Child labour

A priority for EU human rights action

SUMMARY

Despite a comprehensive normative international framework that prohibits child labour, it persists in many areas of the world, particularly in developing countries. In sub-Saharan-Africa, it has even increased in recent years. More efforts are therefore needed to combat child labour. However, not all work performed by children is harmful to their health and development. The first task is therefore to distinguish child labour – which entails harmful forms of work – from other forms of children’s involvement with work that are acceptable and have an educational component. While international conventions provide a broad definition of child labour, they leave the task of defining more precise criteria, such as the acceptable number of working hours per week or what constitutes hazardous work, to national legislation.

Child labour is a complex phenomenon that has a multiplicity of causes, among which poverty usually features first. It requires a comprehensive approach to fight it, including awareness-raising among families and local communities, due diligence by companies involved in global supply chains, and action by governments, international organisations and civil society.

The European Union protects children’s rights through both its internal and external policies. It has deployed measures to fight child labour through cooperation with international organisations and has funded development projects whose aim is to counter it. The human rights conditionality enshrined in the EU's trade arrangements provides another path for tackling child labour. Nevertheless, there are numerous calls from civil society and the European Parliament to impose binding legal obligations on EU-based companies, to make sure their imports of goods from developing countries are free of child labour.

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Definition

‘Child labour’ is a concept used specifically in international law to designate forms of work that are harmful to children. Child labour is forbidden by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which imposes obligations on state parties to eliminate it. Child labour deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and is harmful to their physical and mental development. It also interferes with children’s schooling either by depriving them of the possibility to attend school altogether, or by obliging them to leave school prematurely, or by requiring them to combine school attendance with long and heavy work.

However, not all work performed by children is considered child labour. Activities of a productive nature that are adapted to children’s age and skills and do not interfere with their education and wellbeing can positively contribute to their development. Child labour is usually associated with employment of children under conditions that are not appropriate for their age. It is deemed to also include activities not directly related to economic production, such as illicit activities performed by children (e.g. drug trafficking) or hazardous household chores.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989, is the cornerstone of international protection of children’s rights. Together with three protocols, it states that the child has ‘to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be harmful to children or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development’ (Article 32). This definition remains very general and the CRC assigns the task of adopting the regulatory framework in this respect, including of stipulating a minimum age and appropriate hours and conditions of employment, to the states parties, therefore leaving them considerable flexibility in this respect. The CRC has been ratified almost universally (it has 196 state parties), the US being the only country to have signed but not ratified it. Two of its three optional protocols (both adopted in 2000) address the most extreme and harmful forms of child labour: involvement of children in armed conflict and child prostitution and pornography. The first one was ratified by 168 state parties, the second one by 175.

Two other conventions adopted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) bring more clarity with respect to the definition of child labour. The 1973 ILO Convention C138 (the Minimum Age Convention), which has been ratified by 171 states, provides for a minimum age of 15 years for admission to employment (temporarily set at 14 for some developing countries). Some economic branches can however be excluded from the application of the convention (Article 4) or can be subject to temporary exemptions (Article 5). The minimum age for access to employment that is likely to ‘jeopardise the health, safety or morals of young persons’ – that is, hazardous work – is set at 18 years of age (16 under certain conditions). A difficulty arises in relation to the definition of such hazardous work, as there is no international list of the forms of work that are considered as posing a hazard. According to the Minimum Age Convention, hazardous types of employment or work that are prohibited up to the age of 18 have to be determined by the competent national authorities after consultation with employers and workers (Article 3(2)). The Minimum Age Convention allows ‘light work’ to be performed by persons aged 13 to 15 (or even 12 to 14 in certain countries), provided: a) it is not likely to be harmful to their health or development; and b) it does not prejudice their attendance of school or vocational training. Therefore, the Minimum Age Convention provides for a significant degree of flexibility regarding the economic sectors which can be excluded from the scope of the convention, the minimum age for hazardous and light work, the types of hazardous work for which the minimum age should be set higher than for non-hazardous work and the definition of light work, allowing these to be defined by the national authorities in consultation with employers’ and workers’ organisations.

The 1999 ILO Convention on worst forms of child labour (C182), which has been ratified by 182 states, defines the worst forms of child labour and imposes obligations on states parties to combat them. These worst forms include:
• all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery;
• the use of a child for prostitution and pornography;
• the use of a child for illicit activities (such as drugs trafficking);
• 'work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children'.

