



PRESS RELEASE

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Opinion poll in The Netherlands: Companies and government should take a stand against caste discrimination

More than seven out of ten persons in The Netherlands are of the opinion that the Dutch government should take a stand against caste discrimination in the United Nations as well as in the European Union. Also two out of three people feel that Dutch multinationals who are operating in countries where caste discrimination exists, should tackle the issue in their own company and in their supply chain.

These are some results of an opinion poll by the reputed polling agency TNS NIPO which was commissioned by the *Dalit Network Netherlands (DNN)*. A representative sample was asked to give their views about caste discrimination and how to combat it. Not less than 80% is of the opinion that caste discrimination is a human rights problem that should concern the whole world. More than half of them are willing to support actions against caste discrimination. 'We are very happy with this result' says Gerard Oonk, co-ordinator of the Dalit Network Netherlands. 'In 2004, when a similar survey was done, these percentages were lower. There were also less people willing to support action against caste discrimination.'

The Dutch government, as well as the European Union, have indeed increasingly taken a stand against caste discrimination during the last few years. This year the Dutch Parliament asked the government to be more active on the issue. In September this year the European Union, the government of Nepal and the UN Commissioner for Human Rights supported the adoption of a new UN framework to eliminate caste discrimination worldwide. This happened during a side-event of the Human Rights Council which was organized by the International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN).

The Dutch government has also responded positively regarding the role Dutch multinationals should play in combating caste discrimination. The Ministry of Economic Affairs is actively informing Dutch companies on the issue and on what companies can do against it. This information is a.o. based on the *Ambedkar Principles* and the *Dalit Discrimination Check* which were developed by IDSN in co-operation with the Dalit Network Netherlands.

'Even though this is a human rights issue that is particular to India and other South Asian countries, both the survey and the recent actions of the Dutch government show that the Dutch people as well as the government find it very important to act on.' Oonk says. 'It is awful that at least 260 million people are systematically humiliated, excluded and oppressed. This should be brought to an end, which can only be done if everyone contributes'.

Dalit Network Netherlands (DNN)

For years caste discrimination was the most neglected massive human rights issue in the World. This is changing slowly, but the violation of the human rights of Dalits still does not get the global attention it deserves. The Dalit Network Netherlands (DNN) wants to contribute to the struggle against the discrimination and oppression of Dalits.

The members of the Dalit Network Netherlands are: Cordaid , ICCO, Justitia et Pax, the India Committee of the Netherlands and People On A Mission.

For more information see the DNN website: <http://www.dalits.nl/english.html>

Information on the role of the private sector in combating caste discrimination, the Ambedkar Principles and the Dalit Discrimination Check can be found here:

http://www.dalits.nl/dnn_bedrijven_e.html

Note for the editor, not for publication

For more information on the results of the TNS NIPO survey or what DNN is doing against caste discrimination, you can contact Gerard Oonk, co-ordinator of the Dalit Network Netherlands and director of the India Committee of the Netherlands via email (g.oonk@indianet.nl) of telephone 00-31-30-2321340).