

FIRST AFRICA MEET OF PARLIAMENTARIANS WITHOUT BORDERS FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

12 - 13 MARCH 2018, LOME, TOGO

REPORT



INTRODUCTION

There are 152 million child labourers in the world today and millions of children continue to suffer in exploitative conditions all over the world, compromising on their health, morals and mental well-being. It is the recent global estimates by ILO reveal that 70% of total number of child labourers resides in Africa. The out of school rates of primary school going age are also said to be high in the Sub-Saharan Africa, accounting to be 34.1 million for both girls and boys. If we consider the total number of out of school children, adolescents and youth of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary age, the total figure amounts to 96.9 million of the 263 million out of school children of the world. Africa is also known to have high rates of child trafficking for labour and commercial sexual exploitation, where children are not only trafficked within the country but also beyond borders. In response to alarming situations like these, the dedicated group of Parliamentarians, called Parliamentarians Without Borders for Children's Rights (PWB) was initiated in 2015 by Nobel Peace Laureate Kailash Satyarthi and Brazilian Senator, Cristovam Buarque.

The first Africa meet of this group was organised in Lome, Togo on 12-13 March 2018 which saw participation from 16 Members of Parliament and former Members of Parliament from 8 countries of Africa namely Ghana, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Tchad, Benin, Togo, Niger, Tanzania and from the Netherlands.

The meeting aimed to enable sharing and exchanging experiences that allow the Members of Parliament to know each other and discuss issues related to children's rights, especially child labour, child trafficking, education among others. The meeting further aimed to define collective common actions to promote the rights of children in Africa and strengthen the network of Parliamentarians dedicated to work for betterment of children.

Prior to the meeting on 12 March, Mr. Roelof Van Laar, former Member of Parliament from the Netherlands and a member of PWB group conducted an induction session with the participating Parliamentarians on the 11 March at the hotel premises.



DAY 1:

OPENING CEREMONY

At the opening of the meeting, the 3rd Vice President of the National Assembly of Togo, Mrs. Patricia DAGBAN ZONVIDE, invited the participants to a fruitful debate. During the opening ceremony, the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Honorary President of the Global March against Child Labor (Global March) and initiator of the PWB group, Mr. Kailash SATYARTHI, reminded the audience of the difficulties that leave millions of children in a vulnerable situation around the world. According to him, in spite of the mechanisms, policies and other tools put in place to tackle this situation, there are still challenges to overcome this scourge. He reiterated that all actors, without exception, and especially Parliamentarians can work to guarantee and promote the rights of children. He said that it is not everyday that Members of Parliament come together on talk on children's rights. "Africa is the mirror of humanity. If all children in Africa are not educated, the humanity cannot be sustained. And we need collective commitment and a sense of urgency by the Parliamentarians to ensure children's rights are protected and promoted. A Parliament member is a custodian of children's rights in their constituency, in their region and in the world." He further remarked that politics must be guided by human rights and that all the Parliamentarians must aim to become statesman who work for protecting and promoting the rights of generations to come. Mr. Satyarthi informed that SDGs, especially SDG target 8.7 has given an opportunity to the world to end child labour by 2025 and Goal 4 ensures free, quality, inclusive, equitable education. He shared his experience of meeting children working in football stitching work, cocoa farms, in agricultural fields and children staying in refugee camps. He urged the Parliamentarians to become voices of the most vulnerable children. He rejected the argument that the world is so poor that it cannot afford the education of its children. He said that if we invest 1 dollar on education of a child, the return on investment will be 15 times in next 20 years. Also that one-third of the global military spend can ensure all children are in school.



The former Member of Parliament from The Netherlands, Mr. Roelof Van Laar, who is a strong supporter of the PWB group and a member of the group himself, introduced the participants about the mind behind setting up of this group and the aims for organizing the meeting in Africa. He remarked that more than half of population of child labourers are in Africa and thus it was great that Members of Parliament from different parts of Africa were gathered to discuss the issues of children's rights especially the issue of child labour, child trafficking and education.