### The need for a more precise and uniform definition

The above-mentioned definitions are international legal definitions that require transposition at national level through appropriate legislation and regulatory measures. This may engender some divergence among countries on what constitutes child labour. For the purpose of statistical measurement at international level, it was necessary to establish indicators allowing uniform statistical measurement at cross-country level. In December 2008, the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) adopted a Resolution concerning statistics of child labour, which sets the general standards for measuring child labour in order to allow comparability of estimates.

### ILO approach

Based on this resolution, the ILO has developed a methodology for its global estimates on child labour, which applies the following indicators:

- Ages 5 to 11: at least 1 hour of economic activity per week;
- Ages 12 to 14: at least 14 hour of economic activity per week in all forms of economic activity except permissible 'light' work, where light work is operationally defined as economic activity that i) does not exceed 14 hours per week and that ii) is not hazardous in nature; and
- Ages 15 to 17: work in designated hazardous industries or in designated hazardous occupations, or for long hours. Long hours are defined as 43 or more hours during the reference week.

**UNICEF** uses similar indicators for estimating child labour, but also includes household chores. A child is considered to be involved in child labour under the following conditions:

- Age 5 to 11 years: At least 1 hour of economic work or 21 hours of unpaid household services per week.
- Age 12 to 14 years: At least 14 hours of economic work or 21 hours of unpaid household services per week.
- Age 15 to 17 years: At least 43 hours of economic or unpaid household services per week.

All three above-mentioned conventions impose obligations on states parties to adopt the necessary legal and regulatory framework to prohibit child labour, and to adequately enforce it. However, not all countries have ratified these conventions; transposition and enforcement remain insufficient in many of those that have ratified them. For this reason, fighting child labour has been included as one of the targets of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) under the UN’s 2030 Agenda. Accordingly, Target 8.7 states: ‘Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms’. The European Union (EU) is committed to the UN Agenda 2030 and the realisation of the SDGs.

### Estimates of child labour in the world

Numerous children in the world work, but not always in conditions that qualify their work as child labour. ILO estimates indicate a significant reduction in the number of children in employment (including both in child labour and in acceptable forms of employment) around the world, from 351 million in 2000 to 218 million in 2016. The most pronounced decline in relative terms has been registered among the 12 to 14 years age group. According to the ILO, 'since 2000, girls have experienced the largest absolute and relative reduction in employment'. At regional level, in 2016 Africa had the highest share of children aged 5 to 14 in employment (23.7 %), followed by Asia and
the Pacific (7.4 %), the Americas (5.4 %), Europe and Central Asia (3.5 %), and the Arab states (3.1 %). For 15-17-year-olds, the ranking was the same: Africa (40.7 %) Asia and the Pacific (22.1 %), the Americas (19.7 %), Europe and Central Asia (16.5 %), and the Arab states (10.3 %).

However, there is no similarly good news about child labour. It has remained relatively stable over the same period: according to a 2017 ILO report on global estimates of child labour, 'Between 2012 and 2016, the proportion of children aged 5–17 years engaged in child labour decreased by only one percentage point, from 168.0 million (10.6 per cent) to 151.6 million (9.6 per cent)'. By far, the highest share of children in child labour was in Africa (22.4 %), where a 1 % increase was recorded from 2012 to 2016.

The ILO report says that 'most child labour takes place within the family unit. More than two-thirds of all children in child labour work as contributing family labourers. Paid employment and own-account workers make up 27 per cent and 4 per cent, respectively, of those in child labour .... These numbers underscore an important broader point concerning the nature of child labour in the world today. Child labour is not exacted only by employers, and children do not have to be in an employment relationship with a third-party employer to be in child labour and to suffer its consequences. Indeed, we know from the latest estimates that children working for third-party employers are the exception rather than the rule; most children in child labour work on family farms and in family enterprises'. A common assumption about child labour is that it is caused by poverty. Research has painted a more complex picture: in rural households, child labour is practised not only for economic reasons, but also because of social norms that attach a positive value to it, and because of its higher short-term return as a form of training in comparison with formal education in rural communities. However, this interferes with the child’s right to school education and actually perpetuates poverty in rural communities over generations.

Figure 1: Percentage of 5-14-year olds engaged in child labour (only countries above a 10 % threshold are included)


**Economic sectors with the highest prevalence of child labour**

**Agriculture**: this is the sector where child labour is the most prevalent. According to the ILO, 'worldwide 60 percent of all child labourers in the age group 5-17 years work in agriculture, including farming, fishing, aquaculture, forestry, and livestock ... The majority (67.5%) of child labourers are unpaid family members.' Children engaged in the production of locally consumed agricultural products have received much less public attention than those engaged in making products for international supply chains. Numerous international campaigns have been launched...
to eliminate child labour in these contexts, but it has proved particularly persistent, partly due to the fragmented, opaque and complex nature of agricultural supply chains.

