



## Press release

Berne, 13 June 2012

### **"Corporate Justice" petition submitted**

### **135'285 demand clear rules for Swiss corporations. Worldwide.**

**135'285 people have signed the "Corporate Justice" petition that was submitted to Parliament today. The signatories are urging the Federal Council and the Parliament to compel corporations headquartered in Switzerland to respect human rights and the environment worldwide. Representatives of various political parties simultaneously tabled initiatives on the subject.**

Be it Xstrata, Glencore, Syngenta, Nestlé, Danzer, Triumph or Holcim: Time and again, subsidiaries of Swiss enterprises violate human rights or pollute the environment abroad, while there is no way for the parent companies to be held accountable. Globalisation has massively increased the power and influence of companies operating internationally. Yet there are no binding rules compelling them to comply with human rights and environmental standards. Such rules are urgently needed precisely for Switzerland, home to so many multinationals.

The "Corporate Justice" petition aims to close this gap. It was launched last November by a broad alliance of over 50 development and human rights organisations, environmental and women's associations, trade unions and critical shareholder associations.

The petition also shows how Switzerland should do its homework assigned by the UN Human Rights Council. Exactly one year ago the Council unanimously adopted the guiding principles drawn up by the UN Special Representative on Business and Human Rights, John Ruggie. These guidelines stress that all States have the duty to protect human rights, including against breaches committed by companies. They also underline the responsibility of those companies to respect human rights throughout the world.

States are now called upon to implement these principles. Whereas the EU already asked its members last autumn to develop appropriate concepts, nothing has happened in Switzerland so far. Initiatives have therefore been tabled on the topic of the economy and human rights by MP's Tiana Moser (GLP), Anne Seydoux-Christe (CVP), Ursula Haller (BdP), Maja Ingold (EvP), Alec von Graffenried (Greens) and Carlo Sommaruga (SP).

While handing over the petition, the Director of the Swiss Section of Amnesty International, Manon Schick, pointed out that corporate self-regulation was by itself not enough. Only by combining it with binding rules would human rights abuses and environmental degradation effectively be prevented. Peter Niggli, Director of Alliance Sud, the coalition of Swiss development organisations, highlighted the special responsibility borne by Switzerland as the home state of an above-average number of transnational enterprises. Many of those do business in sensitive fields. The lack of clear rules therefore poses an enormous risk to Switzerland's reputation.

Kaspar Schuler, Campaign Director for Greenpeace Switzerland, recalled that environmental pollution often goes hand-in-hand with human rights violations. The latest examples of Xstrata in Peru or Glencore in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have shown that environmental damage is invariably detrimental to the local population as well.

Even after the submission of the petition, the "Corporate Justice" coalition will continue to further the cause for binding rules for Swiss corporations. Worldwide

**Pictures from the submission of the petition can be viewed from 13.30 :**

<http://www.rechtohnegrenzen.ch/de/medien-downloads/>

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