

Resolution on child labour in cocoa sector

2011/2957(RSP) - 14/03/2012 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution tabled on behalf of the Committee on International Trade on child labour in cocoa sector.

It recalls that the ILO estimates that 115 million children under the age of 15 are engaged in dangerous activities that should be abolished. Whilst Parliament has to give its consent to the conclusion of the 2010 International Cocoa Agreement, stakeholders have raised strong concerns about child labour in the growing and harvesting of cocoa beans. It strongly condemns the use of child labour on cocoa fields, and urges those states which have yet to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child or ILO Conventions Nos 138 concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment or 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, to ratify and implement these conventions swiftly. Furthermore, States should implement all appropriate policies to foster awareness of child abuse in the labour market and of the need to comply with existing national and international rules. All stakeholders involved in growing and processing cocoa beans and their derivative products must live up to their respective responsibilities in terms of combating all forms of forced child labour and collaborate towards a sustainable cocoa supply chain free from child labour.

Parliament calls on the Commission:

- to ensure policy coherence in all its initiatives, namely those related to trade, development (in particular as regards children's access to education), human rights, public procurement and corporate social responsibility, and to encourage the exchange of best practices between different economic sectors in which child labour occurs;
- to ensure that all trade agreements include effective provisions on poverty reduction and the promotion of decent work and safe working conditions, along with legally binding clauses on internationally agreed human rights, social and environmental standards and the enforcement of those standards, accompanied by measures to be applied in the event of infringements.
- with the ILO-IPEC and other partners, to continue efforts to arrive at a better understanding of the economic, social and cultural complexities of farming communities ;
- in view of the CENs (European Committee for Standardisation) new project committee on developing a two-part European standard for traceable and sustainable cocoa, to give consideration to, and if appropriate submit a legislative proposal on, an effective traceability mechanism for goods produced by means of forced child labour. It also calls on the International Cocoa Agreement partners.

Members want the International Cocoa Agreement partners to look into the possibility of introducing accredited, third-party-audited traceability for the cocoa supply chain and to support supply-chain improvements and better organisation of farmers in order to allow traceability throughout the cocoa sector supply chain.

They go on to note that the EU's Generalised System of Preferences (GSP), its main trade policy instrument for promoting core labour standards, is under review and that trade preferences granted to beneficiary countries under that system can be withdrawn in specified circumstances, namely in the event of serious and systematic violation of the principles laid down in a number of core ILO conventions, including Conventions Nos 138 and 182.

They also recall that on [15 December 2011 Parliament](#) decided to withhold its consent to a Textile Protocol to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and Uzbekistan on account of concerns relating to the use of forced child labour on cotton fields in Uzbekistan, and recommended that the EU investigate the possibility of temporarily withdrawing Uzbekistan's GSP benefits if ILO monitoring bodies conclude that it has seriously and systematically breached its obligations.

Lastly, Parliament welcomes all multi-stakeholder initiatives involving governments, industry, producers and civil society that aim at eradicating child labour, improving the lives of children and adults on cocoa farms and ensuring that cocoa is grown responsibly, such as the recent regional initiative by the OECD, the Secretariat of the Sahel and West Africa Club and the International Cocoa Initiative to promote best practice in combating the worst forms of child labour on West African cocoa farms.