Resolution on sustainability in the global cotton value chain

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution tabled by the Committee on International Trade on sustainability in the global cotton value chain.

Parliament recalls that an estimated 100 million rural households are involved in cotton production, which is dominated by China, India and the United States.

Envonmental degradation: noting that the environmental footprint of cotton is multiplied by **excessive use of pesticides, insecticides and water**, leading to soil degradation and contamination, Parliament urges all stakeholders in the cotton sector, to work together through the International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC) in order drastically to minimise environmental degradation.

Child labour: acknowledging that different forms of child and forced labour occur in a large majority of the major cotton-producing countries (the ILO estimates that there are more than 215 million child labourers), Parliament strongly condemns the use of child and forced labour on cotton fields. The EU is called upon to take seriously any allegations of slavery or forced labour in the cotton supply chain and to **respond with appropriate sanctions**. Furthermore, the Commission is asked to submit to Parliament **a legislative proposal on an effective traceability mechanism for goods produced through child or forced labour.**

Working conditions: health and safety standards as well as wage levels remain an issue of great concern, in particular in the LDCs and developing countries. Parliament recalls its resolution of 17 January 2013 regarding fires in Bangladesh in this context. Members stress:

- the need for those working at the coalface of the cotton industry to earn a decent livelihood;
- the responsibility of European companies to comply with core human or labour rights in their supply chains.

Developing countries: Members stress the need to create the right conditions for **small-scale producers** from developing countries to gain access to the main value chains serving the Union's textile and clothing industry, move up the cotton-textile-clothing value chain and grasp the potential of organic and fair trade cotton. The Commission is asked to:

- evaluate how **public procurement legislation** in the EU can bolster the take-up of fair trade cotton;
- step up its efforts to support national and regional cotton strategies in the cotton-producing LDCs.

ICAC: Parliament calls on the Council to take a decision on the modalities of ICAC membership. The ICAC should:

- develop a means of facilitating the independent monitoring by NGOs of human rights violations throughout the cotton value chain;
- regularly assess the social and environmental impact of cotton production and to **make its findings public**;
- consider the possibility of creating an **effective global labelling scheme guaranteeing that products have been produced without the use of child or forced labour** at any stage of the supply chain or production process.

The Commission is asked to make full use of the potential of ICAC membership in order to strive for **enhanced market transparency** in the cotton garment industry and for sustainability, and to **react swiftly to any possible cotton export restrictions or other actions leading to excessive price volatility**.