

Question for written answer E-005670/2020

to the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

Rule 138

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Subject: Sexual exploitation by NGO workers in the Democratic Republic of Congo

According to investigations conducted by news agencies The New Humanitarian and Reuters, 51 Congolese women were reportedly coerced into performing sexual acts in exchange for job opportunities by officials from the World Health Organization (WHO) who had been posted in the DRC to provide medical support to the communities affected by the Ebola outbreak.

The latest statistics from the International Monetary Fund reveal that the Congo has the fourth lowest GDP per capita in the world. The country's economic hardship and terrible health crisis were exploited in order to bribe women with short-term contracts for humble positions paying 50 to 100 dollars per month – a meagre sum which these women so sorely needed to provide for their families.

Among the accused are not only WHO employees but also a number of workers deployed by NGOs in receipt of EU funds, such as: the International Medical Corps, the Alliance for International Medical Action, Unicef, the World Food Programme, the International Rescue Committee and REMED (le Réseau des médias pour le développement, a media network for development organisations).

In view of the revelations, I should like to ask the Vice-President / High Representative the following:

1. Is he aware of the allegations that have emerged from the Democratic Republic of Congo and how does he intend to deal with the scandal?
2. How does he intend to improve the transparency of the activities of the many NGOs working in Africa and receiving huge amounts of EU funds each year?