Global supply chains of agricultural commodities with a high prevalence of child labour include coffee, cocoa, tobacco or cotton. One agricultural sub-sector that has received sustained public attention, given the serious violations of children’s rights involved, is cocoa growing. According to the *Cocoa Barometer 2018*, ‘Child labour remains at very high levels in the cocoa sector, with an estimated 2.1 million children working in cocoa fields in the Ivory Coast and Ghana alone [these are the main producers of cocoa worldwide]. Child labour is due to a combination of root causes, including structural poverty, increased cocoa production, and a lack of schools and other infrastructure. Not a single company or government is anywhere near reaching the sector-wide objective of the elimination of child labour, and not even near their commitments [under the Harkin-Engel Framework as explained under the next point] of a 70 % reduction of child labour by 2020’. In the Ivory Coast and Ghana, over 85 % of children working in cocoa fields face hazardous conditions involving the use of sharp tools, and handle labour-intensive tasks, such as clearing land and lifting heavy loads. A lower but still significant percentage of children work in excess of the maximum allowable working hours (26 % in Côte d'Ivoire and 46 % in Ghana).

Child labour is also used intensively in the *cotton sector*, particularly where mechanisation is low. Children are typically involved in picking cotton by hand, as this is a delicate operation for which their fingers are particularly suited. The myth of children’s ‘nimble fingers’ has contributed to perpetuating child labour. Children also perform numerous other hazardous tasks, such as applying pesticides. Until recently, Uzbekistan used child labour for cotton picking on a massive scale, and for this purpose children had to forego school. This practice has been largely eradicated as a result of international pressure and cooperation (mainly by the EU and the ILO).

Tobacco production is another sector where children work in hazardous conditions, (for example, in *tobacco farms in Zimbabwe*, *Indonesia*, and the *United States*, according to research done by *Human Rights Watch*). Child workers are exposed to nicotine and to various pesticides that are harmful to their health.

There have been instances of intensive use of child labour in the food processing sector. For example, Thailand, which is an important international hub for the shrimp and seafood industries, has been the focus of child labour allegations, particularly with regard to migrant children. According to *ILO and Asia Foundation research* co-funded by the EU, ‘One-third of migrant children in the shrimp and seafood industries do not attend school’. They are also more frequently exposed to workplace hazards than in other sectors (19.4 % of children in those industries reported workplace injuries compared to 8.4 % in others). Recently, under international pressure, Thailand has made significant progress in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labour.

**Industry:** Children also work in various industries. The textile and garment sector with its international supply chains is among those that engage the highest number of children. Textiles and garments are among the main beneficiaries of EU trade preferences, which are conditional on respect for human and labour rights. For example, Bangladesh is the biggest beneficiary of the EU’s Everything but Arms scheme. Textiles represent 93 % of its export to the EU. According to a report by the Overseas Development Institute (2016), 15 % of 6 to 14-year-old children in Dhaka's slums were engaged in full-time work and were out of school, and all those over 14 were working. As the report states, ‘the garments sector accounted for two thirds of female working children, raising serious concerns over garment exports and child labour’. In India, the biggest beneficiary of EU standard generalised scheme of preferences (GSP), girls from impoverished communities (especially Dhalit girls) work in spinning mills in conditions amounting to forced labour. According to *civil society sources*, trafficked children and children in forced labour work in all supply chains of the Indian garment sector, including cotton fields, mills, factories and home-based operations.

**Mining** presents particular risks for working children. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo’s cobalt mines, very young children have been discovered mining for this vital mineral used in mobile
phones. Children also work in small-scale gold mines in Ghana, Mali, Tanzania, and the Philippines, according to Human Rights Watch research. In the mines, children risk death of collapsing pits exposure to toxic chemicals.

**International initiatives for tackling child labour**

Eliminating child labour is a complex issue. Most child labour occurs in the informal sector – in illegal sweatshops, on small farms or at home (e.g. when children produce for global supply chains from their home by performing tasks such as sewing parts of garments). Government measures have been relatively efficient in combating child labour in the formal sector, but much less so in the informal sector. Here children can easily remain under the radar of state control. Given the scale and the pervasiveness of child labour in developing countries, numerous initiatives – involving multinational companies, local producers, governments, intergovernmental organisations, NGOs and consumer groups – have been launched to deal with this phenomenon particularly in global value chains.

