



**Parliamentarians for Global Action**  
**Acción Mundial de Parlamentarios**  
**Action Mondiale des Parlementaires**

**Statement by PGA Member Ms. Marie Norden, Member of the Swedish Parliament**

At the Panel Discussion on

*“THE COST OF WAR ON CHILDREN IN ZONES OF CONFLICT:  
A FORM OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN”*

*A Side Event to the 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women,*

*Organized by the Eng Aja Eze Foundation and*

*hosted by the Permanent Mission of Nigeria to the United Nations*

Tuesday, 5th March 2013, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Colleagues, dear Friends,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you all today on an issue that is very close to my heart.

When we speak about “The Cost of war on children in zones of conflict” we have to look at the factors that are causing the extreme vulnerability of children in times of internal and external conflicts.

Namely, 1) the recruitment of children out into armed conflict and 2) the deliberate targeting of children as the most fragile component of the civilian population, against whom to perpetrate atrocities that can destroy the texture of societies attacked by militias or regular forces: In specific, among the most brutal crimes against children I shall mention the enslavement and sexual enslavement of children during armed conflict, which are crimes against humanity under international law. Additionally, the recruitment of children into armed forces (whether forced or not) is one of the worst forms of the exploitation of the child and is a war crime under the Rome Statute of the ICC.

The vulnerability of children means that they need to be afforded particular protection that does not apply to the general population.

The historical background behind the war crime of enlisting children is securing their physical and psychological well-being, including not only injuries due to fighting but also the serious trauma that can remain, including the separation from family, the disruption of schooling and the devastating effect that enslaving children into an armed group may have on the survivor-child for the rest of her or his life, as well as for the devastating impact of the communities affected by child recruitment and enlistment.

In Uganda, under the leadership of Joseph Kony, the so-called Lord Resistance Army has abducted over 20,000 children under the age of 15. This number constitutes up to eighty percent of the rebel group's membership. The organization that I represent today, Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) – including its Ugandan and Central African Republic National Groups – strongly supports the efforts of Madame Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda and of the International Community to arrest and surrender to the ICC Mr. Kony and the other indicted leaders of the LRA.

In another case, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Thomas Lubanga Dyilo had been the first individual who had been found guilty as co-perpetrator of the charges of conscripting and enlisting children under the age of 15 into the “Union of Congolese Patriots” (The UPC) and the “Patriotic force for the liberation of Congo” (the FPLC) and of using those children to participate actively in hostilities in the DRC.

Lubanga has been sentenced by the ICC to 14 years in prison in July 2012. This has been the first sentence issued by the ICC.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the last decade, women and girls have been abused as sexual slaves in contemporary international and non-international armed conflicts throughout the world.

The recruitment of children into armed conflict is in most cases a form of enslavement. Even in cases where children joined armies voluntarily, it is only because of the circumstances and a matter of pure survival. In the judgment of the Lubanga case it was stated that “**the consent of a child to recruitment does not constitute a valid defense to any of the crimes of which Lubanga has been convicted**”.

Less known is the use of children as suicide bombers by the Taliban in Afghanistan, a state party to the ICC, and across the border in Pakistan. As NATO plans its withdrawal from the region in 2014, the ICC should take a note of this issue.

The *PGA ICC Campaign* pursues the universal ratification of the Rome Statute, the adoption of domestic legislation to ensure the prosecution of ICC crimes at the domestic level and cooperation with the ICC, as well as the promotion of political will in favour of the fight against impunity in all democratic or transitional countries in all regions of the world.

In ensuring the universal ratification of the Statute, we Parliamentarians as PGA Members are contributing to the prevention and prosecution of crimes against children.

While we are doing so, we work relentlessly for the domestic implementation of the Rome Statute, which provides a unique opportunity for an increased protection of victims of sexual and

gender-based violence, enhancing their access to justice and advancing gender equality and children's rights.

It must be clear that PGA recognizes the status of child-soldiers not as perpetrators but as victims of one of the most serious crimes against the international community as a whole.

Even in cases where the perpetrator does not seem to deliberately discriminate against the girl child, certain crimes by their nature are a discrimination against girls under the age of 15, who are subject to sexual violence, unwanted pregnancies, HIV and other sexual diseases.

This may impair for the rest of their lives the enjoyment of other human rights and fundamental freedoms, including their right to health, in specific sexual and reproductive health, their right to a family and very important their right to education and employment.

We therefore fully support the work of the ICC and, in particular, of our Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda, who is a source of hope for the entire humanity.

I really hope that this Panel of today can reinforce the common engagement of all Participants to make sure that we stamp out impunity for all international crimes, including crimes against children, so to continue to prevent and reduce the scourge of widespread victimization.

Thank you.

**In Kampala**

Ms. Joyce Freda Apio  
+256-785.591.110  
[Joyce.Freda@pgaction.org](mailto:Joyce.Freda@pgaction.org)

**In the Hague**

Dr. David Donat Catin  
+31.70.360.4433  
[donat@pgaction.org](mailto:donat@pgaction.org)

**In New York**

Ms. Leyla Nikjou  
+1-212-687-7755 Ext.104  
[leyla.nikjou@pgaction.org](mailto:leyla.nikjou@pgaction.org)

On-line access to PGA ICC Campaign:

<http://www.pgaction.org/countries/africa/mali.html>

<http://www.pgaction.org/programmes/ilhr/overview.html>

<https://www.facebook.com/pgaction> -- <http://twitter.com/#!/PGAAction>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/pgaction/collections/>