

**Question for written answer E-011460/2012
to the Commission
Rule 117
Harlem Désir (S&D)**

Subject: Corporate social responsibility (CSR): clear interpretation of the concept of 'reasonable care'

On 24 November 2012, 112 workers died in a fire in a textile outsourcing factory in Dhaka, Bangladesh. This factory did not comply with the rules on the protection of workers, who made clothing for several European firms, including C&A, Carrefour and H&M. This tragedy is the latest in a long line of violations of human and social rights by subsidiaries of or companies with outsourcing contracts for multinationals. It serves to remind us that statements of intent in the area of CSR are not enough in the absence of independent checks and rigorous regulation.

Corporate social responsibility must be based on the guiding principles of the OECD, the ILO and the United Nations on business and human rights.

As the European Commission pointed out in its last communication on CSR in October 2011, "Better implementation of the UN Guiding Principles will contribute to EU objectives regarding specific human rights issues and core labour standards".

These guiding principles make 'reasonable care' in human rights the key to putting social responsibility into practice. According to this principle, they are required to take proactive measures to prevent any violation of human rights. Reasonable care must apply both to a company's own activities and to those of its subsidiaries and supply chains, i.e. to its entire sphere of influence. Effective implementation of this principle must make it possible to make multinational companies responsible for the harm done to the entirety of their production chain, including in countries with poor social legislation.

Does the Commission intend, in the next stages of the implementation of the UN's guiding principles on business and human rights, to make reasonable care binding, with a view to ensuring greater respect for human and social rights by multinational companies?