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E-004678/2018
Answer given by Ms Malmström
on behalf of the European Commission
(12.12.2018)

The EU's action internationally is guided by shared values and privileges a holistic approach to human and labour rights as these issues cannot be tackled solely through action limited to one area but rather through a variety of instruments.

Under the EU-Vietnam Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, the EU maintains a regular high-level Human Rights Dialogue with the Vietnamese Government. This provides a platform to voice concerns and explore ways of advancing the promotion of human rights in Vietnam. At the last Dialogue held in December 2017, all issues mentioned in the Honourable Member's question were raised.

At the same time, the draft EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (FTA) includes a comprehensive chapter on Trade and Sustainable Development with binding commitments on adherence to and effective implementation of fundamental International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions and Multilateral Environmental Agreements. Hence the FTA will provide additional mechanisms and opportunities for further engagement with the Vietnamese Government, business and civil society to contribute to improving the human rights situation and labour conditions in Vietnam.

The Commission agrees on the importance of ensuring progress on human and labour rights in Vietnam, and believes that already now, the prospect of the entry into force of the FTA provides an incentive for Vietnam to engage on the ratification of outstanding core ILO conventions and to put in motion a process to reform its labour code to align it with the principles and the standards of those conventions. Once ratified, the FTA will offer important additional tools to help achieve this by providing leverage on the issues mentioned.

The Commission will report on progress made.