

Third Global Meet of Parliamentarians Without Borders for Children's Rights

Brussels, 3-4 December 2018



GLOBAL MARCH

Against Child Labour
Contra el Trabajo Infantil
Contre le Travail des Enfants

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Global March Against Child Labour organised the 3rd Meet of Parliamentarian's Without Borders for Children's Rights, in collaboration with the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Commission, Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development. It was held in Brussels, Belgium on 3rd and 4th December, 2018. The meet witnessed the participation of 8 Members of Parliament belonging to Sri Lanka, Benin, Togo, Paraguay, Uganda, Ghana, Netherlands, Costa Rica and 2 members from ILO and 2 from European Commission respectively.

The participants shaped the discourse of the meeting by having pertinent discussions around child labour, the need for inclusive and quality education, the need to address intersectionalities such as migration and child labour in a nuanced way. The challenges in implementing laws and policies were also addressed along with what governments are doing to bridge the gaps between theory and practice, what progress has been made, the need to increase budgets and resource allocation, and how more stakeholders can be mobilized.

DAY 1:

Day 1 of the meeting was held at the European Economic and Social Committee premises. The opening session of the meeting commenced with valuable remarks and insights from former Member of Parliament, The Netherlands, Mr. Roelof van Laar. Further, the MPs introduced themselves and a brief overview of the PWB initiative was given along with setting the context for 2018.

First Session: Addressing child trafficking and unsafe migration in child labour discourse

The first session was largely dedicated to discussing the challenges faced by each country on the issue of child trafficking and migration and finding solutions for the same.

The session was facilitated by European Commission Representative, Ms. Camilla Hagstrom, Deputy Head of Unit DEVCO B.3 Migration and Employment. Ms. Camilla shed light on issues pertaining to children on the move and stated that currently the world is going through a major migration process and therefore European Commission's work is majorly emphasized on tackling exploitation and child related migration challenges in Asia, Latin America and Africa. She said it was crucial as migrant children are more



susceptible to exploitation, sexual violence, detention, trafficking and child labour, especially if they travel alone and through irregular migration path ways. They are also at a huge risk of being devoid of their basic rights such as the right to education which further restricts them from pursuing productive jobs in the future. She stressed that effective child rights mechanisms need to be prioritised, and also mentioned about European Commission's policy document -Communication on Protection of Children on the Move that could be useful for the Members of Parliament to review. Ms. Camilla informed that funding programs are also being instituted to support such initiatives. Other efforts such as supporting unaccompanied minors, collecting data, enduring birth registrations, capacity building and fostering gender equality, are also being carried out by the Commission.

Commenting on the issue, the Ugandan MP, Ms. Robina Ssentongo, propounded that credible alternatives to detention must be found for children and their families, including accommodation in non-custodial, community-based contexts while their immigration status is being resolved.



Corroborating the need for a gender lens, the Ghanaian MP, Mr. Kwame Anyimadu Antwi, pointed out that gender should not just mean women. In order to truly bring gender equality in practice, it is extremely essential to focus on both girls and boys equally when talking of child exploitation in migration discourse. Another view put forth by Mr. Kwame was that there is a need to strike a balance between the government's responsibilities and the civil society's duties.

The government needs to focus on capacity and institution building whereas the civil society should focus on holding the governments accountable and advocating for strong implementation of laws and policies. The Costa Rican MP, Mr. Harllan Hoepelman Páez said that in Costa Rica migrants came from Panamanian indigenous groups to collect coffee beans and children did not have access to schools and therefore have to work in coffee fields. He further mentioned of the Latin American situation that from Honduras mass migration is happening to USA and that a fourth caravan is currently moving towards United States, where children and women are at a great risk.

Significantly, the Paraguayan MP, Mr. Juan Sebastián Villarejo Velilla expressed concern about migration within the country and the struggles of people in the agriculture sector as they are losing their land due to increased mechanization. He also mentioned of the problem of internal migration where people are leaving families in rural homes and sending children to live with relatives.

He specified that even though more urban areas are being created, there's a dearth of good jobs and these limited opportunities can result in children of migrants being involved

in child labour and domestic labour.

