

**Question for written answer E-001084/2020/rev.1
to the Commission**
Rule 138
Eugen Tomac (PPE)

Subject: Situation of children working in Congo cobalt mines

Although child labour is prohibited by numerous international instruments and almost every country in the world has ratified International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention No 138/1973 regarding the minimum age for admission to employment, tens of thousands of children in certain parts of Africa are being deprived of such protection and forced to work from a very early age in dangerous conditions for less than subsistence wages.

The cobalt mines in Congo are a case in point, cobalt being used to manufacture the world's entire supply of lithium ion batteries that are used to power everything from smartphones and laptops to electric vehicles. Although Big Tech claims to have no truck with operators using child labour, many companies prefer to turn a blind eye to the provenance of the cobalt used in products that are being purchased directly or indirectly by EU consumers.

In view of this:

Will the Commission say what can be done to end these severe breaches human rights affecting tens of thousands of children?

How it will ensure that EU Member States close ranks against the importation of products for which the raw materials have been obtained through illegal child labour or where their lawful origin cannot be established?