



EUROPEAN CENTER FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Case Up-Date

Agreement with Cargill and ICT in OECD-proceeding

Berlin, July 26, 2011

ECCHR and the British cotton traders Cargill Cotton UK and ICT Cotton UK have reached agreements in the course of consultation proceedings (compare <http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/business-sectors/low-carbon-business-opportunities/sustainable-development/corporate-responsibility/uk-ncp-oecd-guidelines/whats-new>). ECCHR had filed OECD complaints on the question of the corporations' policies on trading Uzbek cotton. In Uzbekistan, cotton is being harvested with the systematical use of state-organized forced child labour.

ECCHR and the companies, who both affirm to trade in Uzbek cotton, agreed on a number of concrete measures to be undertaken by the companies in order to improve the human rights situation in Uzbekistan. Parties also declared to stay in close contact and to inform each other on a regular basis on the undertaken steps and to meet again after 12 months' time for a thorough evaluation of the progress made. This meeting will be facilitated by the British National Contact Point (NCP).

Dr. Miriam Saage-Maaß, ECCHR, welcomes the agreement: „For the first time, cotton traders have agreed to take active steps against child labour in Uzbekistan and to interact with civil society organizations in a dialogue on the situation in Uzbekistan. Now it is up to the companies to demonstrate that they take their obligations seriously and will lend weight to their demands.” Should the measures taken by the companies prove fruitless, ECCHR reserves the right to refile its OECD complaints and to request a termination of trade relations with Uzbekistan.

Between October 2010 und January 2011, ECCHR had, together with its cooperating partners, filed 7 OECD complaints in four countries against European cotton traders sourcing Uzbek cotton. In the view of ECCHR, these companies' trading policies are in breach with the OECD-Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and contribute to the maintenance of the abusive system of forced child labour. The NCP had accepted the complaints in March 2011

for further examination. Both companies had agreed to take part in the foreseen consultation process.

In Germany, a mediation proceeding is currently taking place. In France, it is expected to take place in the nearer future.

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