

Questions of the members Voordewind (ChristianUnion), Van der Staaij (SGP) en Çörüz (CDA) to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Economic Affairs about the report ‘Understanding Untouchability’ in India (submitted February 8th, 2010)

1. Did you take notice of the recently published report ‘Understanding Untouchability’ of the Indian NGO¹ Navsarjan and the American Robert F. Kennedy Centre for Justice and Human Rights?
2. Are you holding the view - taking into consideration this report but also many other Indian reports as well as the conclusions and recommendations of UN treaty bodies – that caste discrimination is an enormous human rights problem that deserves high priority in Dutch foreign policy?
3. In what way are you raising ‘caste discrimination’ within the European Union or in which way are you planning to do so, including from the angle of European development co-operation, the political dialogue with India and other caste-affected countries (in particular Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka), the discussion on corporate social responsibility and the trade relations?
4. Are you willing to take the initiative to a joint letter of the European heads of government to the Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who called untouchability ‘not only a form of social discrimination’ but also ‘a blot on humanity’, in order to encourage him and where possible to support him in the fight against it?
5. Are you willing to have an investigation undertaken in India and other caste-affected countries, on the prevention and combating of untouchability practices in development programmes of the EU, the World Bank and UN organizations which are supported by the Dutch government?
6. Are you willing to exert your influence to place the report ‘Understanding Untouchability’, together with other conclusions and recommendations with regard to India of e.g. UNCERD², on the agenda of the human rights dialogue between India and the EU which will take place at the end of March 2010?
7. Are you willing, through your input as member state of the EU, to make the issue of untouchability, the related violations of human rights and agreements how to combat it, an issue in the context of the negotiations about the EU-India free trade agreement?
8. Are you willing to prominently raise the issue of untouchability, including the very bad situation of Dalit women, in your speech during the coming Human Rights Council?
9. Can you ensure that the Dutch Embassies in the caste-affected countries regularly report about the issue and can you regularly inform the Parliament about this?
10. Are you willing to bring the Ambedkar Principles (Principles and Guidelines to Address Caste Discrimination in the Private Sector), which were developed by the International Dalit Solidarity Network, to the attention of companies active in India who services from your Ministries and/or who are joining trade missions to India?
11. Are you willing to answer these questions before the beginning of the coming session of the UN Human Rights Council?

¹ Non Governmental Organization

² CERD: Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination