

**Question for written answer E-007449/2012  
to the Commission (Vice-President / High Representative)**

Rule 117

**Ria Oomen-Ruijten (PPE), Thijs Berman (S&D), Franziska Keller (Verts/ALE), Niccolò Rinaldi (ALDE) and Esther de Lange (PPE)**

Subject: VP/HR - Discrimination on grounds of caste

We have noted with concern that there is no reference to 'discrimination on the grounds of caste' in either the human rights package outlined in the Commission's joint communication to Parliament and the Council entitled 'Human rights and democracy at the heart of EU external action – towards a more effective approach' (COM(2011)0886), consisting of the EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, or the EU's Annual Reports on Human Rights and Democracy in the World.

More than 260 million people worldwide face extreme forms of discrimination, exploitation, and violence based on caste. Caste-based discrimination imposes huge barriers to the attainment of the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of those affected, as has been noted by a large number of UN treaty bodies and UN Special Procedures. Parliament raised its concerns and made recommendations in its resolution on the Annual Report on Human Rights in the World in 2010, in the following terms:

'111. Condemns all forms of human rights violations committed against people discriminated against on the basis of work and descent, and the limited access to justice for victims; calls on the EU and its Member States to endorse the draft UN Principles and Guidelines for the Effective Elimination of Discrimination based on Work and Descent;

117. Recommends initiatives for EU legislation to ensure that attention is paid in EU human rights policy and cooperation instruments to eliminating caste discrimination, and action in caste-affected countries, including Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Yemen;'

1. How has the High Representative addressed caste discrimination in caste-affected countries in the last 12 months?
2. Is the High Representative willing to include caste as a ground of discrimination, alongside other forms of discrimination listed in EU communications, and to address this form of discrimination under EU anti-discrimination policies? If not, why not?