



Parliamentary questions

8 July 2010

E-5212/2010

Question for written answer
to the Commission
Rule 117
Peter van Dalen (ECR)

► Subject: Speech by High Representative Ashton in India on 23 June 2010

Answer(s)

On 23 June 2010, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Baroness Ashton, gave a speech in New Delhi, during her four-day visit to India, during which she touched on many issues, such as security, climate change, piracy and trade. However, she said nothing about human rights violations in general and — in particular — child labour, forced labour, torture, freedom of religion and discrimination against the Dalits ('untouchables').

Article 21 of the Treaty on European Union, as amended by the Lisbon Treaty, stipulates, *inter alia*: 'the Union's action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which (...) it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity (...)'.

1. What view does the Commission take of Article 21 of the Treaty on European Union? Must the principles which it sets forth always be applied, or can the High Representative select principles according to the situation and the purpose?
2. What is the Commission's opinion of the situation with regard to child labour, torture, forced labour, freedom of religion and the position of the Dalits in India?
3. How does the Commission reconcile the conclusions of the Council of 14 June 2010 on child labour, which call for dialogue with countries where international agreements on the subject are not implemented, with the failure to mention this issue in India?
4. Does the Commission consider that sensitive topics in the field of human rights should be highlighted in the dialogue with India, particularly on such an important occasion as an official visit by the High Representative?
5. What will the High Representative now do to draw these matters to the attention of the Indian Government as priority issues?

Original language of question: **NL**



Parliamentary questions

31 August 2010

E-5212/2010

Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Ashton on behalf of the Commission

Article 21 of the Treaty on European Union provides the principles and objectives of the European Union's External Action which must indeed be respected. The way in which these principles and objectives are to be promoted must be decided for each particular situation, depending on the circumstances.

The Commission acknowledges that the situation regarding child labour, torture, forced labour, freedom of religion and the position of the Dalits in India is still a matter of concern. The Commission equally recognises the steps being taken by the Indian Government to improve this situation. These and other human rights-related matters are regularly raised with the Indian authorities, notably in the context of the EU–India Human Rights Dialogue. Furthermore, project funding to improve the situation on these issues is made available under the European initiative for democracy and human rights.

Concerning the conclusions of the Council of 14 June 2010, the subject of child labour is indeed regularly raised with the Indian authorities in framework of EU–India relations.

The manner in which highly important but potentially sensitive topics are discussed in the context of the EU's political dialogue with India cannot be categorically defined, but should be determined according to the circumstance and context of the discussions and the judgment of the official or politician concerned.

The subject of child labour will continue to figure among the themes that are raised in the various dialogues that the EU has with the Indian authorities.

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