

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES' STANDING COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS

PETITION REGARDING COCOA PRODUCTS AND THE USE OF CHILD LABOUR
(HEARING DATE: 25 MAY 2011)

Responses to Questions on Notice

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) submits the following answers to questions on notice arising from the House of Representatives' Petitions Committee hearing on 25 May 2011 into a petition regarding cocoa products and the use of child labour. The Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) provided input into the relevant responses.

At the top of page 9 of the proof Hansard, in response to a question from Dr Jensen, there is a reference by witness Mr Kenna to a need to "discuss further with departments, including the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations" (lines 9-10). Although the question was not formally taken on notice, DFAT notes that information that responds to Dr Jensen's question is included below in response to Question 2.

Question 1:

Mr VAN MANEN: Thanks, Chair. Given that Australia, I suppose, globally has a reputation as one of the most efficient agricultural producers in the world, what are we doing from a practical perspective on the ground to help those farmers [in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana] make their farms more efficient and move away from having to use child labour to still achieve good returns for their investment?

Answer:

Australia's aid to Africa is focussed on supporting efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in sectors where Australia has experience and expertise and where Australia is best able to make a difference. Food security is one of the focus areas of Australian assistance to Africa.

Ghana

We have set out below some brief information on two of Australia's current aid initiatives affecting Ghana:

- Australia's first class expertise in dryland farming systems and agricultural research and development is being used to assist African farmers. Ghana is one of nine priority countries for a partnership between CSIRO and the West African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAD/WECARD). Australia's engagement with CORAD/WECARD will help Ghanaian farmers to improve agricultural efficiency, raise agricultural productivity and increase food security. Amongst other things, the partnership is funding a project aimed at enhancing sustainable seed systems of staple crops, to improve food security and agricultural productivity.

- The aid program has also funded ten Ghanaian officials to participate in 2-3 week agricultural study tours to Australia, held in early 2011. The study tours focused on post-harvest management, water and irrigation and livestock.

Côte d'Ivoire

Due to widespread post-election violence in Côte d'Ivoire at the end of 2010 and early 2011, Australian assistance has focussed on immediate humanitarian needs. Australia provided \$5 million in response to the humanitarian crisis impacting Côte d'Ivoire and neighbouring countries in the wake of the post-electoral crisis, comprised of:

- \$1.25 million through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- \$0.5 million through the International Organisation for Migration (IOM)
- \$1.25 million through the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
- \$2 million through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for the significant humanitarian implications of the influx of Ivorian refugees into Liberia.

Question 2:

Ms SAFFIN: I have a question. The minister's response talked about the best way to end child slave labour being through the UN and the ILO, so our multilateral global program approach. My question is about that. You may not be able to answer it completely. How engaged are we in that process? How hands-on is it and how do you monitor, evaluate and report so that we can get a handle on where it is at through whatever means you have to do that?

Mr Kenna: In terms of Australia's activism, the very clear message is that Australia is very actively engaged in these international efforts. We work very actively to encourage all countries to ratify and implement these core treaties, including ILO convention 182. It is an important question—the issue of how we monitor our effectiveness. This was Dr Jensen's question, too, at the beginning: how do you actually measure the impacts of our efforts? I would like to take that on notice as well, to try and provide a more concrete response to the committee on that issue.

Ms SAFFIN: Would you, please. And what sort of mechanisms we are involved in to give effect to what it is said we do.

Answer:

Australia's engagement in multilateral efforts to reduce child labour

Australia is a member of the Governing Body of the International Labour Organization (ILO). Among other things, the Governing Body makes decisions on ILO policy and approves all program and budget proposals prior to their adoption by the International Labour Conference. In our role on the Governing Body, Australia is able to strongly advocate for initiatives that will assist to eliminate child labour. The Governing Body has set a strategic direction for the ILO which pursues the elimination of child labour as a central goal. This includes:

- The Governing Body voted in November 2010 to adopt the ILO's 2010 Global Action Plan¹ which commits the ILO to working with member States to achieve universal ratification of its child labour Conventions (Convention 138: Minimum Age Convention 1973 and Convention 182: Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention 1999) by 2016. With respect to Convention 182, this goal has almost been achieved.²
- The plan also sets an ambitious agenda for research, advocacy, sectoral initiatives (in key industries such as cocoa, sugar, tobacco, cotton, coffee, mining and fishing) and capacity building for governments and worker and employer organisations, all targeted at eliminating child labour.
- The Global Action Plan highlights sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia as regions of concern for child labour. Australia has consistently advocated for a greater investment of ILO resources in Africa and in the Asia-Pacific region.

The agenda set through the Governing Body is implemented by the ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)³. IPEC funds numerous technical cooperation activities aimed at strengthening the capacity of countries to combat child labour. It is the largest single operational program of the ILO, and the largest program of its kind globally. IPEC also collects data on the extent, characteristics and determinants of child labour through its statistical arm.

Evaluating implementation efforts

In addition to its role in deploying aid through AusAID to support efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, Australia also channels specific efforts to eliminate child labour through the ILO. The ILO monitors the effectiveness of its programs. For example, the 2010 Global Report 'Accelerating Action Against Child Labour'⁴, published by the ILO, shows a decline in the incidence of child labour generally and also a more significant decline in the number of children performing hazardous work. The Report found that the number of children in child labour fell by 3 per cent between 2004 and 2008, while the number of child labourers doing hazardous work fell by 10 per cent during the same period.⁵ Among younger children (aged 5-14) the trend is even more positive, with the number of children in child labour in this age group declining by 10 per cent and the number in hazardous work falling by 31 per cent.⁶ However, the Report also notes that there are still 215 million children in child labour, with 115 million children in hazardous work. Therefore, the 2010 Global Action

¹ International Labour Office, 309th session of the Governing Body (November 2010), "Follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work: Technical cooperation priorities and action plan regarding abolition of child labour" (GB.309/TC/3), http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_145558.pdf

² Note: Australia ratified Convention 182 on 19 December 2006. Australia has not yet ratified Convention 138. However, the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Jobs and Workplace Relations, Senator Chris Evans, recently agreed that the Australian Government would consider ratification of this Convention in 2011-12 in consultation with state and territory governments.

³ For more information, see: <http://www.ilo.org/ipecc/programme/lang--en/index.htm>

⁴ International Labour Conference, 99th Session 2010, Report I(B), International Labour Office, Geneva.

⁵ Ibid, pg 7.

⁶ Ibid.

Plan provides a vital strategic framework for the ILO and its constituents in its efforts to meet the 2016 target of the elimination of the worst forms of child labour.

IPEC, and the ILO as a whole, place great importance on monitoring and evaluation of its programmes. In accordance with ILO procedures, IPEC activities have always been subject to both self-evaluations and independent reviews.

In addition, Australia, through its role on the Governing Body has advocated for greater transparency and strengthening of the ILO's evaluation functions. At its meeting in March 2011, the Governing Body adopted an evaluation strategy for 2011-2015 which introduced a number of improvements to the ILO's self-evaluation processes. The Governing Body also advocated strongly for, and voted in favour of, a call to implement all ten recommendations of a 2010 Independent External Evaluation of the ILO's evaluation function.

These initiatives are designed to maximise the effectiveness of the ILO's activities, including those to eliminate child labour.