

Meeting concerning SI/5/2021/VS on how the European Commission ensures respect for human rights in the context of international trade agreements

Correspondence - 15/12/2021

Case SI/5/2021/VS - Opened on 07/07/2021 - Decision on 15/07/2022 - Institution concerned European Commission |

Ms Ursula von der Leyen

President

European Commission

Dear President,

I refer to my letter of 7 July 2021 in which I informed you of having decided to examine the question of how the European Commission ensures respect for human rights in the context of international trade agreements.

Thank you for your reply to my questions so far and for the invitation to a follow-up meeting. I welcome the opportunity for my team to meet with Commission representatives, including, if possible, representatives from the team of the Chief Trade Enforcement Officer, to discuss the matter in more detail. In this context and to guide the discussion during the meeting, my team has prepared the questions set out in Annex I.

I would be grateful if the responsible Commission representatives could contact either Ms Valentina Stoeva or Mr Josef Nejedlý, to agree the arrangements for the meeting to take place preferably before 31 January 2022.

Thank you for your continued cooperation.

Yours sincerely,



Emily O'Reilly European Ombudsman

Strasbourg, 15/12/2021

Enclosure:

Annex I EO Questions in SI/5/2021/VS

1. Could the Commission provide information about the mandate of the Chief Trade Enforcement Officer (CTEO) as it relates to human rights standards forming part of international trade agreements signed by the EU? What are the procedures according to which the CTEO operates in this context?
2. Could the Commission explain the administrative structures and procedures it has in place that allow it to (i) determine the human rights mechanisms to be included in a given trade agreement and to (ii) ensure adequate follow-up (monitoring, complaints)?
3. More specifically, could the Commission provide details on the procedures in place for the examination and handling of complaints under the centralised complaints procedure introduced in 2020? We would be interested to hear about the Commission's experience with stakeholders regarding any relevant Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) complaints and an update on any more recent complaints related to human rights, if available. Could the Commission also explain why, in its view, so few complaints have been made so far?
4. In the context of the EU-Vietnam free trade agreement, could the Commission provide information on how it ensures the promotion of and respect for human rights, other than labour rights?