

EN
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Answer given by Ms Urpilainen
on behalf of the European Commission
(14.1.2020)

Human rights are at the heart of all EU external action, including in relations with Eritrea.

The EU, through the EU-Eritrea political dialogue¹, regularly addresses human rights issues with the Government of Eritrea and encourages reforms, including to its National Service. The EU takes note of the Government's intention to reform the National Service once peace and economic conditions are in place².

The EU promotes the implementation of ILO Fundamental Conventions and the ratification of the Protocol to the Forced Labour Convention³ and of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights in EU partner countries. The Commission is encouraged by the recent dialogue between the Government of Eritrea and ILO.

The project in question⁴ is implemented by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and funds only the procurement of construction plant and equipment necessary for road rehabilitation. It contributes to reinforce peace and economic integration between Eritrea and Ethiopia, facilitating the ability of the Government to demobilise people from the National Service. Should the Commission find that human rights violations occur under the project, it reserves the right to take appropriate action, including suspending the project.

Monitoring measures include regular site visits; UNOPS technical assistance on road rehabilitation and construction works, on quality and standards including for labour safety; continued dialogue with the Red Sea Trading Corporation (RSTC), the Government's central procurement authority. RSTC provides information on people working on the project, on their salaries and rights. Particular attention is given to ensuring that minimum standards for health and safety of the workers involved are ensured.

¹ https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/eritrea/69912/eu-eritrea-article-8-political-dialogue-asmara_en

² <http://www.shabait.com/categoryblog/29440-national-service-synopsis-of-underlying-rationale-and-past-Trajectory->

³ C029 - Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)

⁴ T05-EUTF-HOA-ER-66 "Reconnecting Eritrea and Ethiopia through rehabilitation of the main arterial roads in Eritrea", https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/euetfa/files/t05-eutf-hoa-er-66_-_eritrea_road_rehabilitation.pdf