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EC and ILO launch project to tackle child labour in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries

On 10 June, two days before the World Day Against Child Labour, the European Commission (EC) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) jointly launched the TACKLE project to fight child labour in Kenya, Zambia, Sudan, Madagascar, Mali, Angola, Jamaica, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Guyana and Sierra Leone by providing access to basic education and training.

Louis Michel, Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, emphasised the boost the EC's contribution of €14.75 million will bring to support the eleven countries' efforts to end hazardous child labour and the grave violation of the rights of children. "This project is a step towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education for all by 2015. Endeavours to accomplish the 'Education for All' target need to focus on the children who remain outside of the education system, in particular those engaged in child labour," he said.

ILO's Director of the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (ILO/IPEC) Michele Jankanish values the grant of the European Commission as an outstanding opportunity to improve children's lives in eleven countries across Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. "Thousands of children who have been denied normal development and decent education will be given a chance for a dignified childhood and new prospects for their future."

The aim of the TACKLE project is to contribute to the withdrawal of children engaged in child labour and to prevent further entry of children into employment by offering alternative education and training opportunities. The project will also provide guidance to formulate new or improve existing legal and policy frameworks on child labour and education in the partner countries and to ensure their effective implementation and application. Activities to promote the development of institutional capacities of ministries and other relevant bodies for concrete action to fight child labour as well as to raise awareness, increase dialogue and strengthen networks on child labour and education in coordination with social partners and civil society are also part of the project.

The project was agreed between the European Commission and the ACP Group of States. It has a total budget of more than €16 million and will be implemented over 48 months. It has started in March 2008.

The ILO estimates that 218 million children worldwide aged between 5 and 17 years are engaged in labour. More than two-thirds of these children – a figure that corresponds to 180 million – are exploited in the worst forms of child labour.

The 11 countries were chosen on the basis of the joint EU-ACP commitment to eliminate the worst forms of child labour as stated in article 50 of the Cotonou agreement and because they are all in the lower half of the UNDPs' Human Development Index.

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