

**July 7, 2016**

**Answers by Minister Ploumen (Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation) to**

***Parliamentary questions by the members Voordewind (ChristianUnion) and Van Laar (Labour Party) to the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation on the objective of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to eradicate the worst forms of child labour by 2016 at the latest (submitted June 14, 2016).***

**Question 1**

Are you familiar with the objective of the ILO to eradicate the worst forms of child labour by 2016? Do you know the motion Schouten/Voordewind<sup>(1)</sup>, requesting the Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH) to explicitly adopt the ILO target for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour by 2016 and to inform the Parliament about the results? Are you familiar with the "World Day Against Child Labour" on 12 June?

**Answer**

Yes. The motion Schouten/Voordewind from 2011 (Parliamentary Paper 26 485, No. 118) urged IDH to pursue vigorously complex social issues such as living wage and child labour.

**Question 2**

Do you acknowledge that the ILO objective has not been reached, as 168 million children still work and more than half of them (85 million) works in hazardous conditions?

**Answer**

Yes, unfortunately we still have a long way to go, although there are no statistics on the number of children worldwide that are still victim of child labour by 2016. The figure of 168 million stems from the ILO report *Global child labour trends 2008 to 2012*. In the four years examined by this report, the number of children doing child labour significantly decreased, from 264 to 168 million. It is not clear yet whether this trend continued in the years since 2012. The ILO works in a consultative process on a new publication with data on child labour. This publication will be published in the course of 2017.

**Question 3**

What efforts the Netherlands specifically undertook with respect to the mentioned ILO aim to eradicate the worst forms of child labour within the ten-year *2006 Global Action Plan*?

**Answer**

In 2016 the Netherlands has taken a number of new steps in the fight against child labour. There is a Child Labour Fund - managed by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) - containing EUR 5 million for matching contributions from companies to multi-stakeholder

initiatives against child labour. The first financing is expected to be provided after the summer. Interest was shown by the cocoa, gold and textiles sectors.

Combating child labour is also an important element of the textile covenant, signed on July 4. The Netherlands has used the EU presidency to put child labour higher on the agenda. This has resulted in EU Council conclusions on combating child labour.<sup>(2)</sup>

Through these conclusions the Commission is encouraged to ensure that combating child labour – in addition to development programs – will also be given attention in educational, agricultural, CSR- and decent work programs of the EU. The Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) are urged to take extra steps to protect vulnerable refugee children from (labour) exploitation. These developments in 2016 are in addition to previous (multiannual) initiatives.

The Netherlands has in recent years deployed many different ways to combat child labour. The government's response<sup>(3)</sup> to the initiative document of the member Van Laar last year on banning products related to child labour gives a good overview of the Dutch efforts. The annual human rights reports sent to the Parliament since 2008 provide much additional information. The most recent report, on the year 2015, was sent to the Parliament on June 21.<sup>(4)</sup>

#### **Question 4**

How did the IDH incorporate the objective of the motion in its program and what are the results in terms of the fight against child labour?

#### **Answer**

IDH is engaged in combating child labour at three levels:

1. All IDH programs are developed on the basis of their ICSR [International Corporate Social Responsibility] policies and assessed on the basis of the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises; combating child labour is part of those guidelines. All contracts concluded by IDH refer to this.
2. The sustainability standards supported and promoted by IDH also focus on combating child labour.
3. IDH focuses on systemic changes in the value chains and areas where it operates, and works on the root causes of child labour. A living wage or income is essential. Organizing farmers and access to supply chains and source materials for farmers is a first step to that end.

*Some examples of relevant activities and results:*

- IDH together with the *Ethical Tea Partnership* and other partners in Burundi has eradicated child labour in three regions and did so far protect 14,000 girls in the Indian state of Amman against child trafficking. There is a policy dialogue to share lessons and approaches.
- IDH has established the Child Labour Platform and transferred it in 2012 to the ILO and UN Global Compact.<sup>(5)</sup> Here companies cooperate on the implementation of the ILO conventions.
- IDH works on living wages and promotes dialogue on company level between employees and management; for example in textiles, electronics and tea. In the textile chain IDH cooperates in Vietnam and Pakistan with the *Better Work* program of the ILO.

- IDH is a board member of the *International Cocoa Initiative (ICI)*, where knowledge and expertise on effective ways to combat child labour come together. ICI works with companies and farming communities on action plans to protect children. In addition, ICI collects data on the effectiveness of different strategies to protect children in cocoa-producing areas.

### Questions 5, 6 and 8

Can you give an overview of the programs addressing the problem of child labour was addressed and in which action was taken against the worst, but also all forms of child labour under ILO Conventions C182 and C138?