To supplement action by national governments, which has been relatively inefficient for the reasons explained above, the favoured approach has been based on voluntary commitments by the various suppliers and purchasers in the supply chains, ranging from multinational companies to local producers. Enterprises are expected to undertake voluntary human rights due diligence not only with respect to their own business operations but also to the entire supply chain from which they obtain the goods. There are international guidelines to shape such voluntary initiatives, more specifically the ILO’s *Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy*, and the *UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*. National governments are expected to encourage their enterprises to implement these guidelines. The EU and its Member States are at the forefront of implementing the above-mentioned UN guiding principles via action plans.

In the cocoa sector, the Harkin Engel Framework is a voluntary industry commitment to significantly reduce child labour in the cocoa sector by 2020. The leading chocolate producers in the world signed the Harkin-Engel Protocol (named after the two US congressmen who advocated for US binding legislation on the issue) in 2001, committing to implementing the ILO Convention on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour. In 2010, they signed a joint declaration and a framework of action, committing them to reducing the worst forms of child labour in the cocoa sectors of Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana by 70% by 2020. However, they seem far away from fulfilling this self-imposed objective.

In the cotton sector, the Better Cotton Initiative, which accounts (as of 2015) for 7.6% of total global cotton production, aims to address child labour through a holistic approach, working with local partners at community level. However, as an ILO briefing highlights, ‘there are little publicly available examples of where this has taken place apart from Pakistan, where awareness raising on child labour was undertaken with communities’. The initiative has also developed the Better Cotton Tracer, which claims to be the first online system capable of tracking a commodity through the value chain. Another initiative, ‘Cotton made in Africa’, features issues related to child labour from the perspective of ILO conventions No 138 and No 182. Should any of its members engage child labour, they qualify for exclusion from the initiative, but ‘there is no data as to how this is being applied to farms nor what happens when a member farm is found to employ children,’ according to the same ILO briefing.

Certification is a way to prove to the final buyers that goods have been produced in compliance with human rights standards. General certification schemes such as Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance and UTZ Certified are usually considered effective for improving labour conditions. They claim to work together with producers and civil society to ensure that child labour is eliminated, but their efficiency in this respect remains disputed. Moreover, their coverage of the supply chains remains relatively limited. Other certification schemes specifically target child labour; Goodweave is one...
such initiative, which has been considered successful in eliminating child labour in the carpet/rug weaving sector of South Asia.

Production chains for many agricultural commodities that are heavily traded are long, fragmented and opaque, which makes traceability along the supply chain particularly difficult. Addressing the issue of child labour means also addressing the underlying causes, namely poverty, lack of local infrastructure and schooling opportunities, as well as the presence of social values that support child labour. For example, the *Cocoa Barometer 2018* highlights that 'As child labour is a symptom of deeper problems, the income of cocoa farmers must increase, and local infrastructure must be improved. It is a matter of urgency for efforts to be increased – in funding as well as in ambition and political will – as current levels of engagement will not succeed in eliminating child labour'.

The shortcomings of certain voluntary approaches to eliminating child labour in international supply chains has strengthened calls to establish binding due diligence obligations on companies, especially those based in developed countries, obliging them to verify that the products they purchase have not been produced with child labour. The UN initiative to *draft a binding treaty* on business and human rights, if successful, could be an important driver of this agenda.

**EU action**

The EU is committed to protecting the rights of the child in both its internal and external policies. Article 32 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights prohibits child labour and provides for the protection of young people at work. EU institutions are required to take this charter into account in the design and implementation of legislation or policies, both internally and in their external relations. The EU deploys a range of measures to protect the internationally recognised rights of the child through its external policies. To increase the coherence and consistency of various policies that are relevant to this area, in 2016 the Council of the EU adopted EU Guidelines on the rights of the child, which were revised in 2017. One of the objectives listed in these guidelines (Action 15 b) states: 'Support partner countries to promote, protect and fulfil the rights of the child with a focus on economic, social and cultural rights such as the right to education, health and nutrition, social protection and the fight against the worst forms of child labour, always guided by the best interests of the child'. In June 2008, the EU also adopted Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict, with the aim to eliminate children's recruitment for the purposes of armed conflict, which constitutes an extremely grave form of child labour.

