

Speech by Ms Erica Gerretsen, acting Director INTPA E
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to the launch event of the

**International year for the elimination of child labour in Africa and
accelerate the implementation of the
African Union Ten Year Action Plan on Eradication of Child Labour,
Forced Labour, Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery in Africa (2020-2030)**

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Session on **Voice of Partners and Pledges 15.30 – 16.20** CEST

Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Guests,

What an honour and pleasure to be able to say some words on this so important occasion.

First, let me stress from the outset my Institution's unwavering support to our common cause.

In promoting the European Union's fundamental values, the European Commission has indeed been supporting the fight against child labour for years. Our President Ursula Von der Leyen has further reinforced this engagement by requesting a **zero tolerance policy** against child labour.

Second, we are in this together, within our unique European Union-Africa Partnership.

The European Union and the African Union enjoy a unique partnership, built on common values and commitments to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The **European Union-Africa Strategy** of 2020 is an excellent basis to further strengthen and boost this ambitious partnership. The EU will continue to support African partners in their efforts to address the root causes of child labour for a systemic, transformative and sustainable change. We will continue to help **empower women and youth** through adequate **skills** to access **decent jobs**. We will work to identify and address the main drivers of social and economic **inequalities** and extend **social welfare** programmes to help lift families out of poverty.

We will furthermore support the transition from informal to the formal economy and promote social dialogue to improve both the social and business climate. All

these actions are instrumental to end child labour. **Children's rights** are universal and the EU reinforces its commitment to protect, promote and fulfil these rights across the globe.

And it is crucial that we continue doing this together.

Let me illustrate this cooperation.

We will continue our support to **agriculture value chains** where child labour is prevalent. For example in our current **CLEAR cotton** project in Burkina Faso and Mali and in the ongoing multi-stakeholder discussions of the **EU sustainable cocoa initiative** in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana.

Third, I am pleased to mention that only last week the European Commission has adopted a new **EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child** with key actions contributing to end of child labour worldwide. In this we pledge

1. to devote 10% of the overall aid to free and inclusive **education**: schools are the best place for children to work... for their future ;
2. to ensure **supply chains** of EU companies are free from child labour, notably by promoting sustainable corporate governance;
3. to provide **technical assistance** to strengthen labour **inspection** systems for monitoring and enforcement of child labour law and administration;
4. to ensure that partner countries update regularly national lists of **hazardous work** that children should never perform.

Fourth and finally, we will continue building up knowledge through better data and stronger awareness: the international year is pivotal to this end and today's event is paramount. The EU is already committed to participating in the **Fifth Global Conference** on the Elimination of Child Labour in 2022 in South Africa.

This, dear colleagues, is what we stand and work for.

This is what we want to do together, as a team, with you.

Thank you for your attention.