

ORAL QUESTION O-0050/02

pursuant to Rule 42 of the Rules of Procedure

by Benedetto Della Vedova, Generoso Andria, Ole Andreasen, Emma Bonino, Roberto Bigliardo, André Brie, Renato Brunetta, Niels Busk, Michael Cashman, Marco Cappato, Massimo Carraro, Paulo Casaca, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Antonio Di Pietro, Jean-Maurice Dehousse, Gianfranco Dell'Alba, Olivier Dupuis, Carlo Fatuzzo, Monica Frassoni, Lisbeth Grönfeldt Bergman, Heidi Hautala, Christopher Huhne, Hans Karlsson, Sylvia-Yvonne Kaufmann, Piia-Noora Kauppi, Jean Lambert, Alain Lipietz, Cecilia Malmström, Pietro-Paolo Mennea, Domenico Mennitti, Reinhold Messner, Marco Pannella, Giovanni Pittella, Karin Riis-Jørgensen, Anne Jensen, Giacomo Santini, Luciana Sbarbati, Olle Schmidt, Ole Sørensen, Dirk Sterckx, Charles Tannock, Franz Turchi, Maurizio Turco, Ari Vatanen and Anders Wijkman
to the Commission

Subject: World hunger and the removal of trade barriers against the poorest countries in the world

It was pointed out at the recent FAO summit that 900 people die of starvation in the world every day and that 800 million people, 300 million of them children, do not have enough food. The FAO warns that the situation is worsening in the poorest countries in southern Africa (in particular Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique, Lesotho and Swaziland).

A recent study by the World Bank showed that liberalisation of world trade, by itself, could rescue more than 320 million people from poverty by 2015.

The Commission's recent initiative 'Everything but Arms', which targets precisely the 48 poorest countries in the world and whose aim is the total elimination of customs duty on their exports to the EU, except for arms, is being undermined by a timetable for implementation which, in the face of the urgent and dramatic nature of the figures quoted above, is being excessively and unjustifiably drawn out. For example, duty on rice and sugar is to be reduced by only 50% by 2007 and will not be totally removed until 2009.

Since the time factor is crucial in any political action, but especially for the millions of people who are living in poverty, to delay those measures which may help to combat poverty will therefore deprive them of tangible hope in their daily struggle for survival.

Does not the Commission consider that the 'Everything but Arms' initiative urgently needs to be revamped and stepped up, by being extended to other poor countries and, above all, being applied immediately and definitively to all products as of 1 January 2003?

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