The EU mainstreams human rights in all its external policies. Therefore various EU policies such as trade and development can be leveraged to combat child labour.
Fighting child labour through trade policy

The EU promotes respect for human rights, including the rights of the child, through its bilateral agreements. The human rights clause in trade and cooperation agreements covers all human rights and opens a path to a series of measures to remedy human rights violations, from consultations to the suspension of the agreement as a measure of last resort. The EU has yet to suspend a trade agreement because of human rights violations. Previous cases of development aid and cooperation withdrawal by the EU (under the Cotonou Agreement) show that such sanctions are reserved for very serious and systematic violations of human rights, mainly associated with a major political crisis. The human rights clause empowers the EU to address violations through the joint governance bodies established by the agreements.

The trade and sustainable development (TSD) chapters in the more recent agreements the EU has concluded refer to the labour rights obligations of the parties in line with ILO conventions, two of which focus on fighting child labour, as explained in the first section. The binding force of such provisions varies much from one agreement to the other. For example, the Economic Partnership Agreement with West Africa – a region particularly affected by child labour – which is still awaiting signature by all parties, contains only a reference to negotiating sustainable development provisions in the future. On the contrary, the EU-Vietnam free trade agreement (Chapter 13) awaiting ratification, for example, explicitly obliges the parties to comply with ILO norms and fundamental conventions, including on child labour. While TSD chapters provide for the establishment of an appropriate governance structure, including civil society consultations, they lack sanctioning power, since they are excluded from the regular dispute settlement procedure.

A strong conditionality is also contained in the EU’s unilateral trade preferences, laid out in its generalised system of preferences (GSP). The International Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as ILO conventions 138 and 182 are listed in Annex VIII of the EU GSP Regulation among the international conventions that serve as a reference framework for respecting human rights. All GSP beneficiary countries can lose their preferential access to the EU market in case of serious and systematic violation of the principles enshrined in these conventions. Moreover, the GSP+ beneficiaries (GSP+ is a special strand of GSP providing extended free market access for developing

Data source for child labour: UNICEF (see Figure 1 for the list of countries).
countries that would otherwise not qualify) are subject to an enforced monitoring mechanism. They have to ratify these international conventions and comply with their reporting and monitoring obligations. The EU has carefully monitored the issue of child labour in its regular reports on GSP+ countries. Its most recent reports from January 2018 on Bolivia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the Philippines highlighted that child labour is an issue of concern in these countries.

With a few exceptions, most of the countries with a high prevalence of child labour (above 10% according to UNICEF data, see Figure 2), benefit from EU trade preferences; this means that the EU has important leverage to fight this phenomenon. A good example about the way the EU can use its trade preferences to combat child labour is the textile trade deal with Uzbekistan. The EU continued to withhold granting textile trade preferences to Uzbekistan, where (forced) child labour in cotton harvesting was widespread, until the country largely eliminated this phenomenon. The European Parliament was at the forefront of this fight. It withheld its consent to the trade deal with Uzbekistan as long as the issue was persisting in the country. The Parliament also recommends that the eradication of child labour be included among the general guiding principles for the modernisation of EU trade agreements, for example with Chile (see 2018 resolution on the matter).

Fighting child labour through international cooperation and development aid

The EU supports the ratification and implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as ILO conventions 182 and 138.

The EU is committed to the achievement of the UN sustainable development goals (which include two relevant targets for eliminating child labour by 2030) and mainstreams this objective in its development policy (see next section). The EU has welcomed the Declaration on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour adopted at the fourth global conference on the subject in Buenos Aires in 2017.

The EU cooperates with international organisations competent in the area, particularly the ILO. The EU is the largest donor to the ILO’s development cooperation programme seeking to advance the Decent Work Agenda throughout the world. For example, the project ‘Eliminating child labour and forced labour in the cotton, textile and garment value chains: an integrated approach’ (with a budget of €7.5 million, co-funded by the EU), runs from 2018 to 2020 and is implemented by the ILO in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in four countries: Burkina Faso, Mali, Pakistan and Peru. The project aims to strengthen the policy, legal and regulatory frameworks to combat child labour, and to support local governments, public services providers and other relevant stakeholders to take effective action to stop child labour in the targeted sectors. The EU has also co-funded the ILO monitoring of measures against child labour and forced labour in the cotton harvest in Uzbekistan.

The EU supports the elimination of child labour also indirectly through its development cooperation programmes, for example, in the employment and education sectors, or through various measures to combat poverty. The EU has funded programmes that address the particularly worrying situation of children in armed conflicts. These projects support efforts to secure the release of child soldiers and to ensure their reintegration in society.

