

## Parliamentary questions

15 April 2014

E-004823-14

**Question** for written answer to the Commission

Judith Sargentini (Verts/ALE) , Jean Lambert (Verts/ALE) , Karima Delli (Verts/ALE)

**Subject: Tackling modern slavery in the South Indian textile and garment industry**

1. Is the Commission aware of the paper 'Small Steps, Big Challenges — Update on (tackling) exploitation of girls and young women in the garment industry of South India' and various other publications on the 'modern slavery' of around 100 000 children and young women producing garments for the Western market<sup>(1)</sup>?
2. Is the Commission willing, as a matter of urgency, to take up this large-scale and serious human rights issue at the highest level in its dialogue with the Indian authorities, with a view to starting to work jointly on eradicating child labour, bonded labour and exploitation from the supply chain of European brands sourcing from the South Indian textile and garment industry?
3. Is the Commission willing to initiate a dialogue with European and international garment brands, their sectoral organisations, various joint initiatives and their stakeholders in order to agree to a joint, time-bound plan of action against child labour, bonded labour and exploitation in their supply chains in South India?
4. Is the Commission willing to promote and initiate measures to demand transparency from European garment companies with regard to sourcing locations, first- and further-tier suppliers and the involvement of local stakeholders, along with audit procedures and correction plans and the progress made in implementing them?
5. Is the Commission, as part of its engagement with both the Indian Government and the European garment industry, willing to discuss and work on special measures to protect the rights of vulnerable groups such as Dalit ('outcaste') girls working in the textile and garment industry?
6. Is the Commission willing to actively involve the International Labour Organisation in working on local solutions to eradicate exploitation and bonded labour from textile and garment production in Tamil Nadu?

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(1) <http://www.indianet.nl/pb140404e.html> and [http://www.indianet.nl/sumangali\\_e.html](http://www.indianet.nl/sumangali_e.html)

Parliamentary questions

9 July 2014

E-004823/2014

**Answer given by Mr De Gucht on behalf of the Commission**

The Commission refers to the replies to written questions E-001968/2014 and E-000021/2014 regarding child labour.

The Commission is aware that working conditions in Indian garment industry can be particularly difficult, especially for vulnerable groups. The ratification and effective implementation of the fundamental Conventions of the International Labour Organisation, including on minimum age and on the worst forms of child labour, is regularly brought up at the high level dialogue with India. The EU has repeatedly communicated that it would constitute a very important signal to the world in line with India's status of key global player and Europe's strategic partner. The EU maintains a dialogue with India on employment and social policy that also covers subjects such as social protection and health and safety at work.

Today, in the EU, enterprises can adhere to or develop their own codes of conduct, regarding corporate purchasing and sourcing practices, and compliance with international standards (notably ISO 26000), on a voluntary basis. As indicated in the report<sup>(1)</sup> to the European Parliament and the Council of 25 September 2013, there is no perceived need to include social labelling requirements in the framework of the Textile Regulation<sup>(2)</sup>.

(1) <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2013:0656:FIN:EN:PDF>

(2) <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2011:272:0001:0064:EN:PDF>