

Question for written answer P-002151/2011
to the Commission
Rule 117
Harlem Désir (S&D)

Subject: Progress in the area of corporate social responsibility

On 25 November 2010 Parliament adopted a resolution on corporate social responsibility and the European Union's international trade agreements, stressing, in particular, the need to specify the notions of companies' and groups' 'sphere of influence' and 'due diligence' at international level and urging the parties concluding an international trade agreement to encourage transnational judicial cooperation and to facilitate access to the courts for the victims of the actions of corporations within their sphere of influence. The resolution also called on the Commission to include an obligation in the EU's international trade agreements for companies to report on CSR.

Parliament, which acts as a mouthpiece for the demands of citizens, trade unions and civil society organisations, adopted this resolution by a very large majority, following on from its previous resolutions on CSR. These demands are more than ever relevant at a time when, faced with a Community impasse, NGOs are being forced to make a complaint to the OECD about violations of the OECD guidelines committed by the Dutch multinational company Shell in Nigeria.

When will the Commission be submitting a communication enabling the EU to take steps towards establishing legal arrangements specific to groups of companies, which would recognise the legal personality of a group in the event of violations of fundamental rights and the environment and would create an obligation for all parent companies to report annually on the social and environmental impact of their action, taking account of all entities comprising the group?

The Brussels I Regulation of 22 December 2000 on jurisdiction and the recognition and enforcement of judgments in civil and commercial matters is currently being revised and will allow European courts to extend their jurisdiction to companies whose seats are not in the EU in the case of disputes in a third country. Does the Commission intend to include disputes concerning the violation of human rights and failure to comply with environmental standards, in order to improve victims' access to justice?