



Human rights are too important to be left to company discretion alone

We, the Finnish companies and civil society organizations behind this statement, are urging the European Commission to introduce mandatory human rights due diligence legislation.

Business and international trade can make an important contribution towards human rights. Companies produce products, services and innovations that are crucial to modern society. They provide employment and pay taxes. At the same time however, the rights of children, employees and communities can be infringed on in the global supply chains.

Many companies already voluntarily undertake human rights due diligence. Forerunner companies, for example, map human rights risks, audit supply chains, use certified raw materials, and cooperate with trade unions.

Unfortunately not all companies do this, and irresponsible companies can gain a competitive advantage by infringing on human rights. Irresponsible business conduct of one company can even tarnish the reputation of other companies in the same value chain or in the same industry sector.

Consumers do not knowingly want to make purchasing decisions which support businesses that violate human rights. Consumers want to be able to trust that the products they are considering buying have not been produced by child labour or by forced labour, or by any other means that violate human rights. However, navigating the various claims to sustainability and ethical conduct, the individual consumer cannot be responsible for the human rights impacts of business enterprises.

Like consumers who do their shopping in stores, companies must also be able to trust that their business partners and competitors have proper procedures in place. A fair marketplace, where international human rights principles are adhered to, will benefit everyone.

In various countries, such as France, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Germany and now also in Finland, there are concerted efforts to introduce mandatory human rights due diligence. National laws are however not enough. We, the Finnish companies and civil society organizations behind this statement, are challenging the European Commission to take steps towards mandatory human rights due diligence at European level.

Mandatory human rights due diligence legislation at European level must obligate companies to respect human rights, to map their human rights impacts and to prevent and mitigate possible negative impacts. It must enable access to remedy in cases of actual

negative impacts, and be based on the concept of human rights due diligence, defined in the UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights. To ensure effective enforcement, non-compliance with human rights due diligence must lead to adequate sanctions, modelled according to the best international practices.

In Helsinki, Finland, on 8th November 2018

COMPANIES

Turnover over 900 million euro



Turnover over 10 million euro



Turnover up to 10 million euro



TRADE UNIONS



NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

