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Kerry Kennedy and Hundreds of NYC Area Elementary and High School Students Tell Hershey They Don't Want Chocolate Made by Exploiting Kids

NEW YORK -- With World Day Against Child Labor right around the corner, hundreds of students and concerned consumers gathered today in front of the Hershey Store in Times Square to call on Hershey to "raise the bar" by eliminating exploitative child labor from its cocoa production supply chain.

(Photo: <http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20110608/DC16548>)

Human rights activist Kerry Kennedy also spoke at the rally. She was joined by Lee Cutler, secretary treasurer of New York State United Teachers Union, as well as students, teachers and musical performers from the New York City area.

"The illegal use of child labor in chocolate production by Hershey and other chocolate-makers must stop," said Kerry Kennedy, president of the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights. "With this rally in Times Square, we are making sure that these companies hear that chocolate produced by children is a crime."

A decade after major chocolate companies including Hershey agreed to eliminate abusive child labor, forced labor and trafficking from their supply chains, these abuses continue on West African cocoa farms. Hershey is lagging behind its competitors in implementing policies to end these abuses in its chocolate products. Families who grow cocoa also live in poverty due to unstable cocoa prices. Students and consumers are calling on Hershey to take stronger action to end these labor rights violations and to start using Fair Trade Certified cocoa, which also guarantees farmers a stable price and additional funds for community development projects.

"The people at today's rally represent the tens of thousands of consumers across the country who expect the companies they purchase from to care about the people who are at the very source of the products we buy" said Green America Fair Trade Coordinator Elizabeth O'Connell. "We are sending Hershey the message that it needs to make larger commitments to remove forced and child labor from its chocolate products."

Global Exchange Fair Trade Campaign Director Adrienne Fitch-Frankel said: "So many of us associate Hershey with sweet childhood memories. The remarkable youth turnout at today's rally shows that youth in the United States are outraged that, for a countless number of their peers in Africa, recollections of Hershey and childhood will mean bitter memories of exploitation in the cocoa fields."

International Labor Rights Forum Campaigns Director Tim Newman said: "As World Day against Child Labor approaches this weekend, Hershey continues to lag behind its competitors in independently certifying that its cocoa is not produced by abusive child labor and forced labor. After ten years of broken promises, it's time for Hershey to make firm commitments to sourcing Fair Trade Certified cocoa."

The "Raise the Bar, Hershey!" campaign is organized by the non-profit groups Green America, International Labor Rights Forum, and Global Exchange. Over 30,000 consumers have taken action by sending e-mails, postcards, petitions, and making phone calls to the company asking it to end child labor. Campaign supporters across the country are joining the rally in solidarity by taking part in a national call-in day to Hershey headquarters. <http://www.raisethebarhershey.org/take-action-call-hershey/> [1] and also through twitter by using the hashtag #HersheyGoFair.

For more information on Hershey's corporate social responsibility record please read Time to Raise the Bar: The Real Corporate Social Responsibility Report for the Hershey Company. To read this report visit: <http://www.raisethebarhershey.org> [2].

GREEN AMERICA is the nation's leading green economy organization. Founded in 1982, Green America (formerly Co-op America) provides the economic strategies, organizing power and practical tools for businesses and individuals to solve today's social and environmental problems. www.GreenAmerica.org [3].

GLOBAL EXCHANGE is a membership-based international human rights organization dedicated to promoting social, economic and environmental justice around the world. www.GlobalExchange.org [4]

THE INTERNATIONAL LABOR RIGHTS FORUM is an advocacy organization dedicated to achieving just and humane treatment for workers worldwide. www.LaborRights.org [5]

SOURCE Green America, Washington, D.C.; International Labor Rights Forum, Washington, D.C.; Global Exchange, San Francisco

RELATED LINKS

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Source URL: <http://www.laborrights.org/stop-child-forced-labor/cocoa-campaign/news/12521>

Links:

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