Fighting child labour through policy and legislative measures

The EU promotes responsible business conduct. According to Directive 2014/95/EU on non-financial reporting, from 2018 large EU companies are required to report on their policies with regard to human rights.

Civil society organisations and the European Parliament have called on the European Commission to explore additional legislation, such as on making human rights due diligence binding for EU companies. For example, in 2012 the Parliament adopted a resolution on child labour in the cocoa sector, asking the Commission to explore the possibility of adopting legislative measures to tackle child labour in this sector. The Parliament urged the Commission to consider banning EU imports of
products made with child labour in a 2010 resolution and repeated its demands in a 2016 resolution calling 'for a balanced and realistic proposal for legislation', including measures such as labelling child-labour-free products and prohibiting imports of goods made with child labour. However, in a 2013 staff working document, the Commission expressed reservations towards the concept of such a legislative proposal, considering that a traceability mechanism would be very difficult to implement for certain supply chains and would also be costly for poor countries.

Some EU Member States have enacted legislation to prevent human rights violations (which potentially include child labour) in international supply chains. For instance, in 2015 UK adopted a Modern Slavery Act obliging companies to undertake due diligence to avoid forced labour in their supply chain. In March 2017, France enacted a law establishing a duty of due diligence for large companies based in France, which effectively obliges them to take measures to prevent human rights violations in their supply chains. The European Parliament has addressed the issue of child labour in numerous resolutions over the years, urging the states concerned to take appropriate measures and the EU to provide support. The Parliament, in a 2008 resolution on Towards an EU strategy on the rights of the child, called for consideration to be given to the EU’s accession to the CRC. More recently, in a resolution of February 2018, the Parliament addressed the issue of widespread forced labour of children in Haiti, urging the country’s authorities to implement measures to end this practice. In a 2017 resolution on EU priorities for the UN Human Rights Council sessions in 2017, the Parliament called on the EU to promote children’s rights by eliminating child labour. The Parliament has a cross-party Intergroup on Children’s Rights. Its Child Rights Manifesto has as its aim the realisation of the EU’s legal and policy commitments to promote and protect children’s rights.

On 12 March 2014, the Parliament adopted a recommendation to the Council on humanitarian engagement of armed non-state actors in child protection, in which it recommended to ‘include in political dialogues with third countries, the goal of preventing and stopping the recruitment and forced involvement of children’.

**MAIN REFERENCES**


Council of the EU, Conclusions on Child Labour, 20 June 2016.

ENDNOTES

1 The states that have not ratified it are Australia, Bangladesh, the Cook Islands, Iran, Liberia, the Marshall Islands, Myanmar, New Zealand, Palau, Saint Lucia, Somalia, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, the United States and Vanuatu.

2 The states that have not ratified it are Eritrea, the Marshall Islands, Palau, Tonga and Tuvalu.


4 According to the study conducted by Tulane University in collaboration with Tony's Chocolonely and the Walk Free Foundation, Bitter sweets: Prevalence of forced labour & child labour in the cocoa sectors of Côte d'Ivoire & Ghana, 2018, on which the Cocoa Barometer estimates are also based.

5 According to an ILO publication on Child labour in cotton – a briefing, July 2017: ‘The ‘nimble fingers’ myth is particularly relevant to cottonseed production, where employers claim that the tasks of cross-pollination, emasculation and hand-pollination are best undertaken by pre-pubescent, female children, as is the case in India. Likewise there are a number of other tasks such as weeding where the perception is that children’s small hands and bodies are better. These tasks then become regarded as children’s responsibilities.’

6 According to the European Commission’s 2018 GSP Report, in India ‘from 2014 onwards, several product sections, including textiles, were graduated from GSP as they no longer qualified for GSP trade preferences. Despite graduation, India remains the biggest exporter to the EU under the GSP. In 2016, India exported EUR 7.6 billion worth of textiles and clothing to the EU, of which EUR 5.7 billion under the Standard GSP’.

7 Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations ‘Protect, Respect and Remedy’ Framework: ‘Where business enterprises have large numbers of entities in their value chains it may be unreasonably difficult to conduct due diligence for adverse human rights impacts across them all. If so, business enterprises should identify general areas where the risk of adverse human rights impacts is most significant, whether due to certain suppliers’ or clients’ operating context, the particular operations, products or services involved, or other relevant considerations, and prioritize these for human rights due diligence’.


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