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Hershey, Trailing Behind Competitors, Gets "F" for Failing to Remove Child Labor from Chocolate

Date of publication: September 13, 2011

Source: Press Release

Author: ILRF, Global Exchange and Green America

Groups: Hershey has failed to live up to promises the company made 10 years ago this month

Washington DC – September 13, 2011 — A year has gone by since non-profit groups shined a spotlight on Hershey for its use of forced, child, and trafficked labor in its chocolate products. Twelve months later, the groups are saying that no progress has been made and that Hershey chocolate is still tainted by child labor.

Today, Green America, Global Exchange and the International Labor Rights Forum published a follow-up ^[1] to the report they released last year: *Time to Raise the Bar: The Real Corporate Social Responsibility Report for the Hershey Company*. The updated report, the publication of which coincides with the expected annual release of Hershey's own corporate social responsibility (CSR) report, critiques Hershey's existing CSR initiatives and highlights the fact that Hershey is falling further behind its competitors in removing child labor from its products. The report urges Hershey to commit to sourcing Fair Trade cocoa to stop these abuses.

The three groups give Hershey an "F" for failing to remove child labor from its supply chain. September 19, 2011 will mark the 10-year anniversary of the signing of the Harkin-Engel Protocol – an agreement made by the country's largest chocolate companies, including Hershey – to put an end to forced child labor in chocolate by 2005. A full decade after making this commitment, hundreds of thousands of children continue to work in hazardous conditions on cocoa farms in West Africa, and human trafficking continues.

While some of Hershey's closest competitors, including Mars and Nestlé, have committed to begin sourcing cocoa that is independently certified to comply with labor rights standards, Hershey, the largest and most iconic chocolate company in the US—maker of Hershey's Bars, Reeses's Peanut Butter Cups, and Hershey's Kisses—still lags behind.

Since the release of the first "Raise the Bar" report, over 50,000 consumers nationwide have signed petitions to Hershey to "go Fair Trade", and thousands more have called the company and protested its stores. In spite of the mounting pressure, Hershey has yet to make any commitments to independent, third party certification for its cocoa to address child labor, as recommended by a comprehensive report issued by Tulane University, funded by the Department of Labor.

Judy Gearhart executive director of the International Labor Rights Forum, said, "A full decade after Hershey committed to ending the exploitation of children in its chocolate, it is a sad reality that

this iconic chocolate brand continues to lag behind its competitors in ensuring that its primary ingredient does not harm children.”

“It’s increasingly clear that consumers care where the products they buy are from and how they were made,” said Elizabeth O’Connell, Fair Trade Campaigns Director at Green America, “Every day that Hershey delays in instituting Fair Trade certification to prevent forced labor in its products is a day that tarnishes Hershey’s image as “America’s Chocolate Company”.

Consumers, businesses, and legislators are increasingly pushing for greater transparency and the reduction of labor abuses in supply chains. The Time to Raise the Bar report calls for Hershey to take significant action on child labor, including immediate steps to eliminate forced, trafficked and child labor from its supply chain and the adoption of Fair Trade Certification for its major products.

To read Time to Raise the Bar: The Real Corporate Social Responsibility Report for the Hershey Company please visit: <http://laborrights.org/stop-child-forced-labor/cocoa-campaign/resources/still-time-to-raise-the-bar-the-real-corporate-soci> [1].

GLOBAL EXCHANGE is a membership-based international human rights organization dedicated to promoting social, economic and environmental justice around the world.

www.GlobalExchange.org [2]

GREEN AMERICA is a non-profit organization whose mission is to harness economic power—the strength of consumers, investors, businesses, and the marketplace—to create a socially just and environmentally sustainable society.

www.greenamerica.org [3]

THE INTERNATIONAL LABOR RIGHTS FORUM is an advocacy organization dedicated to achieving just and humane treatment for workers worldwide.

www.LaborRights.org [4]

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[1] <http://laborrights.org/stop-child-forced-labor/cocoa-campaign/resources/still-time-to-raise-the-bar-the-real-corporate-soci>

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