

**June 30, 2017**

**Answers by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, also on behalf of the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, to**

***Parliamentary Questions by member Voordewind (ChristianUnion) about the visit of Prime Minister Modi of India to the Netherlands [no. 2017Z08801, submitted June 22, 2017]***

**Question 1**

Are you willing – also in view of your statements in response to previous questions<sup>(1)</sup> - to emphatically ask the attention of Prime Minister Modi of India for excluding and thwarting human rights and other civil society organizations, including through the restrictive *Foreign Contribution Regulation Act*, which causes Dutch development organizations to face major problems in financing their Indian partner organizations?

**Answer 1**

Yes.

**Question 2**

Are you prepared to discuss with Prime Minister Modi that a considerable number of people and organizations in the Netherlands face difficulties when applying for a visa for India, partly because they were critical about problems in Indian society and/or the policy of the Indian government? Would you urge him to change this restrictive visa policy and to bring it into line with the democratic values that India promotes?

**Answer 2**

It is known to the government that organizations and individuals in some cases encounter problems when applying for a visa for India. It is not always clear what the underlying reasons are. In recent years the number of travel movements between India and the Netherlands has increased significantly – in both directions. Further facilitation of the flows of travelers is the subject of consultation between both countries. In contact with the government of India the Dutch government continuously emphasizes the importance of civil society organizations for a well-functioning democratic state with the rule of law. The government is engaged to see that employees of organizations operating in accordance with local legislation are enabled to conduct their societal activities. This has also been raised during the visit by Prime Minister Modi.

**Question 3**

Are you willing, in view of the many violations of labour rights, including child labour and modern slavery, that occur in various production chains of Dutch companies that are active in

India, including in the garment<sup>(2)</sup>, seeds<sup>(3)</sup> and natural stone<sup>(4)</sup> sector, to work on further arrangements with Prime Minister Modi about collectively addressing these issues?

### **Answer 3**

Various reports show a painful picture of the daily lives of many labourers in India: low wages, extreme long working hours and discrimination against female workers. Also child labour still continues to occur.

On the positive side, the Indian Parliament has recently approved the ratification of two conventions on child labour of the International Labour Organization (ILO): Convention 138, concerning the Minimum Age for Employment, and Convention 182, aiming to prevent children under the age of 18 from engaging in work which is harmful or dangerous for their physical or mental health. Of course, the next step is a concrete implementation of the conventions. In addition to the government, also companies and civil society organizations can play a role. The [Dutch] government also supports organizations that are active in these areas.

Monitoring the compliance with local laws and regulations, such as minimum wages and good labour conditions, is a responsibility of the local government and companies that enter into agreements with suppliers. Under the OECD Guidelines, companies are expected to ensure compliance with local legislation regarding their suppliers. India is also under the supervision of the ILO. This means that Indian trade unions can file a complaint against their government with the ILO in case of violation of labour legislation.

The government emphasizes in contacts with the Indian government the importance of inclusive sustainable development, including a well-functioning rule of law and respect for human rights. Sustainable development and a well-functioning rule of law are closely linked. This was not only discussed bilaterally during the visit of Prime Minister Modi but is also a subject of multilateral dialogue.

### **Question 4**

Are you, as a final point, prepared to address the position of frequently discriminated and marginalised groups such as Dalits and Muslims, also in view of the increasing number of violent acts against them by extremist Hindu groups with regard to the banning of beef?<sup>(5)</sup>

### **Question 5**

Are you prepared to raise the increasing violence against Christian minorities, as evidenced by a report by the All India Christian Council?<sup>(6)</sup>

### **Answers 4 and 5**

The Dutch government is seeking a permanent dialogue with India on human rights and the role of non-governmental organizations, either bilaterally or in EU and multilateral relations. The Netherlands emphasizes the importance of respect for human rights for everyone, including religious and other minorities, for a well-functioning rule of law and the promotion of sustainable development.

During the visit of the the Minister of Foreign Affairs to his Indian counterpart Swaraj on May 9, 2017, he raised the subject of human rights as a matter of course. During the visit of Prime Minister Modi of India to the Netherlands, the importance of human rights has also been discussed.

### **Question 6**

Can you answer these questions before the visit of Prime Minister Modi on 27 June next?

### **Answer 6**

The questions were answered as soon as possible.

### Notes

- 1) <http://www.indianet.nl/pdf/kv170213e.pdf>
- 2) <http://www.indianet.nl/pdf/kv170216e.pdf>
- 3) <http://www.indianet.nl/pdf/kv151218e.pdf>
- 4) <http://www.indianet.nl/pdf/kv150604e.pdf>
- 5) <http://idsn.org/hrw-india-must-stop-cow-protection-vigilante-violence-dalits-muslims/>
- 6) <https://www.dropbox.com/s/9r5fl2jtxe65v8w/AICC%20Annual%20Report%202016.pdf?dl=0>

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