

August 31, 2017

Parliamentary Question for written answer to the European Commission

Rule 130

Judith Sargentini (Verts/ALE)

Subject: Call for due diligence in response to abuses in the granite industry

The report by the Landelijke India Werkgroep (LIW) (India Committee of the Netherlands) indicates that serious abuses occur in the granite industry, such as child labour and practices verging on slavery. One of the recommendations to businesses is that they should subscribe to the best existing multi-stakeholder initiative which adheres as closely as possible to the UNGP and OECD guidelines, and that these should be further improved. It is recommended that the EU should introduce a due diligence requirement and a requirement for businesses to render the supply chain transparent.

1. What has the Commission so far done to tackle abuses in this industry, and what more will it do in the light of this report?
2. What view does the Commission take of the recommendation for compulsory due diligence (particularly for SMEs), such as already exists for timber and conflict minerals, in the light of the proliferation of voluntary initiatives to which businesses subscribe and which fall short of international standards and are insufficiently effective to tackle abuses?
3. Will the Commission order an inquiry and ascertain to what extent the current voluntary initiatives in the granite industry comply with the standards of the UNGP and OECD guidelines?

October 30, 2017

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E-005421/2017

Answer given by Mr Mimica on behalf of the Commission

1. The Commission is firmly committed to eliminating child and forced labour. To this aim, it has been working in a multidimensional approach to address labour abuses through various instruments and stakeholders. As the main donor to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the EU has helped to increase ratifications and enforcements of the ILO Fundamental Conventions¹ by partner countries, including India. Special efforts are devoted to the 2014 Protocol² for its rapid ratification and enforcement.

Other EU external actions³ aim to improve social protection systems, better working conditions and access to education and decent jobs, in particular for children and youth. The Commission will continue tackling labour rights abuses in line with its commitment to the United Nations 2030 Agenda and the New European Consensus on Development⁴.

¹ Freedom of association and collective bargaining, Forced Labour (including the 2014 Protocol), Child Labour, Equality of opportunity and treatment

² P029 - Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930

³ In India for example the EU has supported Bal Raksha, Bharat (Save the Children India) to strengthen child protection mechanisms and social welfare schemes

⁴ 2017/C 210/01

2. The Commission has already taken steps⁵ to improve transparency and traceability in global value chains in the garment/cotton/textile industry. Technical cooperation to promote responsible value chains in the mineral sector, including conflict minerals, is ongoing in particular for African, Caribbean and Pacific countries in coordination with governments, other development partners and existing initiatives.

The due diligence requirements under the Conflict Minerals Regulation⁶ will become applicable for EU importers as of 1 January 2021. The Commission is currently not considering enlarging its scope.

3. The Commission will continue to support the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's work ensuring broadest uptake to comply with their Responsible Business Conduct guidelines in the extractive sector including granite as applicable.

⁵ C(2016)8575 final Annex 3 "Promoting Responsible Value Chains in the Garment Sector with a focus on Decent Work, Transparency and Traceability". This programme includes the funding to the multi-donor Vision Zero Fund (VZF) to address occupational health and safety deficits in global supply chains. The VZF helps to achieve EU objectives to promote level playing field and to combat social dumping across global supply chains as established in the Council conclusions on 12 May 2016

⁶ Regulation (EU) 2017/821 laying down supply chain due diligence obligations for Union importers of tin, tantalum and tungsten, their ores, and gold originating from conflict-affected and high-risk areas.