The President of Parliamentarians Sans Frontiers de Togo (PSF Togo), Mr. Albert Edoh HOWANOU, said that to better defend the cause of children, the Togolese parliaments, and the PSF group is working hard to put children at the centre of their working and that a collective approach to ending child labour was essential.

Mr Cléophas MALLY, the Director of WAO- Afrique, welcomed the idea of Mr Kailash SATYARTHI to bring together Parliamentarians in the world and in Africa. Mr. Mally exclaimed that there are 40,000 Parliamentarians in the world and barely 2% of them mention the issue of the rights of the child. He further informed the participants that the Parliamentarians Without Borders for Children's Rights (PWB) created in 2015, is an active group of more than 100 Parliamentarians from no less than 23 countries. It contributes worldwide to raising awareness about children's rights and how to implement them locally and internationally. To enhance the member of Parliament's knowledge on the issue of child labour, trafficking, education and the policy gaps in their respective countries, Global March facilitated country briefs for all participating delegates.

MR. SATYARTHI MEETS THE PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF TOGO

After the opening ceremony, Mr. Satyarthi was received in audience at the seat of the Togolese Parliament by the President of the National Assembly (NA), Mr. Dama DRAMANI. The two personalities discussed the issue of children's rights, which is a major concern for Mr. Kailash's fight around the world especially in Africa. As a result of these discussions, the NA President pledged a full day at the NA to discuss issues related to children's rights on the proposal of Mr. Kailash Satyarthi. By accepting this principle, Togo becomes the first and the pioneer in Africa in this area. In doing so, Togo could inspire the rest of the world to follow on its footsteps and dedicate one full day's discussion to child rights in the Parliament.

After the opening ceremony, the meeting began with the first session on "Knowing Parliamentarians Without Borders for Children's Rights". Mr. Roelof Van Laar introduced the session by sharing his experience of being a member of Parliament and the member of PWB group. He said that "as MPs we have power to change things and expediate the process of change. We also struggle sometimes with lack of information while trying to address various issues and funds are always a challenge. However, we need political will to tackle a situation and work within the funds available to bring positive change in society by being creative." Mr. Van Laar described the 4 guiding principles of the UNCRC- the right to non-discrimination, right to life and development best interest

of child and youth participation, which also must form the basis of every Parliamentarian's work for protecting children's rights. After the introduction by Mr. Van Laar, the participants shared about the work they are doing in their respective countries and the challenges faced by them.

FIRST SESSION:

The first session consisted of the presentation of each parliamentarian and their actions on children's rights / human rights. For example, in Togo, 173 children were removed from the voodoo convent and enrolled in school; in Côte d'Ivoire, children's schooling, especially that of girls, is noted, as is the nutritional security of children; in Cameroon there has been the elimination of child labor, and the protection of their rights.



SECOND SESSION:

The second session of the meeting on "Introducing PSG Togo group and setting context for the Africa meeting in 2018", aimed at introducing the agenda of discussion to be held during the 1.5 days meeting and sharing of the experience of establishing the PSF Togo group and its successful working for it to be replicated in other parts of Africa. The session began with the presentation from the PSF Togo members. They shared that the whole process of ideating the PSF Togo and its working with the support of WAO-Afrique in Togo. The session also explained the aims of the group and the meeting clearly which were to:

- Allow participants to share their experiences in protecting the rights of children and women in their respective countries;
- Encouraging the creation of Parliamentarians Without Borders for Children's Rights chapters in the participating countries by the end of 2018

- Creating a synergy of actions within parliaments to contribute to the search for adequate solutions to social problems, in particular: children's rights, women's rights, nutrition, women's/ children's education, human trafficking, economic exploitation of women and children etc.
- Provide participants with the knowledge and tools to make the best contributions to the implementation of the SDGs

During the discussions the situation of child labour was discussed by participants such as the presence of domestic child labour and child labour in agriculture in Benin, Niger, Chad and Togo; along with the use of children in rearing and grazing of animals, as well as use of children in selling and marketing products in Tanzania, and Cameroon.

