Answer given by Mr Patten on behalf of the Commission

(28 July 2000)

In response to the questions raised by the Honourable Member on the above issues, the Commission has undertaken thorough research through its delegation in New Delhi.

According to the accessible information, 11 bonded labourers were freed from a stone quarry from Charki Dadri, near Bhiwani, in Haryana on 11 February 2000, through the efforts made by the National Human Rights Commission acting on a petition filed by the South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude.

Regarding prosecution of landlords for illegally employing bonded labourers, unfortunately, no information is available and relevant details on the human rights organisation Volunteers for Social Justice could not be retraced.

If the Honourable Member could provide additional information, the Commission will be happy to pursue its enquiries.

(2001/C 103 E/088)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2188/00

by Avril Doyle (PPE-DE) to the Council

(11 July 2000)

Subject: Diamonds and African conflicts

Given that the sale of diamonds fuels many African conflicts, particularly the conflicts in Sierra Leone and in Angola, that the planned embargo on diamonds from rebel-held areas in Sierra Leone, instigated by the UK government within the UN; would be almost impossible to enforce (1) that London jewellers are eager to buy Sierra Leone diamonds (2) and that most smuggled diamonds have ended up in Antwerp (3), would the Council outline what the EU is doing to help resolve the situation in general, what it is doing specifically to prevent the trade in diamonds mined inside rebel-held territories and what the EU's overall strategy is with a view to preventing the illegal funding of conflicts in Africa?

(1) The Financial Times, 8 June 2000.
(2) The Observer, 4 June 2000.
(3) The Economist, 3 June and 9 June 2000.

Reply

(9 November 2000)

The European Union has always supported unreservedly all endeavours at international level to put an end to the illegal exploitation of diamonds and other assets of the African countries ravaged by armed conflicts.

The Council of 22 May 2000 also expressed the deep concern with which it views the illegal exploitation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo’s natural resources — minerals in particular — and other assets, which violates inter alia the sovereignty of that country; the Council welcomed the proposal of the Secretary-General of the United Nations regarding the setting up of a group of experts in accordance with Resolution 1291 of the Security Council.

At that meeting the Council also referred to the case of Angola and stressed the importance of observing the United Nations Security Council Resolutions banning imports of diamonds which are not duly certified by the Angolan Government. At stake was a valuable political tool intended to force UNITA to observe the

As regards Sierra Leone, the Council, on 20 July 2000, adopted Common Position 2000/455/CFSP (2), prohibiting the direct or indirect import into the Community of all rough diamonds from Sierra Leone under the conditions set out in United Nations Security Council Resolution 1306(2000).

Also, on 3 August 2000 the Council adopted Regulation (EC) No 1745/2000 on the importation into the Community of rough diamonds from Sierra Leone (3) as implementation of the relevant Security Council Decisions needs the adoption of Community legislative texts, in order, among other things, to prevent distortion of competition and to provide for a system of sanctions for non-compliance with that Regulation.

The Council considers, moreover, that account must be taken of the fact that the legitimate diamond trade is of great economic importance for many countries and can contribute to stability and prosperity, and that the integrity of the legitimate diamond industry should not therefore be brought into disrepute. In this context the Council notes with interest the growing awareness of the professionals in this sector, as is shown by the resolution which the World Federation of Diamond Bourses (WFDB) and the International Diamond Manufacturers Association (IDMA) adopted jointly on 19 July 2000 in Antwerp.


WRITTEN QUESTION E-2189/00
by Glenys Kinnock (PSE) to the Commission
(3 July 2000)

Subject: Mobile phone masts

Will the Commission clarify whether there is any EU-wide procedure for controlling the positioning of mobile phone masts?

Answer given by Mr Liikanen on behalf of the Commission
(20 September 2000)

The positioning of mobile phone masts is a matter between the mobile operators and local, regional and state authorities. The procedures in use and criteria applied vary largely across Member States and may include considerations on the possible health effects of electromagnetic radiation, the need to protect the environment, and the need to respect town planning rules.

Furthermore, Directive 97/33/EC of the Parliament and of the Council of 30 June 1997 on interconnection in telecommunications with regard to ensuring universal service and interoperability through application of the principles of open network provision (ONP) (4) stipulates that where facility sharing can be of benefit for town planning, environmental, economic or other reasons, Member States and national regulatory authorities may impose sharing arrangements and intervene to resolve disputes between commercial parties.

The Commission does not at present plan to go beyond provisions of the current telecommunications regulatory framework i.e. there is no intention to propose a Community-wide procedure for controlling the positioning of phone masts.