



Governing Council
Item 11

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25 August 2010

REPORTS ON RECENT IPU SPECIALIZED MEETINGS

**(d) REGIONAL CONFERENCE "TOWARDS ENHANCED PARLIAMENTARY ACTION
TO COMBAT THE TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN FOR PURPOSES OF LABOUR
EXPLOITATION IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA"**

1. Child trafficking for economic purposes persists in spite of widespread condemnation and efforts to put an end to it. This scourge, which is on the rise, and to which thousands of children fall victim, points to the need for concerted global action by all stakeholders involved. It requires them to formulate targeted policies by combining a development-focused approach with strategies that are adapted to the constantly changing modus operandi of traffickers.
2. In response to that need, the IPU and the Sahel and West Africa Club (SWAC-OECD), with the financial support of the Government of Belgium, jointly launched a project that seeks to enhance parliamentary involvement in efforts to combat this scourge by strengthening both the legal framework and collaboration at the national and regional levels.
3. The first activity organized under this project was a regional conference held in Cotonou from 26 to 28 May 2010. In attendance were about 100 participants from national and regional parliaments, notably the Speaker of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Parliament and the Speaker of the National Assembly of Gabon, and other stakeholders in West and Central Africa. The purpose of the meeting was to further sensitize members of parliament to the consequences of child trafficking, identify approaches to project activities under the national plan, and adopt a roadmap with broad guidelines for parliamentary action to combat child trafficking.
4. The main recommendations contained in the Cotonou Declaration, adopted at the end of the Conference, include the following:
 - Set up or strengthen parliamentary bodies dealing with children's issues, provide them with sufficient resources to carry out their mandate, including implementation of the recommendations contained in the Cotonou Declaration;
 - Increase budget allocations to sectors concerning children - health, education professional training, and reintegration of children freed from trafficking;
 - Set up a special committee, composed of members of a cross-section of parliamentary committees, that will be mandated to visit at least once a year centres for children who have been freed from trafficking. The purpose is to sensitize all parliamentary committees with a view to benefiting from their contribution and support for the body entrusted with children's issues in an effort to combat this scourge;

- Adopt enabling legislation for laws already passed in order to offset enforcement deadlines. In the same vein, it was also recommended that a parliamentary mechanism be established to follow up effective enforcement of laws and national policies;
- Promote permanent dialogue between parliament and local government authorities, through local councillors, who will require capacity-building;
- Establish or strengthen networks, which are crucial to coordinating strategies to combat trafficking. To this end, regular meetings between parliament and major pressure groups should be held, in particular transport unions and employers that take in child apprentices, agricultural unions and the media;
- Foster public debate on the existence of child trafficking and its consequences with a view to dispelling the taboo and breaking the silence surrounding the issue in order to enhance action to combat traffickers;
- Encourage birth announcement and registration with a view to controlling travel authorizations and termination of apprenticeship contracts.

5. It was proposed that a mechanism for following up the recommendations should be established. At the national level, once each parliament takes ownership of the Declaration, it will appoint a body to oversee implementation of the text. This body will in turn designate a focal point, who will be a member of the regional Follow-up Committee, to which he/she will report on national efforts.

6. The regional Follow-up Committee will conduct assessment visits to the various parliaments in keeping with its terms of reference, to be defined by its members.