With respect to barriers to access and completion of education, some common problems came to the table such the problem of teachers' strike, lack of qualified teachers, lack of kindergarten recreation materials and school supplies and the problem of flooding , especially in Benin. Along with the problem of abandoning children to their fate in Ghana and Chad; lack of proper sanitary napkins for girls during menstruation in Tanzania; absence of birth certificates for the continuation of schooling in Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon and Togo were also discussed. Early and forced marriage, problems of hunger and displacement of households, lack of appropriate infrastructure in Niger; kidnapping of children in Cameroon; the problem of refugees in Tanzania were also seen as serious problems to be addressed. Violence in schools in Côte d'Ivoire; enlisting children in voodoo convents in Togo; and migration of people for agricultural needs, leading to the stopping of schooling of children were some other identified problems by the members of Parliament.

After discussing all such problems in the countries, some common challenges identified in implementing the policies and laws for the promotion and protection of children's rights, were:

- Lack of funds for Parliamentarians to monitor and implement policies with the exception of Cameroon
- Low resource allocation for child protection

The session ended with agreement on advocating within the Parliaments for increased resource allocation on child protection laws in the country and for monitoring the implementation of the policies.

THIRD SESSION:

The third session on “legislator’s role in combatting child labour and child trafficking, especially in agriculture and domestic work” saw active participation of all participants where they shared their country experiences and situation of child labour in these 2 sectors.

The following points were shared during the discussions:

TOGO:

The members of Parliament from Togo, Ms. Christine Mensah, Mr. Osseyi Yawovi and Ms. Akossiwa Tchohlo shared that child labour was a serious problem in the country and that child domestic workers can often be found working at homes. Children are also involved in mining. When preparing the budget, the Parliament can be urged to include these sensitive areas to be considered as well.

TANZANIA:

The member of Parliament from Tanzania, Mr. Hamid Bobali said that the situation of child labour was present but human trafficking was reducing due to the commitment of the current President of the country. He said that 65% of child labourers in Tanzania were involved in agriculture and dropout rate was around 40% amongst girls because of lack of sanitary napkins during menstruation days. He has been working to provide the same in his constituency.

BENIN:

The member of Parliament from Benin, Mr. Eric Heoundete said that the efforts have been made to ensure education amongst children but the dropout rates are high even though education is free. This is because the books, stationary, meals etc. are not free which causes dropouts from school. Nigeria used to be a destination of human trafficking for Benin children, but that is not the case anymore. He said the country needed to strengthen the laws and fill the gaps and question the government regarding the same. Mr. Heoundete said once he goes back to Benin after the meeting he will draft a set of questions to be asked to the government during the Parliament session. He also showed his commitment to push for the ratification of ILO Convention 189 that protect children in domestic work.

CHAD:

The member of Parliament from Chad, Mr. Issa Djabir shared that all the situations discussed till now stood relevant for his country as well and agreed to the fact that more efforts must be taken by the members of Parliament to ensure children's rights are restored.

At the end of the session, the participants identified the following actions to be taken in their respective countries:- Initiation of law propositions

- Education of parents on child labor
- Making recovery proposals to the executive
- Establishment of feeding programs to encourage children to go to school
- Build schools in communities where there are none and increase teacher-student ratio in schools

FOURTH SESSION:

The fourth session of the meeting focused on the role of Parliamentarians in removing barriers to access and completion of education in Africa. While a lot of points to be discussed under this session were covered in the previous session, where common problems described by members of Parliament were extra costs to education such as books stationary, uniforms, lack of teachers in schools, lack of infrastructure in schools, lack of toilets for girls and boys, among others. As part of solutions to such problems, the following points were discussed to be advocated for:

- Put pressure on the government and represent the population in legislation
- Advocate for quality birth certificates and food programs
- Establish educational structures in villages to avoid rural exodus.
- Interpolate periodically the Ministers concerned by the child protection
- Set up committees to monitor the laws proposed to the government

GROUPWORK:

Following the end of this session, the participants were divided into 3 groups to discuss the points to be included in the Declaration of Commitment that would be adopted by the participants at the end of the meeting. This Declaration will be used as a guideline to work towards promotion of child rights in their respective countries and report back on successes and challenged by end of 2018 and in the next Africa meet of PWB group.

