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Statement from
the International Partnership for cooperation on child labour in
agriculture*
to the participants at the
Hague Global Child Labour Conference – towards a world without child
labour – mapping the road to 2016
The Hague, 10 – 11 May 2010

Globally some progress has been made in eliminating child labour. However, the ILO estimates that 129 million girls and boys aged 5–17, equivalent to 60 percent of all child labourers, are still working in agriculture, including fisheries and forestry, many of them under hazardous conditions. One of the most important causes of child labour in agriculture is poverty, which forces parents to have their children engaged in economic activities at a very early age.

A number of factors make child labour in agriculture and rural areas particularly difficult to tackle. These include: the hazardous nature of agricultural work, limited enforcement of labour laws and labour inspection in rural areas and at sea, the invisibility of agricultural children's work, limited access to quality education, and ingrained attitudes and perceptions about the roles of children in rural areas. In many countries, children are often considered an indispensable asset on the farm. However, long hours of work, difficult physical and psychological conditions and exposure to hazards along with risks such as handling pesticides, and dangerous tools and machinery, can hinder children's development. The time spent on working on a farm can affect children's ability to learn. The prevalence of child labour undermines decent work and employment for adults and weakens rural labour markets as it maintains a cycle where household income for farmers, fishers and waged workers is insufficient to meet the economic needs of their families.

The International Partnership for Cooperation on Child Labour in agriculture therefore calls on Hague Conference participants to ensure that the Roadmap to be adopted by the Conference contains a specific commitment and concrete actions to tackle the elimination of child labour in agriculture, including livestock rearing, fisheries and forestry. We believe that without this specific commitment and concrete actions the ILO's goal of eliminating the worst form of child labour by 2016 will not be achieved.

This commitment should:

- ensure that priority is given to stopping children from doing hazardous work in agriculture,
- pay special attention to girls, to children in hidden work situations, to children migrating to work or migrating with their parents and to children with special vulnerabilities or needs.

The Roadmap should also recognise that the elimination of child labour in agriculture will be more rapidly achieved if there is policy coherence at national and international levels around:

- establishment and full application of laws on child labour in agriculture, fisheries and forestry, and effective enforcement of child labour legislation including through labour inspection;
- rural strategies, adequate incentives and programmes aimed at reducing poverty, improving rural livelihoods and mainstreaming child labour concerns into agricultural policy making;
- strategies to improve access to quality and relevant education for all girls and boys in agricultural and fishing communities;
- better health and safety in agriculture as one of the ways of eliminating hazardous work of children;
- youth employment opportunities in agriculture and rural areas, including agricultural skills training.

* The International Partnership for Cooperation on Child Labour in agriculture was set up on World Day Against Child Labour 2007. Agriculture includes fisheries and aquaculture, forestry and livestock.

The partnership members are:

International Labour Organization (ILO)

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

International Fund for Agricultural development (IFAD)

International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) representing the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP)

International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers associations (IUF)

More information is available at <http://www.fao-ilo.org/fao-ilo-child/>