



Thailand and Gabon first States to ratify new UN treaty giving children access to justice at the international level.

PRESS RELEASE

Geneva/Manila, 26 September 2012 – Thailand and Gabon are the first countries to ratify the new international treaty on children's rights, which allows children and their representatives to report rights violations to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. The ratifications are receiving strong support from NGOs around the world.

"Before this new treaty, it was almost impossible to challenge violations of children's rights at the international level," said Anita Goh, Co-Chair of Ratify OP3CRC - International Coalition for the OPCRC on a Communications Procedure, an alliance of children's rights NGOs and institutions.

The treaty, a third Optional Protocol (OP) to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), establishes a channel of complaint for children whose rights have been violated, for example through violence, sexual exploitation, or lack of access to education. If violations cannot be addressed effectively by national courts, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child will be able to examine them.

"We applaud Thailand's and Gabon's lead, and urge every country to ratify the OP to recognize children as full rights holders" said Ryan Silverio, representing Child Rights Coalition Asia, a member organisation of the International Coalition. "Ratifying this treaty is an important step towards ensuring that children have equal access to justice at the international level," added Silverio.

"The International Coalition especially looks for leadership of States that supported the creation of the Protocol and all those that have signed it. We call for its entry into force by February 28, 2013, the first anniversary of its signing," said Goh.

Thailand and Gabon ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child at the UN annual treaty event on 25 September 2012, in New York. The Protocol enters into force once ten States ratify it. It can then be used by children and their representatives in every state where it is ratified.

Background information

Thailand was part of the core group of twelve States (Austria, Chile, Egypt, Finland, Germany, Kenya, the Maldives, Slovakia, Slovenia, Thailand and Uruguay) that led the drafting of OP3 CRC.

Other States have initiated the ratification process. For example, Germany adopted a draft law on the ratification of the OP in August 2012.

Fifty-five States expressed official support for OP3 CRC when it was adopted by the United Nations in 2011: Albania, Andorra, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Ireland, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Maldives, Mali, Montenegro, Morocco, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Senegal, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Turkey, Ukraine, United States of America, Uruguay and Zambia

As of 25 September 2012, in addition to Thailand, thirty-one States have signed OP3 – indicating their intention to ratify: Albania, Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Cape Verde, Chile, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Finland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Montenegro, Morocco, Peru, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey and Uruguay.

For more information and interviews, please contact:

Anita Goh, NGO Group for the CRC, Co-Chair of Ratify OP3 CRC - International Coalition for the OPCRC on a Communications Procedure (in English, French or Spanish), based in Geneva, Switzerland, on +41 763581222 or goh@childrightsnet.org

Ryan Silverio, Child Rights Coalition Asia, Member of Ratify OP3CRC – International Coalition for the OPCRC on a Communications Procedure (in English), based in Manila, Philippines, on +632-3766388 or rsilverio@childrightscoalitionasia.org

Ratify OP3 CRC - International Coalition for the OPCRC on a Communications Procedure, a group of over forty national, regional and international children's rights NGOs and institutions, is guided by a Steering Committee composed of: African Child Policy Forum, Eurochild, Child Rights Coalition Asia (CRC Asia), Child Rights International Network (CRIN), Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of children (GIEACP), NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child (NGO Group for the CRC), Kindernothilfe, Plan International, Red latinoamericana y caribeña por la defensa de los derechos de los niños, niñas y adolescentes (Redlamyc), Save the Children, Terre des Hommes International Federation (TDHIF), and World Vision.

For background information on the International Coalition, see: www.ratifyop3crc.org