The Benin MP, Mr. Eric Houndete spoke about both emigration and immigration taking place and the need to implement the law on child trafficking. Supplementing what Mr. Eric said, the Togo MP, Mr. Edoh Howanou stated that despite the existence of laws on paper, effective implementation on ground is a huge challenge. It was discussed that amidst the ongoing migration crisis, there's a need to take immediate measures such as addressing statelessness, facilitating family reunification, promoting gender awareness and gender sensitivity among both girls and boys.

Responding to the situations narrated by the MPs, Ms. Camilla stated that it is imperative to differentiate between refugees who seek protection and migrants who seek economic opportunity. She also stated that on behalf of the Commission, we have a dialogue with MPs on a daily basis and

inform them of policies that they are designing and implementing for children, as MPs need to have an oversight on the policies that are being implemented. She further affirmed that meetings like this



between MPs across different countries, therefore is an important initiative to improve cross border learning and cooperation, to ensure that children are protected from the source, transit till destination during the migration process.

Second Session: Addressing child labour in supply chains from the source to the destination

This session was facilitated by Mr Benjamin Smith, Senior Officer on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), International Labour Organisation (ILO) on Skype due to his inability to be present in Brussels physically. Mr Smith reiterated the need to strengthen action towards elimination of child labour in supply chains. He identified multiple steps that can be carried out by governments and Members of Parliament to ensure child labour elimination and decent work in their supply chains. These included- providing information on international standards, providing direct support for implementation, what can with governments do to eliminate child exploitation in supply chains , and what is the role of

enterprises and so on. He further pointed out that strong trade unions, organisation of small producers and cooperatives and employers' associations can also play a significant role in this process. Mr Smith further shared about a leading business initiative to eradicate child labour in supply chains-the Child Labour Platform which provides a platform to exchange best practices, learnings and failures. It is co-chaired by the International Organisation of Employers and the International Trade Union Confederation,



and supports member companies with the due diligence process, addresses root causes, and helps measure impact. He also asserted that monitoring of other work sites such as farm fields, mines, home-based work, is crucial and requires going beyond the traditional factory inspections.

The Ugandan MP, Ms. Robina, further contributed to the discussion on child labour by stating that in Uganda their focus is on augmenting the National Action Plan on elimination of the worst forms of child labour, instead of forming parallel programs. She shared challenges of trafficking, limited budget allocation, insufficient training of the police. She mentioned that a bill on minimum wage for domestic work has been placed which could prevent children from being employed in Uganda.

The session also integrated discussion on how the EU needs to analyze how to effectively support the CSOs in this pursuit of ending child labour in supply chains. Ms. Maria Rosa De Paolis, Policy Officer, Employment and Social Inclusion Sector, DEVCO Unit B.3 Migration and Development, European Commission, proposed a holistic approach to tackle child labour by supporting governments to implement ILO conventions, building capacities in ministries by improving inspections / collection of data, working with families to improve livelihoods, providing vocational trainings / income alternatives, raising awareness of various stakeholders with respect to sending children to schools, encouraging partner countries to have minimum social protection. Ms. Maria further encouraged the Members of Parliament to get in touch with the EU Ambassadors in their respective countries and have a positive dialogue with them for any collaboration and support needed from the European Union for furthering children's rights.

Third Session: Strengthening parliamentarians' role at national levels to promote children's rights

This session began with introductory remarks from Mr. Mr Maxence Daublain, Unit DEVCO B.1 Gender Equality, Human Rights and Democratic Governance, and emphasized on the need for effective laws and the need to combine them with implementation mechanisms as well as internal and external accountability mechanisms. He added that European Commission and civil society must come up with unified messages with Parliamentarians to together advocate for the protection and promotion of children's rights. Mr. Daublain said that MPs have a great responsibility on making the executive accountable on budgeting and monitoring of the same and ensuring it is gender sensitive and has an element of promotion of girls' human rights. He further said MP's work is also to ensure that any policy in the country has a positive impact on children. Therefore it is imperative that child rights is mainstreamed in all Parliamentary work and all thematic areas where MPs have an important role to play.



