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Committee on Development

2008/2135(INI)

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DRAFT OPINION

of the Committee on Development

for the Committee on International Trade

on An EU-India Free Trade Agreement
(2008/2135(INI))

Rapporteur: Filip Kaczmarek

PA_NonLeg

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Development calls on the Committee on International Trade, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Welcomes the fact that the EU and India committed themselves to strengthening their consultations in the United Nations Human Rights Council and sustaining their dialogue with a view to promoting the universality of human rights at the ninth India-EU Summit on 29 September 2008, as reflected in the published Joint Action Plan, and commends its expansion to include research and cooperation in the areas of decent work, sustainable development and climate change;
2. Welcomes the launching of the special action for EU-India cultural cooperation for the period 2007-2009, especially in the area of education, student exchange, training and inter-cultural dialogue;
3. Expresses concern about rising global commodity prices and their effect on the poorest populations, including in India, which pose a challenge to stable growth and increase global inequalities; calls on the EU and India to coordinate a comprehensive strategy to tackle this issue in an integrated manner;
4. Welcomes the fact that India has made considerable progress towards universal primary education, improving poverty eradication and increasing access to safe drinking water, notes however that India is still off track on most of the health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) such as infant mortality, maternal health, child malnutrition and reducing malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS; is concerned that Dalits and Adivasis (indigenous tribes and peoples) experience the least progress towards achieving the MDGs, and continue to face discrimination in housing, education, employment and access to health-care and other services;
5. Notes that despite sustained economic growth, vast inequalities still persist, with more than 800 million people surviving on less than \$2 per day; is particularly concerned about the situation of underprivileged sections of the population, in particular women, children, the disadvantaged and the rural population: stresses the need to ensure that the Free Trade Agreement would not restrict powers needed by the Indian Government to address poverty and inequality; calls on the Commission and the Council to work together with the Indian government to improve the situation of those groups and to examine future cooperation as to their contribution towards ending gender and caste discrimination;
6. Is impressed by the development effects of economic growth in some regions of India and calls on the Commission to support research and the main patterns and underlying national and sub-national policies responsible for such effects, in order to facilitate cross-regional learning and best practices;
7. Welcomes the emergence of the spread of microcredit throughout India, which has gained recognition as an effective way of creating grassroots-led development;

8. Calls for EU-India cooperation in the area of employment and social policy to be focused on the problems of labour discrimination against women, forced labour and child labour - given the fact that India has one of the largest numbers of child labourers in the world, approximately 150 million;
9. Acknowledges the introduction of a new Indian child labour law implemented in 2006 which bans children under 14 from working as domestic servants or on food stalls and calls on the EU to continue to encourage India to ratify ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour and Conventions 138 concerning the minimum age for admission to employment and 98 on the right to organise and collective bargaining, which would signify a positive step towards the eventual abolition of child labour;
10. Underscores that the EU should press the Indian government to tackle the issue of bonded labour, which affects millions of people in India. It is believed that this issue is not being adequately addressed due to a lack of administrative and political will;
11. Urges the EU to promote greater corporate responsibility among foreign undertakings established in India in international fora, and at the same time urges that an agreement be reached with the Indian government to set up an effective system for monitoring workers' rights within domestic and foreign companies based in India.