

November 26, 2015

Parliamentary questions by the members Van Laar (Labour Party) and Voordewind (Christian Union) to the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation on child labour and low wages in Dutch and in the Netherlands operating seed companies active in India [no. 2015Z22670]

Question 1

Are you familiar with the report *Soiled Seeds - Child Labour and Under Payment of Women in Vegetable Seed Production in India*⁽¹⁾ by the India Committee of the Netherlands?

Question 2

What is your reaction to the findings of the report that an increasing number of children - an estimated 156.000 - operates in the Indian vegetable seed production, that women are usually paid far below the official minimum wage and that a number of Dutch and in the Netherlands active seed companies are involved?

Question 3

What is your opinion about the fact that at least 19 members of the trade association Plantum are operating in India, of which only 10 do some kind of monitoring on child labour under the age of 14, and that for the majority of the companies it is not known whether they also contribute to solutions to accompany these children to education.⁽²⁾

Question 4

Are you of the opinion that Dutch seed companies, which are violating Convention 182 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) by doing nothing or little against hazardous labour by 14 to 18 year old children and are paying such low prices to farmers that they are inclined to pay women far below the minimum wage, must also actively take up these issues?

Question 5

Are you willing to address companies and the trade association Plantum on the above mentioned issues? Do you find a Covenant [Sector Agreement] with the trade association, companies, civil society organisations and the government an appropriate measure to come to further arrangements about that?

Question 6

Are you prepared to support Indian organisations or new joint initiatives which have proved or from whom it can be expected that they can contribute to effectively tackling child labour in the vegetable seed production and to working on at least the official minimum wage, working towards a living wage?

Question 7

Are you and your colleagues prepared to raise this issue in your bilateral contacts with India, including in the framework of the *Memorandum of Understanding* on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), and if possible to contribute jointly to solutions?

Question 8

Do you support the recommendation in the report that companies and trade associations should have an effective complaints mechanism to actively address and resolve individual as well as structural abuses?

Question 9

Do you endorse also the other recommendations in the report, and what opportunities do you see to contribute to their implementation?

Question 10

Are you prepared to answer these questions ahead of the ICSR Parliamentary Consultation on December 3, 2015?

Notes

1) See media release and report: <http://www.indianet.nl/pb151123e.html>

2) See statement Plantum: <http://www.indianet.nl/pdf/PlantumKinderarbeid.pdf>

Translation by ICN; original document: <http://www.indianet.nl/pdf/kv151126.pdf>