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48th Ordinary Session of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC)

Side Event– Concept Note

Event title: “The protection of children against sexual violence: a North-South dialogue”

Date: 13 October 2026 (17.30-19.00), Maseru (Lesotho)

Languages: EN (French translation subject to funds and confirmation)

Target audience: ACERWC Committee members, representatives of the members to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, interested parties that are invited by the Committee, NHRIs and civil society representatives.

Purpose: Advance a North-South dialogue on protecting children against sexual violence, foster convergence between the Lanzarote Convention and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and explore practical pathways for building child-friendly justice systems adaptable to African contexts. The event will identify actionable steps and reinforce collaboration between the bodies established to monitor the implementation of both Treaties.

Rationale: The [Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse](#), also known as “the **Lanzarote Convention**”, is the most comprehensive binding international instrument providing a holistic response to sexual violence against children. To date, 48 States have become Parties, and the Convention remains open for accession by countries worldwide, strengthening global efforts to safeguard children. Tunisia acceded to it in 2019 becoming the first non-European State Party.

Other regional and international frameworks also significantly contribute to these efforts, such as the [African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child \(ACRWC\)](#), adopted by the Organisation of African Unity in 1990, the basis of which many African countries have criminalised the sexual exploitation and abuse of children and enacted national protection systems into law.

The Lanzarote Convention is complemented by international soft-law standards on **child-friendly justice**, such as the Council of Europe Guidelines on Child-friendly Justice or the Guidelines on Action for Children in the Justice System in Africa. Together, they set clear guidance to prevent secondary victimisation and calling for child-friendly, multidisciplinary and interagency responses. The **Barnahus model** exemplifies this vision in practice: it delivers justice and comprehensive support to child victims while minimising further harm.

In May 2026, the Chairs of the Lanzarote Committee and of the ACERWC, the bodies established to monitor the implementation of both Treaties, initiated their collaboration in the framework of the [North-South event](#). This ACERWC side event will follow-up this first exchange and bring both Committees together to foster meaningful discussion and shared reflection on creating effective, child-friendly justice systems and strengthening a culture where children’s rights and ending sexual violence are collective priorities.



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Key Questions:

- What are the main common characteristics and how do the **Lanzarote Convention** and the **African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child** reinforce each other to protect children against sexual violence?
- Is it possible to access the Lanzarote Convention? What are the main benefits of joining the Lanzarote Convention?
- How can international **child-friendly justice standards** protect children before, during, and after judicial proceedings?
- How do child-friendly multidisciplinary and interagency (MDIA) services like **Barnahus** contribute to preventing secondary victimisation and providing a comprehensive, integrated response? What have been the main challenges and lessons learnt in national adaptations?
- What are the key common challenges and responses to protect children against sexual violence in the context of emerging technologies? (TBC, depending on timing and resources, it could also be addressed during the General Discussion Day)

Event duration: 1h 30min – 2 hours

- **Panel discussion:**
 - **Moderator:** Mireya Garcia de Murcia (Legal Advisor to the Lanzarote Committee Secretariat)
 - **Proposed speakers:**
 - Maria José Castello-Branco
Chair of the Lanzarote Committee
 - Sabrina Gahar
Chair of the ACERWC
 - Satang Nabaneh
ACERWC Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Children
 - Morenikejimi Olaniran
Global Survivor Council, Brave Movement
- **Questions and answers**