

The logo for CORE, consisting of the word "CORE" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font.The logo for deighton pierce glynn, with the name in a lowercase, grey, sans-serif font. The words "deighton", "pierce", and "glynn" are separated by thin horizontal lines.The logo for the london mining network, with the words "london", "mining", and "network" stacked vertically in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

Rights and Accountability in Development



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Rt Hon William Hague MP,
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

14 May 2014

Dear Foreign Secretary,

UN Human Rights Council resolution on an inter-governmental process towards a treaty to address business-related human rights abuses

Thank you for your continuing leadership on, and commitment to the business and human rights agenda.

At the June 2014 session of the UN Human Rights Council, a group of States will table a resolution that will seek to begin a process of developing an international treaty on business and human rights. This is a development of potential significant importance for the advancement of human rights and more than 80 States indicated their support for such a proposal last September. In line with the UK's commitment to implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, we are writing to ask that the UK supports this initiative and avoids taking steps to block the resolution, including through influencing the EU position.

The adoption of the UNGPs reflected the recognition by States and stakeholders that business has a responsibility to respect human rights. The international community (and Prof. John Ruggie, the

author of the UNGPs) nevertheless acknowledged that the UNGPs represented the beginning of a process and that they should not foreclose future enhancement of standards. The UNGPs clearly set out that business impacts require a 'smart mix' of policy responses, going beyond voluntary standards and including regulation. An intergovernmental process at the UN level to strengthen the normative framework on business and human rights would be complementary to the implementation of the UNGPs. Such a process would go alongside continuing efforts to strengthen existing national and regional frameworks and has the potential to help address the transnational nature of business-related human rights abuse and the urgent need to ensure access to remedy for victims.

Support for this resolution would send an important signal to other EU Member States, the European Commission and UN members of the need for legal accountability for business-related harm to people and the environment. Social conflicts and the criminalisation of peaceful and legitimate protest related to business activities are on the rise. Access to justice and remedy continues to be denied to communities and citizens in many countries. Voluntary commitments to implement human rights are failing to prevent serious adverse human rights impacts by businesses.

We therefore urge the UK to join the broad range of States who have already shown their support for progressing international law to address business-related human rights abuses.

We thank you for your attention to this important matter and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Andy Atkins

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