END OF DAY 1:

The end of group work led to the end of discussions for day 1 which concluded with vote of thanks from Mr. Cleophas Mally. The participants also congratulated the organizers for the work done: warm welcome, good work methodology that allowed learning from the experiences of others.



DAY 2:

The second day of the meeting began with a recap of the discussions held on Day 1 of the meeting. Some of the highlights elucidated from day 1 are as follows:- The interventions, made it possible for participants to realize that they had many common challenges to be taken up with regard to the education of the children the registration of children; and the right to nutrition.

- The promotion of the rights of the child involves the establishment of a good education / training system
- PWBs are composed of Parliamentarians both 'in duty' and those 'no more in duty' and there was from a need to create the group chapters in all countries of Africa.

FIFTH SESSION:

During the fifth session of the meeting, the participants discussed the role of Parliamentarians in promoting children's rights through child-friendly budgeting and adequate allocation of resources. The common point of discussion that came out was the resources allocated at the centre and their improper allocation in the regions and at the village level. The lack of sufficient resources allocated to children's issues and laws concerning their development was also identified as a common problem. To these, the following points were proposed as solutions:

- Put a lot of pressure on the Minister of Finance
- Make amendment proposals in relation to the budget
- Advocate at the National Assembly for sensitive budgeting for the rights of the child
- Ensure that the funds allocated to the free education of children are used for these purposes
- Work for multispectral budgeting
- Make an evaluation of the programs implemented to see their relevance
- Question the government on the implementation of the programs during the sessions.
- Form a committee that will discuss the problems of children at the level of the National Assembly.
- Advocate for the government to revise the funds allocated to education without forgetting the school canteens
- Work on making proposals for laws and advocate for their consideration by the Executive
- Make an analysis of the situation of children and give priority to the health and education of children.

SIXTH SESSION:

The sixth and the last session of the meeting, enabled participants to identify the main actions to be undertaken on the three themes discussed at this meeting. Some of the steps described by members of Parliament that they will take upon going back to their countries is as follows:

GHANA:

- Establishment of a strong PWB institution in next 3 months
- Form a team of 20 people to meet the development partners to strengthen their advocacy asks with the government
- Create an action plan and a whatsapp platform for discussion amongst other members of Parliament

CAMEROON:

- Organise a feedback meeting to inform the Parliament about PWB's working and target 16 members to develop an action plan to setup the Cameroon chapter of PWB.
- Advocate for a better consideration of Nutrition in government programs

IVORY COAST:

- Meet the President of the National Assembly and the Mayor for the cause of the children
- Review children's nutrition at school level
- Establish the PWB network with an action plan

CHAD:

- Raise awareness about the rights of children
- Make the restitution of this meeting to its working partners
- Report this meeting to the National Assembly
- Will focus on achievement of SDGs

BENIN:

- Work for the establishment of PWB in Benin
- Call on the government for the situation of children and question them,

TANZANIA:

- Report the recommendations of this meeting to Parliament
- Discuss children's issues with the government and put pressure on them
- Continue nutritional support for children
- Work towards having 1 day dedicated children's rights in the Parliament

NIGER:

- Brief and evaluate the creation of a legal network for the cause of children
- Training of 300 teachers to stop the migration of children and ensure quality education in schools
- Work towards ending migration of children with the help of the police
- Advocate with the Mayor to provide sufficient budget for education of children.

