

**Special
Supplement
on
International
Women's Day**

Gender, Equity & Social Inclusion

Parliamentarians from Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zimbabwe reaffirm their Commitment to End Child Marriage

As the International Community Celebrates International Women's Day 2016

Accra/New York/The Hague - March 8, 2016

Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA), in collaboration with the Parliament of Ghana, convened Parliamentarians from Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zimbabwe for a two-day Capacity Building Seminar for African Parliamentarians on Addressing Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) that took place on March 2-3, in the Parliament of Ghana, Accra.

A few days before the celebration of International Women's Day (which this year focuses on women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development, reflected throughout Development Agenda 2030 particularly in Goal 5 to "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls"), members of Parliament (MPs) from Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zimbabwe adopted a Statement of Commitment 2016, recognizing that the elimination of child, early and forced marriage is a prerequisite to more equal, peaceful and democratic societies, as well as for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 and the African Union Agenda 2063.

Speaking at the Seminar for African Parliamentarians on Child Marriage, in Accra, Nana Oye Lithur, Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection of the Republic of Ghana, said that 1 out of 3 girls in Ghana are subjected to child marriage and offered four main recommendations to effectively end this practice: strengthen the legal and policy frameworks by identifying and closing any loopholes; establish indicators, a strategic plan, and verifiable results; launch national, re-

gional and international campaigns spearheaded by high-level political figures to tackle child marriage; and strengthen the capacity of Parliaments to address the practice more strategically.

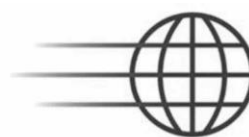
The event took place two weeks after the country joined the African Union's Campaign to End Child Marriage by launching its national effort and coincides with the development process of a National Strategic Framework to End Child Marriage led by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection of the Republic of Ghana.

Hon. Hanna Serwaa Tetteh, MP, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, and Hon. Joe Ghartey, MP, Second Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Ghana, reiterated the commitment of the Executive and Legislative branches in working together to end the practice of child, early and forced marriage in their country and agreed on the need to monitor and assess progress periodically and improve coordination among agencies.

Mr. Christopher Thornley, High Commissioner of Canada to Ghana, who spoke at the opening ceremony, quoted the First Lady of Ghana in characterizing child marriage as "the most obnoxious practice," and reiterated Canada's commitment to ending this harmful practice around the world.

The Seminar also had valuable contributions from PGA Members in Ghana, among them, Hon. Alban Bagbin, MP, Majority Leader in the Parliament of Ghana and Chair of

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CAPACITY BUILDING SEMINAR FOR AFRICAN PARLIAMENTARIANS ON ADDRESSING CHILD, EARLY AND FORCED MARRIAGE (CEFM)

Parliament of Ghana
March 2-3, 2016 | Accra, Ghana

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

Guided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948); the International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and on Civil and Political Rights (1966); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979); the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989); as well as other relevant human rights instruments, including the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (1998); the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child (1999); and the African Youth Charter (2006);

Taking note of the Sustainable Development Goals Agenda, particularly Goal 5 to "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" and its target 5.3 to "Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation," the Outcome Statement of the First African Girls' Summit on Ending Child Marriage in Africa, and its Annex, and the African Union's Campaign to End Child Marriage;

Deeply concerned that the practice of child, early and forced marriage is a violation of human rights impeding girls and women's enjoyment of rights, including education, employment, political participation, health, sexual and reproductive health, and a life free from violence;

And recognizing that the elimination of this harmful practice is a prerequisite to more equal, peaceful and democratic societies, as well as for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 and the African Union Agenda 2063, We, Parliamentarians from Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe, meeting in Accra, Ghana on this day, declare and commit to:

1. Encourage the launch of national campaigns and the development of national action plans to end child, early and forced marriage and collaborate with the relevant Ministry or Ministries responsible for the development and implementation of national strategies and programs to end this harmful practice by, among other actions, amending obsolete legislation and increasing budgetary allocations.

