

International Day of the Girl Child 2015
Theme: The Power of the Adolescent Girl: Vision for 2030
United Nations Headquarters
Monday, October 12, 2015

*Remarks of Honorable Dr. Pindi Chana, MP Tanzania; Deputy Minister for
Community Development, Gender and Children & Chair of Parliamentarians for
Global Action International Council*

**Presentation of PGA's Global Parliamentary Declaration to End Child, Early &
Forced Marriage to Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, President of 70th Session of the UN
General Assembly**

2:00 – 2:30 p.m., ECOSOC Chamber, UN Conference Building
Hosted by PGA, in collaboration with the Permanent Missions of Canada, Tanzania,
Ghana and Zambia.

I am much honored to be sharing with you the festivities of this year's International Day of the Girl Child, standing among partners and colleagues, and having the opportunity to express, on behalf of Parliamentarians for Global Action, our deep commitment to empowering girls and women in every corner of the world.

Parliamentarians for Global Action is an international network of over 1,200 legislators in 142 elected parliaments worldwide that informs and mobilizes parliamentarians to advocate for human rights and the rule of law, democracy, human security, non-discrimination and gender equality.

In March 2015, we launched a **Global Parliamentary Declaration to End Child, Early and Forced Marriage** to raise awareness about this harmful practice among Parliamentarians, encourage them to acknowledge the practice as a violation of human rights, call for a robust target on this issue in the post-2015 development agenda, and commit to its implementation at the national level.

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Development by Member States at the end of September, PGA's Parliamentary Declaration now seeks to facilitate the emergence of a strong global parliamentary constituency for the implementation and monitoring of *Target 5.3: to eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilations*, and in so doing, bring attention as well to each of the targets under *Goal 5: to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls* by 2030.

After fifteen years of working towards accomplishing a specific Millennium Development Goal on this area, we are still greatly indebted to our girls. We have come short at providing access to quality education and economic opportunities to break the cycle of poverty, at guaranteeing sexual and reproductive health and rights as well as protecting them from violence and marginalization. We have been unsuccessful in effectively addressing discriminatory practices and laws that lead to the perpetuation of child, early and forced marriage.

I must acknowledge that my country, Tanzania, has two impending responsibilities on this regard:

- **To domesticate international human rights instruments** allowing us to harmonize the current legal and policy framework to Tanzania's international commitments as a State Party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), among others; and
- **To amend the Law of Marriage Act (LMA) of 1971** as it maintains certain gender discriminatory practices such as polygamy for men, but not women, and different marriage ages for men and women (a man must be 18 years old to marry, whereas a woman must be 15 years old), to accommodate customary and Islamic law. In addition, the LMA is ambiguous in many areas, often resulting in unjust outcomes for women upon divorce such as property division in the case of polygamous divorce.

Joint efforts in the Mara region demonstrate that we are stronger and have a better impact when working together. Thus, in collaboration with PGA, in June 2015, the Parliament in Dodoma hosted a *Capacity-Building Discussion on Child, Early and Forced Marriage with Tanzanian Parliamentarians*, colleagues from Ghana and Malawi, and representatives from civil society working on this issue. The session offered a space to share information, challenges and best practices empowering parliamentarians, encouraging dialogue between the latter and civil society, and fostering multi-sectoral coordination to develop and implement national strategies and action plans that address this harmful practice in our countries.

I would like to thank Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development of Canada (DFATD), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), for their partnerships and important support

to the Campaign to End Child Marriage, as well as to the Governments of Zambia, Ghana and my own for their commitment to end child marriage.

Mr. Lykketoft,

In my capacity as Chair of PGA's International Council, it is my pleasure to present to you as President of the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly and as a former colleague and PGA Member, **PGA's Global Parliamentary Declaration to End Child, Early and Forced Marriage** which has been signed to date by **729 Members of Parliament** from **77 countries around the world** pledging:

As leaders, to raise awareness in our constituencies and, with our colleagues in Parliament, of the value of the girl child, the importance of keeping girls in school, including pregnant and young mothers, and alternatives to child, early and forced marriage that benefit the child, the community and the country.

As lawmakers, to assert the primacy of national law over religious and customary laws, to establish 18 as the minimum and uniform age of marriage for both boys and girls, to strengthen birth registration systems, and protect women and girls' rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, property rights, and access to justice.

And to oversee and monitor the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals as well as the allocation of resources to new and existing policies and laws that address child, early and forced marriage to ensure their effectiveness.

PGA will continue working tirelessly to ensure no one is left behind.

I thank you.