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Plenary sitting

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B7-0585/2013

PROPOSAL FOR A RECOMMENDATION TO THE COUNCIL

pursuant to Rule 121(1) of the Rules of Procedure

on humanitarian engagement of armed non-state actors in child protection

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on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

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United in diversity

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European Parliament recommendation to the Council on humanitarian engagement of armed non-state actors in child protection

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the 2013 report of the UN Secretary-General on children and armed conflict and to other reports by relevant actors,
 - having regard to the 2008 EU guidelines on children and armed conflict, the 2010 implementation strategy for the EU guidelines on children and armed conflict and the 2008 Checklist for the Integration of the Protection of Children affected by Armed Conflict into ESDP Operations,
 - having regard to the Council conclusions of 2008 on ‘the promotion and protection of the rights of the child in the European Union’s external action – the development and humanitarian dimensions’,
 - having regard to its resolutions of 19 February 2009 on a special place for children in EU external action¹, of 16 January 2008 entitled ‘Towards an EU strategy on the rights of the child’², of 3 July 2003 on trafficking in children and child soldiers³, of 6 July 2000 on the abduction of children by the Lord’s Resistance Army⁴ and of 17 December 1998 on child soldiers⁵,
 - having regard to the United Nations resolutions on the rights of the child, especially UN Security Council resolution 1612 (2005),
 - having regard to the 2002 Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict,
 - having regard to the Paris Commitments to Protect Children from Unlawful Recruitment or use by Armed Forces or Armed Groups and to the Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups, both of which were adopted on 6 February 2007,
 - having regard to Rule 121(1) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas most contemporary armed conflicts involve one or more armed non-state actors fighting governments or other armed groups, with civilians and particularly children bearing the brunt of these wars;
- B. whereas in order to improve the protection of civilians, and particularly children,

¹ OJ C 76 E, 25.3.2010, p. 3.

² OJ C 41 E, 19.2.2009, p. 24.

³ OJ C 74 E, 24.3.2004, p. 854.

⁴ OJ C 121, 24.4.2001, p. 401.

⁵ OJ C 98, 9.4.1999, p. 297.

consideration has to be given to all the parties in conflict;

- C. whereas international humanitarian norms apply to and bind all parties in an armed conflict;
- D. whereas armed conflicts have a particularly devastating impact on children's physical and mental development, with long-term consequences for human security and sustainable development;
- E. whereas the Statute of the International Criminal Court criminalises the act of conscripting or enlisting children under the age of 15 into armed forces or groups, or using them to participate actively in hostilities;
- F. whereas international law prohibits all forms of sexual violence, including against children, and whereas acts of sexual violence may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide;
- G. whereas the use of anti-personnel mines has decreased since the adoption of the Mine Ban Convention in 1997, but still poses a threat to children, especially in armed conflicts not of an international character;
- H. whereas the international community has a moral duty to seek commitments from all parties involved in conflicts, including both states and armed non-state actors, in order to protect children;
- 1. Addresses the following recommendations to the Commissioner for Development and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy:
 - (a) encourage the signing of action plans for the protection of children in armed conflict with the UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict by concerned states and armed non-state actors;
 - (b) recognise the efforts made by the UN and non-governmental organisations to persuade armed non-state actors to protect children, while reiterating that this does not imply support for, or recognition of, the legitimacy of the activities of those actors;
 - (c) include in political dialogues with third countries, for instance within the framework of the Cotonou Agreement, the goal of preventing and stopping the recruitment and forced involvement of children under the age of 18 and ensuring their release and reintegration into society;
 - (d) reiterate that states and armed non-state actors must comply with international humanitarian law and international humanitarian customary law, and support them in their efforts to take special measures to protect civilians, particularly children;
 - (e) engage directly, or indirectly through specialised NGOs, with armed non-state actors on the issue of protection of girls and boys, with a view to alleviating children's

suffering in armed conflict and urging armed non-state actors to sign the Deed of Commitment under the Geneva Call for the Protection of Children from the Effects of Armed Conflict;

- (f) support humanitarian NGOs that engage in dialogue with armed non-state actors in order to promote respect for international humanitarian norms in armed conflict, in particular the protection of children through political, diplomatic and financial means;
2. Instructs its President to forward this recommendation to the Commissioner for Development, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Commission, the Council and the European External Action Service.