

Press release
Bern, 2nd September 2014



Swiss Foreign Affairs Committee wants mandatory Human Rights Due Diligence

A Milestone for Human Rights

The Foreign Affairs Committee of Switzerland’s Lower Chamber has called for human rights and environmental due diligence to be a requirement for companies. The Committee has adopted a motion in response to the government’s comparative law study. The ‘Swiss Coalition for Corporate Justice’ (‘SCCJ’) welcomes this far-sighted move.

The government’s report on human rights due diligence carried out by companies was published in May this year (available in [German](#) or [French](#)). Commissioned by the Foreign Affairs Committee of Switzerland’s Lower Chamber (“the Committee”), the report sets out the possibilities for anchoring due diligence duties for companies in law.

The Committee has now taken the next logical step, adopting a [committee motion](#) calling for draft legislation based on the findings of the report, to be developed either in the context of the upcoming corporate law reforms or in a separate project. By so doing, one of the first hurdles for the implementation of the SCCJ petition, which was filed in 2012 with 135,000 signatures, has been overcome.

The introduction of such a due diligence requirement would go a significant way to preventing human rights violations and environmental crimes before any damage occurs. It would require companies to identify actual and potential risks to human rights and the environment, take measures against those risks and report on the mechanisms and processes put in place. Due diligence is also at the heart of the UN Human Rights Council’s 2011 unanimously-adopted Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Should Parliament approve the motion, Switzerland would be playing a leading role in the implementation of these guiding principles. This would be an appropriate step for Switzerland to take, being not only the home state of the UN but also the place of domicile for numerous internationally operating companies as well.

The SCCJ calls on the federal parliament to support the Committee’s motion.

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