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Committee on Foreign Affairs

2010/0323(NLE)

26.8.2011

DRAFT OPINION

of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

for the Committee on International Trade

on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of a Protocol to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement establishing a partnership between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Uzbekistan, of the other part, amending the Agreement in order to extend the provisions of the Agreement to bilateral trade in textiles, taking account of the expiry of the bilateral textiles Agreement
(16384/2010 – C7-0097/2011 – 2010/0323(NLE))

Rapporteur: Nicole Kiil-Nielsen

PA_NonLeg_Interim

The Committee on Foreign Affairs calls on the Committee on International Trade, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its interim report:

1. Reminds that Article 2 of the PCA with Uzbekistan states that "Respect for democracy, principles of international law and human rights as defined in particular in the United Nations Charter, the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, as well as the principles of market economy, including those enunciated in the documents of the CSCE Bonn Conference, underpin the internal and external policies of the Parties and constitute essential elements of partnership and of this Agreement".
2. Reminds that Human Rights principles are enshrined in the text of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan and that Uzbekistan has signed and ratified most UN conventions relating to Human rights, civil and political rights and rights of the children but that this formal set of legal acts is far from being implemented in what remains in practice one of the most repressive dictatorships in the world;
3. Notes that despite the Uzbek authorities' assertions that the practice of employing children in cotton harvesting is now limited to teenagers only, that this practice is the fact of private farms and not a state-condoned policy and that forced labour is illegal and repressed, the pressure to comply with the centrally planned production objectives set by the Government contradicts any enforcement of the legislation by local authorities on the field;
4. Stresses further that independent international observers have gathered enough evidence to conclude that the practice of forced labour and in particular forced child labour is a systematic and organised practice involving pressures on teachers and families with involvement of police and security forces;
5. Considers that fair international trade requires competition on a level playing-field and that the economic factors determining the pricing of products exported to the EU should not be distorted by practices contrary to the basic principles of Human Rights and the rights of the children;
6. Supports the request by the International Labour Office (ILO) to assess the situation regarding the alleged widespread continuing practice of forced labour and in particular forced child labour in harvesting cotton despite the formal prohibition of this practice in the Uzbek legislation and the international conventions ratified by Uzbekistan;
7. Recommends that the consent to this Protocol should only be brought to the vote of Parliament after international observers, and in particular the ILO and UNICEF have confirmed that this practice has been fully abolished in practice at national, *viloyat* and local level in a sustained and verifiable way and that Uzbekistan provides all elements and facilities to ensure verification of the situation.

