



**PRESS STATEMENT ON THE
COMMEMORATION OF THE DAY OF AFRICAN CHILD**

THEME: "THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD IN THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT"

The Malawi Human Rights Commission (the Commission) joins member states of the African Union (AU) in commemorating the Day of the African Child which falls on the 16th of June every year. This year's function is commemorated under the theme of '***The Rights of the Child in a digital environment***'. Upon reflecting on the importance of the theme, the Commission calls upon individuals, organizations, parents, and all other stakeholders to ensure that children are protected from the ever-evolving digital environment which is increasingly exposing children to cyberbullying, online sexual exploitation, child pornography, and exposure to violent or inappropriate material and sharing of children's private information and pictures on social media. In addition, the children's rights to privacy are also compromised due to a number of practices such as sharing of personal information collected online and used without a child's consent and knowledge.

The Commission takes cognizance that the rapid advancement of technology has transformed the way children learn, communicate, and interact with the world. However, these advancements have a bearing on the realization of children's fundamental rights of access to information, education, freedom of expression, and protection from exploitation. All stakeholders must undertake and commit to safeguarding children's rights at all times.

To ensure that the rights of children are protected and fulfilled in the digital environment, the Commission calls upon the government, guardians, parents and stakeholders to:

1. Ensure that in all actions regarding the use of digital environment, the best interest of the child is the primary consideration.
2. Take deliberate efforts to invest in comprehensive digital literacy programs to educate children about online risks and proper utilization and navigation of online platforms.
3. Strengthen legislative and policy frameworks protecting children from online abuse, exploitation, and cyberbullying and hold perpetrators accountable.

4. Ensure child participation and the inclusion of children's voices in shaping policies and practices concerning the digital environment by empowering children to express their opinions, concerns, and aspirations regarding the digital world.

The Commission urges parents and caregivers to monitor, support and guide their children effectively and encourage them to have open dialogues with their children about online experiences. The Commission reaffirms its commitment to upholding the rights of every child in the digital environment. It further calls on the government and all stakeholders to work together to create an inclusive and empowering digital space that nurtures the well-being, growth, and future of children in Malawi and Africa at large.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Habiba Osman', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Habiba Osman
Executive Secretary.