

Brussels, 23 November
JM/GR/JH/TJ/sw

Ms. Benita Ferrero-Waldner
Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy
European Commission
Berlaymont
B-1049 Bruxelles

Via e-mail: benita.ferrero-waldner@ec.europa.eu

EU-India Summit, New Delhi, 30 November

Dear Ms. Ferrero-Waldner,

In anticipation of next week's EU-India Summit taking place in New Delhi on 30 November, the ETUC and ITUC are writing to you concerning three urgent items that need to be placed on the table for the discussions. We welcome, in so doing, press reports that the serious issue of child labour will be included on the agenda, at the proposal of the government of the Netherlands.

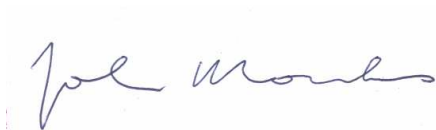
Firstly, it is clear that India provides a major source of economic and diplomatic support for the government of Burma. Many Indian companies, especially public sector enterprises, are major investors in Burma, yet the Indian government has taken a wholly hands-off attitude to the situation there which we consider entirely unacceptable in view of the degree of human rights violations, including forced labour in that country. Indeed, India has pursued a clear policy of increasing substantially its economic relations with Burma over the last several years and is continuing to offer development and military assistance to Burma. The Summit next week must be used to press India to recall its international obligations, in pursuance of the resolution adopted at the 2000 International Labour Conference and strengthened by subsequent decisions of the ILO Conference and Governing Body. We believe firmly that, instead of supporting Burma's military junta economically and diplomatically, India should be called upon to use all means at its disposal to assist the EU and the international community in general in achieving progress towards respect for human rights in Burma.

Secondly, we understand that Indian Ministers have again been cited as saying that they refuse to countenance any reference to labour or social chapters in the EU-India negotiations towards a trade agreement. This stands at variance with certain promising indications that they had indeed agreed to receive and review EU proposals in that direction, and we hope that it merely constitutes a negotiating tactic on the part of the Ministers concerned. We believe the EU needs to use the Summit to send a strong signal to India that the social chapter is an integral part of all EU trade agreements and cannot be excluded from that with the government of India or any other negotiating partner.

Thirdly, we are deeply disturbed at the Indian government's support for legal measures being brought to court in India against international organisations which have sought to bring serious violations of human rights in India, notably violations of freedom of association, into the public domain. Court proceedings have also been launched against internet companies which supply these organisations. The Trade Minister's position may conceivably lead to international arrest warrants being issued against European labour rights organisations and even against their internet providers when the case comes to court in India, probably on 10 December. Further, the Indian government's recent assertions that publicity surrounding the use of child labour by Indian suppliers represents some kind of unacceptable barrier to trade are unjustified and unacceptable. As recalled by various human rights organisations, the Indian government's action is a violation of freedom of speech and cannot be considered a part of accepted international processes without undermining the prerequisites of respect for human rights in the 21st century.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



John Monks
General Secretary ETUC



Guy Ryder
General Secretary ITUC

cc: Mr. Peter Mandelson, Trade Commissioner
Mr. Andris Piebalgs, Energy Commissioner
Mr. Louis Michel, Development Commissioner
Mr. Vladimir Spidla, Employment Commissioner