

## US COURT: OK TO SUE FIRMS OVER HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Chocolate importers and other companies can be sued for aiding and abetting child slave labor

A federal appeals court ruled this week that companies that [merchandise and import cocoa](#) harvested by child slave labor can be sued. The Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco found that the companies were “well aware—from their own frequent visits and independent studies— that they were selling the products of child slavery, but insisted on finding the cheapest sources of cocoa”. The court finds

that the Alien Tort Statute—a U.S. law that allows foreign citizens to seek remedies for human rights violations—now applies to corporations as well as states. Companies named in the lawsuit all import cocoa from the Ivory Coast. The plaintiffs claim is that the companies “placed increased revenues before basic human welfare,” Judge Dorothy Nelson said in a 2-1 ruling allowing the suit to proceed. “The prohibition against slavery is universal and may be asserted against the corporate defendants in this case.”

### UPDATE: JAPANESE STEWARDSHIP CODE

In [Sustainable Insights Edition 45](#) we reported that Japan’s government pension fund will require managers to sign Japan’s Stewardship Code, thereby committing to disclosing voting and engagement practices among other requirements. To date, the number of signatories has reached 160 following a rapid take up by Japanese investors.

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## DEVELOPMENT BANKS RAMP UP CLIMATE FINANCE

European Investment Bank and World Bank scale up action to combat climate change

The World Bank and European Investment Bank will join the African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the Inter-American Development Bank to scale up efforts

to tackle climate change, according to a joint statement published this week. The banks have provided more than USD 75bn in climate finance for developing and emerging economies since 2011, but have now committed to further accelerate climate-related investment activity.

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## LAWMAKERS URGE EU ENERGY AND CLIMATE COMMISSIONER TO DROP OIL SHARES

### Climate and energy commissioner candidate told to dispose of oil shareholdings

Miguel Arias Canete, the European Union's proposed climate and energy commissioner was urged by lawmakers to give up shares in two oil companies before they would consider giving him a nomination. The former Spanish agriculture and environment minister currently holds stock

in two oil companies. "A commissioner has to be independent from special interests and in my opinion it is obligatory that he give up any shares in oil companies if he wants to fulfill his duties in office free from any conflict of interests," Leinen, a German social democrat MEP, told the Guardian. "He must not be compromised by commercial or personal interests."

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### STAT OF THE WEEK

In the U.S. forty percent of the average city's electric bill goes to street lighting, and close to half of that is wasted. Excessive outdoor lighting, including exterior fixtures on office and industrial buildings, wastes about \$3.5 billion in energy per year, according to the International Dark-Sky Association.

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### BELIEVE IT OR NOT

Ninety nine percent of Sweden's garbage is now recycled. The Scandinavian country has become so good at managing waste, they have to import garbage from the UK, Italy, Norway and Ireland to feed the country's 32 waste-to-energy (WTE) plants, a practice that has been in place for years.

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