TOGO:

- Insist on the level of the Minister of the Economy, for an allocation of funds for the cause of the children
- Continue the actions already started in the field
- Raise funds from international non-governmental organisations for funds for better working.

SIGNING OF DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT:

After the end of the last session, the Declaration of Commitment was read and adopted unanimously by the participants by signing the same. Read the Declaration of Commitment in the following pages.

CLOSING CEREMONY



The meeting concluded with closing remarks from Mr. Joseph Kokou KOFFIGO, former parliamentarian, former Prime Minister of Togo, as well as the Honorary President of the PWB Togo, who congratulated the organizers for this noble initiative especially WAO-Afrique. Mr. Koffigoh congratulated Mr. Kailash SATYARTHI by offering him a poem that highlighted his commitment to the cause of children. Mr. MALLY, Director of WAO-Afrique, welcomed the presence of Mr. KOFFIGO at this meeting. Mr. Kailash SATYARTHI in his statement thanked all the participants and urged them to make a practical and non-theoretical commitment for the protection of the rights of the child.

2018 Declaration of Commitment

We, Parliamentarians gathered at the First African Meeting of Parliamentarians Without Borders for the Rights of the Child in Lome, Togo:

- Recognize Parliamentarians Without Borders for Children's Rights as a platform for members of Parliament to engage in advocacy for the rights of the child at the African, national and global levels.
- Reaffirm our commitment and recognize the relevance and need to engage Parliamentarians to adopt and promote programs for the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, by:
 1. Make efforts to prioritize child issues in political discourse by asking the government questions in parliamentary debates on policies and programs on child rights, child labor, child trafficking and children's education.
 2. Advocate for a full day of debate on the Rights of the Child in our respective parliaments.
 3. Form forums and parliamentary groups on the issue of children's rights, in particular child labor, child trafficking, education and conduct sensitization, capacity-building seminars for Parliamentarians on the issues identified and how to develop proposals for draft laws, for example, on child labor, trafficking and education.
 4. Create national chapters of the Parliamentarians Without Borders for the Rights of the Child by mobilizing committed Parliamentarians who advocate for the Rights of the Child and holding regular national and regional meetings.
 5. Publish joint statements on behalf of the Parliamentarians Without Borders Group to show solidarity and raise awareness of child labor, education and trafficking during international days, such as the World Day Against Child Labor, (12 June), Day of the African Child (16 June), International Girls Day (11 October), International Literacy Day (8 September), Universal Children's Day (20 November), , etc.
 6. Ensure adequate resource allocations and track its use and implementation in child rights programs and policies to maximize their success.
 7. Report successes and challenges at upcoming meetings of Parliamentarians Without Borders for the Rights of the Child in Africa.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

1	Erick Houndete	Benin
2	Herssesse Zondol	Caméroun
3	Fofana N. Mondeny Else Diomand	Côte D'ivoire
4	Joseph Zaphenat Amenowode	Ghana
5	Kwasi Agyemang Gyan - Tutu	Ghana
6	Mahamadou Danfanta	Niger
7	Hamidu Hassan Bobali	Tanzania
8	Issa Mardo Djabir	Tchad
9	Edoh Howanou	Togo
10	Osseyi Yawovi	Togo
11	Victor Ketoglo Yao	Togo
12	Issolemo Koupokpa	Togo
13	Akossiwa Tchohlo	Togo
14	Christine Mensah-Atomne	Togo
15	Moumouni Harouna Lamido	Niger
16	Roelof Van Laar	Netherlands

AGENDA

Africa Meeting of Parliamentarians Without Borders for Children's Rights 12 & 13th March 2018, Lome, Togo

