that report, it was identified that the factors that push children into living and working in the street include; poverty, death of parents, separation/divorce of parents, abandonment, mistreatment by parents or relatives, tribal displacement, inadequate food at home, fear of being reprimanded, corporal punishment and domestic violence. To stop violence Against Children, all of us have to deal with these push factors.

My Ministry has continued to put measures to ensure a holistic and comprehensive approach to end all forms of violence, with a focus on prevention and provision of response and support services. Key interventions that we have adopted includes; dissemination and implementation of the **National Prevention and Response Plan on Violence Against Children 2019-2023**.

The Plan has 6 strategic areas of actions aimed at accelerating evidence based multi-sectoral actions to address violence against children these are:

- Implementation of Laws and Policies and Raising Public Awareness;
- Supporting families by Strengthening Parenting Skills and Economic Status;
- Addressing Norms and Values that are punitive towards children;
- Education and Life skills;
- Enhancing Response and Support Services; and
- Strengthening Coordination Mechanisms both at National and County levels.

I am happy to note that during this conference, strategic actions have been clearly outlined that the State, Religious Leaders, families and other stakeholders need to take up to fast track the fight to end violence against children. Indeed, we do require a multi-sectoral approach, a whole-of-society approach to ensure all of us play our part in ending all forms of violence against our children.

As part of implementing the action plan, My Ministry with the help of our partners developed a simpler version of the response plan to assist children, be aware of the various kinds of violence; why children experience violence; and where they can seek help. This was out of the realization that it is important for children to understand how to prevent and respond to violence against them.

Similarly, as part of addressing norms, attitudes and behaviors around violence against children in our society, my Ministry under the support of **UNICEF** launched a public behavior change campaign on Violence against Children **SPOT IT, STOP IT**. The campaign aims at kick starting a movement to end violence against children in Kenya through awareness creation from the national to the grass root levels. We are calling on all of you to be part and parcel of this campaign.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The responsibility of bringing up Children and caring for them, is bestowed on all parents and would be parents. The book of Deuteronomy chapter 6 in verse 6-7 reminds us that giving proper instructions to our children is a life time engagement, and not a one-off activity.

More importantly while instructing our children, the book of Ephesians in chapter 6 verse 4, calls on parents and especially fathers not to provoke their children to anger, by the way they treat them, but rather to bring them up with the discipline and instructions that comes from the Lord. It is therefore unfortunate, that the Violence Against children report 2019 indicates that most children reported to have witnessed violence at home directly or indirectly.

Having realized that parents and the community has abrogated on their responsibility as witnessed by the statistics I mentioned earlier, where **93 percent** of cases of Violence Against Children reported this year is from neglect, My Ministry through the Department of Social Development is in

the process of developing a National Parenting Programme that will provide a set of activities or services to enhance positive parenting.

The government has also identified poverty as one of the factors that contributes to Violence Against Children. To cushion vulnerable families from the effects of poverty and other social inequities, the Government is implementing Social Protection Program which include Cash Transfer Programs; Presidential Secondary School Bursary; CDF Education Bursary; and National Government Affirmative Action Fund Education Bursary among others.

These initiatives have had a significant impact on poverty reduction and consequently accelerated protection, empowerment and equal opportunities that have enabled children to enjoy their rights. I call upon all faith leaders present here today, to partner with Government in sponsoring needy children and complement these government initiatives.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We recognize the role our development partners and stakeholders continue to play, in ensuring that together we achieve the goal of preventing and responding to violence against children in our nation.

I wish to particularly recognize the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops, the National Council of Churches of Kenya, Evangelical alliance of Kenya, SUPKEM, The Joining forces alliance, and UNICEF among others, for the work that you continue to do in advocating the rights of children in our country.

We sincerely appreciate our partners for committing both human and financial resources towards ending violence against children in Kenya and aligning their programming and implementation with the Government agenda as outlined in the implementation of the National Prevention and Response Plan 2019-2023.

Ladies and Gentlemen

As I conclude, let me to state that my Ministry will strive to establish new partnerships and collaborations, especially in key emerging areas relevant to the mandate of the Ministry.

My appeal to all of us is to walk together as we all seek to protect, and serve the children in this great Nation. Specifically allow me to mention a few things which I believe you, as faith leaders can do to advocate for ending Violence Against Children;

- Disseminate the Child friendly Action Plan so that Children can know what to do when faced with Violence
- Use your pulpit to preach and educate everyone what constitute violence against children
- Preach Against retrogressive cultural practices like early marriages and FGM, that constitute Violence Against Children
- Report and encourage all your congregants to report all forms of Violence Against Children, by joining the **Spot it Stop it** movement
- Establish specific ministries in your institutions to focus on educating children by giving them life skills to equip them to respond against any form of violence

- Use your position to admonish parents and adults who continue to use physical violence on their children
- Strengthen the institution of marriage, to address the push factor that leads children to the street
- Encourage leaders in your institutions to train in mediation and set up mediation committee in your institutions to deal with families matters
- Partner with my Ministry and set up Child rescue centers

As a Faith community, you have a great role in preserving traditions, culture, and morality, I therefore call upon you all, to use your position of power, and influence norms, practices, advocate for human rights and dignity in the areas where you operate because you have a very wide network on the ground. I appeal to you to leverage on the trust that most of you enjoy in our communities and promote child protection interventions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

God has given us the responsibility of advancing this Children course at this point in time, let us use it to achieve what God has called us to achieve in our life time. I have listed a few efforts which I believe as faith leaders you can take among many other efforts, to make our Children more protected and safer.

I thank you all for sacrificing you time to attend this conference, and for inviting me to share my thoughts on this critical subject. It is now my honour and privilege to officially declare this **Inter Religious Conference on Ending Violence Against Children in Kenya** officially closed.

THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS YOU