

**July 8, 2014**

**Answers by Minister Ploumen of Foreign Trade and Development to**

***Parliamentary Questions by members Voordewind (ChristianUnion), Gesthuizen (Socialist Party) and Van Laar (Labour Party) to the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development regarding a new study on large-scale child labour and other violations of labour rights in Turkish hazelnut production (submitted June 16, 2014)***

**Question 1**

Are you aware of the recent research by the Fair Labor Association, commissioned by Nestlé, on child labour and working conditions in the hazelnut harvest in the Ordu and Gisesun regions in Turkey from which it appears that there is large-scale child labour (41% is younger than 18 years and half of them even under 15 years), very long working hours (more than 11 hours per day) and wages below the legal minimum?<sup>1</sup>

**Answer 1**

Yes.

**Question 2**

Do you acknowledge that [the results of] this extended impact assessment are broadly consistent with the situation of the Turkish hazelnut harvest in general, also because these growers are not selected by Nestlé itself? If not, why not?

**Answer 2**

It is difficult to ascertain if the production chain of Nestlé in the Ordu and Giresun regions is representative of the whole hazelnut harvest in Turkey.

**Question 3**

How do you assess this serious situation, also in view of the activities supported by you on this issue, including support to a project of the ILO in Turkey in the Ordu region that has been started in November 2012 and led to an action plan discussed with local authorities and civil society organizations?<sup>2</sup>

**Answer 3**

The Turkish government recognizes this problem and tackles it therefore being the primary responsible party. To promote cooperation with other responsible parties, such as local governments, farmers, middlemen and families, the Netherlands supports the mentioned ILO project I referred to in my answers to previous parliamentary questions<sup>3</sup>. Just like the European customers, I also support the follow-up project, aimed at the for Turkey relatively new concept of cooperation between government, business and civil society. Solving this structural problem will take time.

#### **Question 4**

Did you raise the problem of child labour during the trade mission to Turkey (2 to 4 June this year)? If so, can you inform the Parliament about the results?

#### **Answer 4**

I have raised this issue several times during my mission to Turkey from 2 to June 4. Child labour was e.g. the subject of a meeting with the Turkish government, the ILO and the Dutch delegation. I promised a contribution of 90,000 euros to the above mentioned follow-up project of the ILO. In an interview with Deputy Prime Minister Babacan, I have also drawn attention to this issue. He indicated that child labour in the agricultural sector has been reduced during the last decade and that Turkey continues to strive for a further reduction. I told him that the Netherlands wants to continue cooperating with Turkey on this issue.

#### **Questions 5 and 6**

Are you willing to again bring the situation as described in the study with regard to the production chain of Nestlé to the attention of the Turkish authorities and the ILO and to ask them what measures they have taken or will take to prevent that the next hazelnut harvest (August/September) will again lead to child labour and other labour rights violations?

Are you willing, on the basis of the investigation of seasonal labour migration<sup>4</sup> supported by the Netherlands, to bring the broader issue of child labour and violations of labour rights in various sectors, including the cotton sector, to the attention of the Turkish authorities and the ILO again in order to improve the economic and social situation of these families in an effective and sustainable manner? If so, what action will you undertake?

#### **Answers 5 and 6**

These issues do and will have my continuing attention, as evidenced by the fact that I have given this subject a prominent place in the program during my last mission. I will continue the discussion and cooperation with the Turkish government on these issues.

#### **Questions 7, 8 and 9**

Do you believe that the transparency of Nestle on these major problems, as well as making the production chain traceable, is commendable, and that the same transparency openness and accountability can be expected from other companies that import and/or sale or process hazelnuts from Turkey? If so, what action do you undertake towards these companies?

Are you willing to ask other companies that sell or process hazelnuts from Turkey in their products - including Ahold, Unilever, Ferrero and Mondelez - what they are doing to combat child labour and the associated low wages and poor working conditions and to be transparent about this?

Do you believe that supermarkets should raise this serious problem with their suppliers of (products containing) hazelnuts and must insist on targeted action and transparency? Are you also prepared to raise this issue with the CBL and FNLI?

## Answers 7, 8 and 9

In line with the government's policy on corporate social responsibility, I expect companies to take responsibility in the supply chain. I have, in line with this policy, approached FNLI and asked about the way its members tackle the problem of child labour in the hazelnut chain and show transparency about this. FNLI indicates that the main Dutch importers of hazelnuts from Turkey are the international companies Nestlé, Ferrero, Mondelez and Unilever, and that they regularly bring these issues to the attention of their members, in collaboration with the European trade association. The latter will on July 8, at the initiative of FNLI, organize a meeting with companies and stakeholders on what they can do to eliminate child labour in the hazelnut harvest in Turkey. FNLI states that the companies mentioned, in addition to their participation in the ILO project, also undertake individual activities in their supply chain. For example, Ferrero wants to achieve 100% traceability in the hazelnut supply chain by 2020, Mondelez focuses on improving the living conditions of the workers concerned and Unilever focuses on sustainability of their raw materials. Via FNLI I asked Unilever in relation to this to also pay attention to the purchase of hazelnuts. When asked CBL [trade association of the supermarket sector and food service companies] states that supermarkets do endorse the importance of good working conditions for all the products they sell and that they draw attention of their suppliers to this issue. The subject of labour conditions in the agricultural supply chain will be on the agenda of a meeting between the Deputy Minister of Economic Affairs, Dijksma, and the CBL.

## Question 10

Are you willing to ask the European Commission to raise the problem of continuing child labour and poor working conditions in seasonal agricultural work in their discussions and negotiations with the Turkish government?

## Answer 10

In the EU context, Turkey is regularly addressed on child labour in relation to the dialogue on meeting the strict criteria for entry into the EU. In this context, the European Commission repeatedly urges Turkey to increase the efforts to combat child labour. In its latest progress report, the Commission stressed that Turkey should take further action to address child labour.

[Translation by ICN]

## Notes:

- (1) See: <http://www.stopkinderarbeid.nl/Stop-Kinderarbeid/NIEUWS/Kinderarbeid-wijdverbreid-in-Turkse-hazelnootproductie>
- (2) Aanhangsel Handelingen, vergaderjaar 2013–2014, nr. 837
- (3) See for this answers my letter DGBEB/IMH 2013.342988
- (4) Idem (2)