Day 1: 12 March 2018, Monday

09:30 am - 10.00 am **Registration of Parliamentarians**

10.00 am - 10.45 am **Opening Ceremony**

Welcome Address by: Mr.CleophasMally, Director, WAO-Afrique

Introduction by: Mr.Roelof Van Laar, Member of PWB Group, Netherlands

Remarks by: Hon. HowanouEdoh Albert, President, PSF Togo

Key Note Address by: Mr.KailashSatyarthi, Nobel Peace Prize Winner, 2014

10.45 am - 11.15 am

First Session: Knowing our Parliamentarians Without Borders for Children's Rights An introduction of Parliamentarians and their work on children's rights/human rights (2 mins by each participant)

11.15 am - 11.30 am **Coffee/Tea**

11.30 am - 12.00 pm

Second Session: Introducing the PWB /PSF Group and Setting Context for Africa Meeting in 2018

- Brief on the PWB Group
- Setting context for Africa 2018 meeting - Focus on 3 themes under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Framework and the new ILO Report on child labour, covering child labour in agriculture and domestic work, barriers to access and completion of education and resource allocation to policies and laws promoting and protecting children's rights.

Moderator: Mr. Roelof Van Laar, Member of PWB Group, Netherlands

12:00 pm - 1.30 pm

Third Session : Legislators' Role in Combatting Child Labour and Child Trafficking, especially in Agriculture and Domestic Work in Africa Brainstorming, identifying and agreeing key role of Parliamentarians for combatting hazardous child labour and child trafficking, with focussed

discussions on child labour and child trafficking carried out for engaging children in agriculture and domestic work. The session will discuss possible contributions by Parliamentarians to eliminate child labour through existing policies and national action plans and oversee its effective and successful implementation, and discuss the need to filling the gaps.

Each Parliamentarian could present specific actions that they will take in this regard in their own constituency/Parliament, with their counterparts in their country.

All delegates participate

Moderator: Mr. Joseph Amenowode, Member of Parliament, Ghana

01:30 pm - 2:30 pm **Lunch**

02.30 pm - 4:00 pm

Fourth Session: Legislators' Role in Eliminating Barriers to Access and Completion of Education in Africa Legislators can speak on the situation of access to education in their countries and various steps being taken to improve them. Country level best practices on effective policies and programmes to address the gaps in the existing education system, covering issues of additional costs related to school supplies, books, uniforms, fees, and school feeding programs, infrastructure etc.

Each Parliamentarian to present specific actions that they will take in this regard in their own constituency/Parliament, with their counterparts in their country.

All Delegates Participate

Moderator - Ms. Sarah Babirye, Member of Parliament, Uganda

04.00 pm - 04.30 pm **Coffee/Tea**

4.30 pm - 5.00 pm

Day 1 Conclusion

Conclusion of Day 1 and the highlights of the day by Dr. Peter Coleman, Member of Parliament, Liberia

DAY 2: 13 March 2018, Tuesday

09:00 am - 09.15 am **Recap of Day 1**

09.15 am - 10.30 am

Fifth Session: Legislators' Role in Promoting Children's Rights by Child-Responsive Budgeting and Adequate Resource Allocation

The session will discuss the role of Parliamentarians in advocating with the Government to ensure adequate funding and resource allocation to the relevant policies, programs and laws to strengthen its enforcement and better equip the enforcement officials to protect and promote child rights.

Each participant to present their specific idea/commitment on this theme.

All Delegates Participate

Moderator - MP from Togo(TBD)

10.30 am - 11.00 am **Coffee/Tea**

11.00 am - 12.15 pm

Sixth Session: Way forward on the PWB Africa Initiative: Steps to Achieve the Vision for 2019

The last session will collate key actions to be undertaken by Parliamentarians on 3 themes discussed at the meeting, and will decide next steps, and the host of the next meeting.

Signing of PWB Lome Declaration, 2018

Moderator: Ms. Nadia Chouitem, Member of Parliament, Algeria

12.15 pm - 12.30 pm

Closing Ceremony

Concluding remarks by Mr. Cleophas Mally
MP from Togo(TBD)

Words of Encouragement by: Mr. Kailash Satyarthi, Global March

12.30 pm - 13.30 pm: **Lunch**

End of the Meeting



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