

2010Z09614

Questions of the members Gesthuizen (SP/Socialist Party) and Voordewind (ChristianUnion) to the Minister of Economic Affairs and the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the involvement of Advanta and Bejo Zaden in child labour in India (submitted June 21, 2010)

1

What is your response to the reports "Seeds of Child Labour - Signs of Hope: Child and Adult Labour in Cottonseed Production in India"¹⁾ and "Growing Up in the Danger Fields: Child and Adult Labour in Vegetable Seed Production in India"²⁾ published by the India Committee of the Netherlands, the International Labor Rights Forum and the campaign 'Stop Child Labour' on (the subject of) child labour which state that, among other issues, more than half a million children labour in the Indian seed production work for 10 to 12 hours a day, and that they are exposed to toxic pesticides, while adults - particularly women - are paid much less than the official minimum wages, and that vegetable seeds are produced for Dutch companies such as Advanta and Bejo Zaden?³⁾

2

Do you share the conclusion that acting like this is not in conformity with international agreements such as those of the International Labor Organization?

3

Do you share the opinion that in view of the tripartite character of the International Labour Organization, Dutch companies and the Dutch government have to make all possible efforts to prevent and combat such offences?

4

Are you willing to publicly condemn the Dutch seed companies Advanta and Bejo Zaden which are involved in the proven practices of child labour, also because of the fact that the reports demonstrate the strong purchasing power of these companies and their position of authority over middlemen and the conditions on the basis of which they are purchasing?

If not, are you holding the view that the companies concerned have taken all possible measures to prevent violations of the International Labour Organization conventions, such as the including of the ban on child labour and implementation of International Labor Organization Conventions in a code of conduct; the inclusion of a ban on child labour, women's discrimination and implementation of ILO Conventions in contracts with suppliers; a credible management system for combating child labour and implementation of ILO Conventions, including independent monitoring, a complaints procedure, public reporting and engaging in a dialogue with parties involved like NGOs and trade unions? If not, are you prepared to start a dialogue with these companies and to challenge them on these issues? Are you willing to agree with them on a deadline for ending these structural violations? Are you willing to make agreements with the Dutch seed sector as a whole on this issue?

5

Did the Dutch companies concerned make use of governmental subsidies or other government facilities? If so, what will be consequences for these subsidies or this support, taking into consideration the meaning of the motion Gesthuizen⁴⁾ and the motion Voordewind⁵⁾ as well as the point of view of the government that in such cases fines may be imposed?

6

Are you willing to raise this issue in bilateral contacts with the Indian government as well as in the case of visits to India?

7

Are you willing to plead with the European Union that in the negotiations on the EU-India Free Trade Agreement an agreement will be reached on coming child labour and on the implementation of for human rights and ensure that they will become an integral part of this agreement, including a dispute settlement mechanism?

8

Are you willing to investigate the involvement of Dutch companies in child labour and exploitation in the agricultural sector, starting with an examination of the labour-intensive seed production?

1) International Labour Rights Forum (ILRF), India Committee of the Netherlands (ICN), Stop Child Labour – School is the Best Place to Work, June 2010
<http://www.indianet.nl/pdf/signsofhope.pdf>.

2) International Labour Rights Forum (ILRF), India Committee of the Netherlands (ICN), Stop Child Labour – School is the Best Place to Work, June 2010
<http://www.indianet.nl/pdf/dangerfields.pdf>.

3) India Committee of the Netherlands, 10 June 2010: “More than half a million child labourers in Indian seed production Situation improved where government, NGOs and companies intervened”: <http://www.indianet.nl/pb100610e.html>;
de Volkskrant, 10 June 2010: “Kinderarbeid op beloop gelaten”

4) Kamerstuk 26 485, nr. 76

5) Kamerstuk 31 263, nr. 16