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# ILRF Says Presidential Ban on Child Labor-made Goods is Only a First Step

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**Urges Senate Ratification of ILO Convention**

**Prohibiting Abusive Child Labor Practices**

The International Labor Rights Fund (ILRF) believes President Clinton's initiative to prohibit federal agencies from purchasing any products made with forced or indentured child labor is a step in the right direction. However, we encourage the President to extend the scope of the executive order to include products made by all forms of child labor, or at a minimum those covered by a new International Labour Organization (ILO) convention on the worst forms of child labor. We further call upon President Clinton to ensure that the executive order be extended to all countries without exception.

The executive order, signed by President Clinton on June 12, specifies that federal agencies must not purchase any products manufactured by forced or indentured child labor. The order requires that within 120 days the Department of Labor must compose a list of products that have been made with child labor. We believe this list of bad actors will not only inform the federal government for procurement purposes, but will educate the public about the widespread use of child labor in the production of goods around the world. However, we note with concern that the agreement provides exemptions for countries that are part of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and for signatories to the World Trade Organization's agreement on government procurement. Participation in multilateral trade bodies or agreements should not provide an excuse for any country to continue to tolerate the existence of child labor, nor should it provide a reason for the US government to turn a blind eye to child labor-made goods.

We at the International Labor Rights Fund have been working for many years to raise awareness of child labor, and to end the terrible exploitation of children toiling in industries around the world. As part of a coalition involving hundreds of grassroots organizations worldwide, we have promoted the need for a new ILO convention on the elimination of the worst forms of child labor. President Clinton appeared before the International Labor Organization conference in Geneva last month to endorse the ILO's convention that would prohibit abusive child labor practices around the world, involving hazardous work conditions, bondage or forced labor, conscription into armed conflict, and sex trafficking or pornographic activities. We urge the US Senate to ratify this convention as soon as possible, to strengthen the US commitment to the President's statements. We urge the President to amend his executive order to better reflect this commitment, by eliminating exceptions and by extending the order to goods produced by any child labor covered by the new ILO convention.

The presidential initiative and support for an international convention results from the persistent efforts of child labor opponents, such as Senator Tom Harkin and Representative Bernard Sanders. We strongly support congressional initiatives introduced by Senator Harkin and Representative Sanders to restrict the

import of any child labor made goods into the United States.

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