In this regard, we commend our host, Ghana, for the recent launch of its National Campaign and the Parliament's commitment to engage with the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection in the development process of the National Strategic Framework to End Child Marriage.

2. Review current legislation on children, women and family matters with a view to harmonizing it in accordance with international human rights obligations and to eliminate all discriminatory laws that penalize girls and impede women's access to equal rights.

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PGA's Ghana National Group; Hon. Irene Torshie Addo, MP and Deputy Minority Whip; and Hon. Ursula Owusu-Ekuful, MP, PGA Board Member.

In a video message, Ms. Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, Goodwill Ambassador for the African Union's Campaign to End Child Marriage, called on MPs to enact comprehensive laws and policies to address child marriage and ensure 18 as the minimum legal age of marriage; provide adequate resources for programs; supervise Ministries' work and results; and to serve as the voice of their communities: "Make it your issue. Make it a human rights issue. Make it a development issue," Ms. Gumbonzvanda said.

During the two-day discussions, experts, human rights practitioners and civil society representatives joined Parliamentarians to offer their testimonies, experience and perspective on the root causes, consequences and strategies to end child marriage, prioritizing a holistic and multi-stakeholder approach. Among the participants were: Advocate Karen McKenzie, Head of Human Rights, Commonwealth Secretariat; Ms. Ruth Koshal, Senior Africa Engagement Officer, Girls Not Brides; Ms. Valerie Msoka, first awardee of the Champion of Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) in Tanzania Award conferred by Canada; Ms. Susan Namondo Ngongi, UNICEF Country Representative; Mr. M. Bawa Amadu, UNFPA Country Assistant Representative; ActionAid-Ghana, and civil society representatives from Girls Not Brides-Ghana.

This year's Seminar is a follow-up activity to PGA's Parliamen-

tary Seminar on Combatting CEFM that took place in March 3-4, 2014 in Accra, Ghana, which resulted in the adoption of a Statement of Commitment to End CEFM by participants and contributed to discussions, at the Ministerial level in Ghana, for the establishment of a Child Marriage Unit and the development of a strategic plan to address the practice.

Activities under PGA's Global Parliamentary Campaign on Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) are generously supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development of Canada.

About PGA

Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) is a non-governmental, non-partisan international network of approximately 1,300 legislators in 143 elected parliaments around the globe that informs and mobilizes parliamentarians to advocate for human rights and the rule of law, democracy, human security, non-discrimination and gender equality.

In 2014, PGA launched its Global Parliamentary Campaign to End CEFM in support of regional and international efforts to eliminate CEFM through raising Parliamentarians' awareness about this harmful practice and building political will at the national level to legislatively address the human rights of girls and women, their right to a life free from violence, and their equal access to the rights of education, employment, active participation in public and private spheres, and health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, in accordance with international human rights norms and standards.



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3. Adopt legislation that sets the minimum age of marriage at 18, and that effectively prohibits, prevents and punishes the practice of child, early and forced marriage, giving redress to the victims as well as protecting those girls already married;
4. In line with our oversight prerogative and our countries' pledges to implement the Sustainable Development Goals Agenda 2030, monitor the progress towards the achievement of Goal 5 and Target 5.3 by calling on Ministries to collect, analyze, disseminate and use age- and sex-disaggregated data on child, early and forced marriage and to periodically brief Parliament and appropriate Parliamentary Committees on this matter;
5. Involve more Parliamentarians and engage in dialogue and strengthen our partnerships with civil society organizations, traditional and religious leaders, National Human Rights Institutions, relevant Ministries and the media to foster an effective and coordinated multi-stakeholder approach to address child, early and forced marriage nationally.¹ At the regional level, utilize PGA's network to consolidate a parliamentary alliance that facilitates the exchange and dissemination of good practices and evidence on effective policies and programs to end child, early and forced marriage.

Done on this 3rd of March 2016, in Accra, Ghana.

¹ In addition, PGA will engage in institutional dialogue with representatives of the Judiciary, as appropriate.