Taking the session further, the moderator, Mr. Roelof Van Laar encouraged the MPs to think of and talk about what they can do in their respective countries and regions to end child labour, promote quality education and protect children's human rights. After much discussions on the situation of child labour in their respective countries, the Members of Parliament presented ideas on what they could do in the capacity of legislators to improve the situation of child labour and work towards its elimination and the rehabilitation of the concerned children. Some of the suggestions presented were such as providing free quality education and increasing the number of pre-schools, tightening the law; probation department can be strengthened and watch over employers employing children; governments can make advertisements and public announcements for awareness-raising amongst children, parents and employers; overlooking government recruitment agencies, forming agreements between trade unions and governments, increasing the number of officers in the child probation & rehabilitation centres, organising a group of MPs to advocate for child rights.

As the chairperson of the Togolese Chapter of Parliamentarians Without Borders for Children's Rights (PWB), or the Parliamentarians Sans Frontiers (PSF) Togo, the Togolese MP, Mr. Edoh Howanou also shared his experience of establishing the Togolese chapter of PWB and said that considering the numerous challenges faced by children in Togo, the members of PSF Togo decided to take action ourselves and undertook technical and financial support from other organisations such as WAO-Afrique, Terre des Hommes and UNICEF. Through the support from such organisations, PSF Togo has promoted initiatives on education, skill based education and promoting nutrition and health amongst children.

Day 2:



Discussions on the second day of the meeting were held at the premises of European Commission, Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development. Apart from sharing, discussing and scrutinizing multiple issues, the MPs, on the second day, also deliberated upon some effective actions that ought to be taken to enforce child rights.

Fourth Session: Using formal and skill based education to tackle child labour

Ms. Maria Rosa De Paolis, Policy Officer, Employment and Social Inclusion Sector, European Commission, DEVCO Unit delivered an introduction on the work of European Commission concerning interventions in education and the priorities of the Commission in the coming years to achieve the SDGs. Adding to the discussion, the Ugandan MP, Ms. Robina suggested some interventions such as enhancing political and policy leadership, developing indicators that help detect governance failures in the nation's education system, developing education programs on child protection, publicizing national policies on child migration. The Paraguay MP, Mr. Juan Sebastián Villarejo Velilla incorporated the importance of quality and inclusive education and the need for more schools with credible infrastructure. The Sri Lankan MP, Mr. Aravindh Kumar Arunchalaem informed of Sri Lanka's successful education model where teacher-student ratio is 1:20 and emphasised on the need of recruitment of adequate number of teachers along with developing public awareness through innovative means. The Costa Rica MP, Mr. Harllan Hoepelman Páez talked of investing in technical training and addressing gaps in policies that hinder

children's education and family wellbeing and criticised a policy in Costa Rica where parents who are unable to pay for child support can be immediately detained without being heard and informed that after going back from the meeting he will work harder to enforce a better solution to the problem.

Representative from ILO, Brussels, Ms. Irene Wintermayr also gave a presentation on what can the Parliamentarians do to end child labour and promote children's rights. She added that registering companies and bringing them under the labour laws is a crucial step, and inter-ministerial cooperation (e.g. welfare, health, education, labour, justice, migration) is also the need of the hour. Some of the ways suggested for MPs' engagement to bolster political will also include: consult social partners, include informal economy and self-employed children while adopting and enforcing legislation; facilitate in establishing national programs to eradicate child labour, with concise objectives; consistently monitor and evaluate progress towards elimination of child labour; mobilize and build capacity of relevant stakeholders; help in providing financial and human resources; mobilise public opinion, stimulate debate in parliament and form robust, effective alliances.



Group Work with Parliamentarians

After the last thematic session of the meeting, the MPs were divided into small groups, where they discussed on the actions they would like to take in next 1 year upon going back to their countries to protect and promote children's rights.



The two day meeting culminated with a group discussion wherein all the MPs committed to working towards elimination of child labour, ensuring that policies have a positive impact on children especially those who are most vulnerable, mainstreaming child rights in their parliamentary work, and advocating for a gender sensitive budget. MPs also synthesised the key takeaways of the meeting and read out the outcome document.