What are the results for each program where child labour is a risk factor?

What is the IDH currently doing to combat all forms of child labour prohibited under ILO conventions? What results did these activities achieve up to now?

### Answers

The IDH programs work on making the following sectors sustainable: cocoa, coffee, tea, cotton, palm oil, soy, aquaculture, textiles, tropical timber, paper/pulp, vegetables/fruit and spices. Combating child labour requires attention in many agricultural and textile chains, with the biggest problems in the cocoa and cotton sectors. In all these programs the prevention of child labour is part of the standards IDH wants to agree on within the sector.

IDH is also working on scalable approaches to improve living wages, for example through a public-private coalition in the tea sector in Malawi. Moreover, the promotion of better incomes and living conditions of farming families is a major focus of the programs.

*Some specific results:*

- Certification of production is an often used way to combat child labour.<sup>(6)</sup> Therefore IDH has from the beginning put a strong emphasis on strengthening the certification of trading chains where child labour plays an important role. The certification of production has boomed in recent years thanks to efforts of IDH.<sup>(7)</sup> Absence of child labour is a hard condition for certification.
- Thanks to the strong commitment of IDH certification of cocoa and cotton has rapidly expanded in the past 8 years. For cotton already 12% of the world production is certified, while it was less than 1% about 8 years ago. Meeting the objectives of the Declaration of Intent on Sustainable Cocoa is progressing well: the 50% target for 2015 was achieved a year earlier.<sup>(8)</sup>
- Within the *International Cocoa Initiative* IDH puts pressure on the industry to combat child labour, together with Solidaridad, ILO, Tony's Chocolonely and Save the Children. ICI is a major initiative in the field of combating child labour in the cocoa sector.

### Question 7

Which lessons did the IDH learn concerning (the worst forms of) child labour that can also be instructive for other initiatives and organizations?

## Answer

With the increased commitment in recent years a lot of experience was gained about fighting child labour. These are the main lessons of IDH:

- *Complexity* - Combating child labor is complex. Certification of plantations or cooperatives prevents child labour, but does not address the root causes. Improving the incomes and living conditions of farming families is crucial, besides an accessible and possibly mandatory offer of education.
- *Comprehensive approach required* - To tackle child labour a comprehensive approach is needed: providing education, living income/wage for parents, good regulations, proper inspection and enforcement. It can not only be addressed through a program aimed at preventing child labour in the workplace.
- *Risk of displacement of the problem* - Without overall improvement in living conditions there is a high risk that children go to work in another place (more difficult to detect) when child labour in part of the plantations or farms has been stopped.
- *Labour demand and productivity* - The increased labour demand by increasing the yield per hectare does not lead to a higher risk of child labour. <sup>(9)</sup>
- *Involve the (peasant) communities* – Cooperating with the communities in combating child labour proves to be effective. Like the way IDH and ICI work with women's groups and *Community Action Plans*: farmers are getting advice on when children are allowed or not allowed to help in the plantation instead of being punished. Because in this way the community is participating to combat child labour, it is easier to identify cases of child labour.

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- (1) Parliamentary Paper 26 485, No. 118
  - (2) <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/06/20-fac-child-labour/>
  - (3) <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/binaries/rijksoverheid/documenten/kamerstukken/2015/01/20/kamerbrief-over-verbieden-producten-gerelateerd-aan-kinderarbeid/kamerbrief-over-verbieden-producten-gerelateerd-aan-kinderarbeid.pdf>
  - (4) <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/binaries/rijksoverheid/documenten/rapporten/2016/06/21/mensenrecht-enrapportage-2015/mensenrechtenrapportage-2015.pdf>
  - (5) <http://www.ilo.org/ipcc/Action/CSR/clp/lang--en/index.htm>
  - (6) [http://www.childlaborcocoa.org/images/Payson\\_Reports/Tulane%20University%20-%20Survey%20Research%20on%20Child%20Labor%20in%20the%20Cocoa%20Sector%20-%2030%20July%202015.pdf](http://www.childlaborcocoa.org/images/Payson_Reports/Tulane%20University%20-%20Survey%20Research%20on%20Child%20Labor%20in%20the%20Cocoa%20Sector%20-%2030%20July%202015.pdf)
  - (7) <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2014/10/31/iob-review-riding-the-wave-of-sustainable-commodity-sourcing-engels>
  - (8) <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2015/11/13/kamerbrief-over-resultaten-monitor-duurzame-agrogrondstoffen-2014>
  - (9) [http://www.cocoainitiative.org/images/LMRS\\_policy\\_brief\\_EN\\_web.pdf](http://www.cocoainitiative.org/images/LMRS_policy_brief_EN_web.pdf)