



Trade MEPs call for action against child labour in cocoa production

Committees: Committee on International Trade

As the world's biggest consumer of chocolate, the EU must take responsibility for the sustainability of the cocoa sector, said Parliament's International Trade Committee on Thursday. MEPs recommended that Parliament give its consent to a new International Cocoa Agreement, but also adopted a resolution calling for action against the use of child labour in the sector.

"During the consent procedure of the International Cocoa Agreement, several stakeholders highlighted the issue of child labour in cocoa fields. Since we believed that this was a serious issue that could not be overlooked, we decided to raise the issue by means of a resolution", said rapporteur Vital Moreira (S&D, PT).

The resolution, to be voted by Parliament's plenary in March, acknowledges the pressure on producers to keep labour costs down, but calls on cocoa traders, EU policy makers and consumers to share responsibility in addressing child labour. MEPs say a holistic framework is needed to ensure fair and sustainable trade.

More traceability for chocolate

MEPs call on the Commission to consider proposing legislation for effective tracking of cocoa goods produced through child labour and to engage International Cocoa Agreement partners to play their part in ensuring traceability along the supply chain.

2010 International Cocoa Agreement

Once Parliament's plenary gives the green light, the EU will formally approve the 2010 International Cocoa Agreement, a deal between the world's leading producing and consuming countries. The new agreement will reinforce cooperation among members, increase transparency and extend cooperation with the private sector and civil society.

Cocoa facts and figures

West Africa produces 70% of the world's cocoa and employs 7.5 million people in the sector. Extracting cocoa seeds is highly labour-intensive, since mechanical cutting often damages the seeds.

The International Labour Organisation estimates that over 215 million children worldwide are child labourers, amongst them 152 million are under the age of 15. Not all work done by children should be classified as child labour, but studies suggest that some children may have been trafficked to work in cocoa farms in Ghana and the Ivory Coast. MEPs say that the recent conflict in Ivory Coast has worsened the situation of children.

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