The meeting also ended with a consensus on the urgent need for Parliamentarians to take action on the matter of children and that European Commission, the ILO and Global March Against Child Labour stand in support of any assistance required by the Parliamentarians in this endeavour.

Followed by the meeting, the Parliamentarians were taken on an exposure visit to the European Parliament in Brussels.

Annexure 1

List of Participating Members of Parliament

Country	MP Name
Sri Lanka	Aravindh Kumar Arunachalem
Togo	Edoh Howanou
Ghana	Kwame Anyimadu Antwi
Uganda	Robina Ssentongo
Benin	Eric Houndete
Costa Rica	Harllan Hoepelman Pérez
Paraguay	Juan Sebastián Villarejo Velilla
Netherlands	Roelof Van Laar

European Commission and ILO Members

Name
Maria Rosa De Paolis , Policy Officer, Employment and Social Inclusion Sector, Unit DEVCO B.3 Migration and Employment
Camilla Hagström , Deputy Head of Unit, DEVCO.B3 Migration, Employment
Maxence Daublain , Unit DEVCO B.1 Gender Equality, Human Rights and Democratic Governance
Benjamin Smith , Senior Specialist, ILO
Irene Wintermayr , International Labour Organisation (ILO) Brussels
Fleur Rondelez , Communication and Public Information Officer

Global March Staff

Name
Deepika Mittal , Campaigns & Communications Coordinator
Maina Sharma , Communications officer
Angela Solano Doncel , Project officer

Annexure 2

2018 Declaration of Commitment **3rd Global Meet of Parliamentarians Without Borders for Children's Rights** **3-4 December 2018, Brussels**

We, Parliamentarians gathered at the Third Global Meeting of Parliamentarians Without Borders for Children's Rights in Brussels, Belgium:

- Recognise Parliamentarians without Borders for Children's Rights as a platform for members of Parliament to engage in advocacy for child rights at the global and regional levels.
- Reaffirm our commitment and recognise the relevance and need to engage Parliamentarians to adopt and promote programs for the promotion and protection of the rights of the child.
- Take concrete action in our capacity as legislators to:

Uganda

1. Identify, strengthen or form Parliamentary forum on child rights. Organise induction of MPs and share learnings from the PWB meeting and hold meetings
2. Organise events or discussions on important international days related to children, child labour, education.
3. Mobilise funding for PWB platform to further agenda.

Benin and Togo

1. Agree on the previous declarations
2. Look for different partners- technical and financial
3. Make an inventory of legal tools and share those tools with other MPs in ECOWAS during regional seminars
4. Vote for a resolution on advertisement on child labour
5. Take part in actions of NGOs/civil society working on ending child labour and take part in government activities.

Latin America

1. Mobilise efforts to make children's rights a priority on the government's agenda for public policies.
2. Foster an increase in the budgetary allocations towards efficient programs to

eradicate child labour'

3. Political monitoring and follow up of actions from public organisms and authorities of the executive power
4. Foster relationships and support with international organizations and national social organizations
5. Promote the use and interaction between education and technological innovation
6. Create a business certificate to prove that there is no presence of child labour in the supply chain

Ghana

1. Help create awareness of the meaning of child labour and to educate fellow MPs and with other regional groups like ECOWAS to identify issues of CL and help eliminate them
2. Help eliminate all forms of child labour in migrant farming by raising the awareness of government and policy makers on education to focus on such unidentifiable sectors
3. Plea / act an oversight on the sector ministry on Children to achieve the implementation of the ILO conventions 138 & 182

Sri Lanka

1. Increase the number of pre-schools
2. Get in touch with NGOs and make awareness programmes through innovative methods such as stickers etc.
3. Organise group of MPs on Child Rights and establish the Sri Lanka Chapter of Parliamentarians Without Borders for Children's Rights.
4. Advocate for increase in fund allocation to the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
5. Advocate for increase the number of officers in the child probation & rehab centres
6. Debate regarding child rights in Parliament
7. Strengthen education in my constituency
8. Conduct educational seminars where schools are lacking teachers.