PRESS RELEASE

To All Media Houses

**West African Parliamentarians take Action against Child Labour**

Child labour is work which is detrimental to the health education and development of the child. There are 168 million child labourers across the world. In Sub-Saharan Africa, every fifth child is a child labourer with 59 million children between 5-17 years in child labour. This is an abuse of the fundamental human rights of the affected children and a blight on the future of the sub-region. It is unacceptable.

In December 2012, Ministers of Labour and Social Protection of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), adopted a West Africa Regional Action Plan (RAP) for the elimination of child labour, especially its worst forms. The Plan “aims at ensuring that children are shielded from activities that are detrimental to their physical, social or psychological well-being.” The RAP is imperative because of “the need for a coherent framework for the coordination of activities to eliminate child labour at the regional and national levels and to strengthen coordination systems, build capacities and ensure an effective monitoring and evaluation and peer review system for responding to the malaise of child labour”.

In November 2014, Parliamentarians of Cameroon, Cote d’Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo meeting in Turin, Italy, expressed worry on the slow progress made in the fight against child labour in West Africa over the decade.

Parliaments and Parliamentarians, as the legislative arm of governance and the elected representatives of the express will and aspirations of their citizens and constituencies, have a grave responsibility in ensuring that the right of every child to be protected from work that is exploitative and a threat to his or her well-being is practically guaranteed.

To this end, the network of ECOWAS Parliamentarians against Child Labour, established in November 2014, is spearheading efforts to expand solidarity, provide mutual support and improve effectiveness through sharing experience and knowledge on innovative, replicable and sustainable solutions to eliminating child labour. The Parliamentarians have committed to working with their respective Parliaments to hold governments to account, and in exercising leadership at national and local levels.

In Ghana, extensive work is being done to combat child labour, and there is significant progress: many children have been prevented or withdrawn from worst forms of child labour and more are making a positive transition from child labour by combining work with school. There is opportunity to complete this transition by ensuring that children are totally prevented, removed or protected from exploitative work and effectively supported to acquire quality education. The task is daunting, but the growing collaboration from duty-bearers and stakeholders and the strong partnership from the Media is yielding results.

The experience and example of Ghana provides direction and leadership to the efforts of ECOWAS and State Parliaments and Parliamentarians in West Africa to reinforce their commitments, enhance the provision of resources and motivate their governments to be more accountable towards ensuring the rights of children and building the quality human resource capacities required to drive economic and social development in and among member-states.

**Issued By: the Parliamentary Select-Committee on State Enterprises, Social Welfare and Employment**

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**Date:**

**Signed: Hon Joseph Z. Amenowode (MP, Afadzato)**

**Chairman of the ECOWAS Parliamentarians against Child Labour**

Attached is the full Communiqué issued by the West African Parliamentarians on Child Labour