

Bern, 19 January 2015

Press Release from the [Swiss Coalition of Corporate Justice \(SCCJ\)](#)

Popular Initiative for Responsible Business

The Swiss Coalition of Corporate Justice (SCCJ) is planning to launch a popular initiative, the aim of which will be to require Swiss companies to respect human rights and environmental standards abroad as well as at home. The widely supported association comprises some 50 charities, women's rights, human rights, environmental and church organizations, as well as trade unions and shareholders' associations.

In 2011, the SCCJ started a campaign with a petition demanding that Swiss companies respect human rights and environmental standards – also abroad. Just seven months later, the petition was submitted with 135,000 signatures. And it got the ball rolling: Parliament requested the government to put together a national action plan on business and human rights (the “Ruggie Strategy”), a comparative law report on due diligence with respect to human rights and the environment, and a yet-to-be-delivered report on access to justice for the victims of human rights violations caused by companies. Although the government has recognized the problems in the arena of human rights and business and the related reputational risks posed by such to Switzerland, all the solutions proposed so far have focused on voluntary measures. Neither government nor Parliament has so far been prepared to take the necessary next step and to formulate legally binding requirements on companies based in Switzerland. As a result, the respect for human rights and the environment abroad continues to be left up to the goodwill of Swiss companies.

For this reason a broad coalition of over 50 civil society organizations decided together to launch a popular initiative “for responsible business – for the protection of people and the environment (the responsible business initiative)”. At the heart of the initiative is mandatory due diligence regarding human rights and the environment. Due diligence in this context includes a risk assessment, measures to prevent and eliminate possible human rights violations and environmental damage, as well as comprehensive reporting on the policies in place and the action taken. The duty to carry out due diligence extends through all business operations and is based on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, unanimously adopted by the UN Human Rights Council in 2011. The initiative covers all Swiss companies. The scale and complexity of the due diligence depends on the specific risks of the corporation – small and medium-sized enterprises will remain largely unaffected by the initiative.

The text of the initiative is currently under review at the Federal Chancellery and the committee of the initiative is just being established. The association «Initiative for responsible business» will launch the initiative in the second half of April 2015. The collection of signatures will start at the beginning of May.

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Notes to the editor:

In the event that the initiators of a popular initiative manage to collect 100,000 signatures across 18 months, a binding referendum on the subject will then follow.

The following organizations are involved in the coalition (as at January 2015):

Charities/development organizations

- Alliance Sud
- Bread for all
- Brücke - Le pont
- cfd
- Comundo (Bethlehem Mission Immensee, E-Changer, Inter-Agire)
- Swiss Catholic Lenten Fund
- HEKS
- Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation
- Interteam
- medico international schweiz
- Solidar Suisse
- Swissaid
- Interaction/StopArmut 2015
- terre des hommes schweiz
- Terre des Hommes Suisse

Environmental organizations

- Greenpeace
- Bruno Manser Fonds
- SES - Schweiz. Energiestiftung
- AefU - Ärztinnen und Ärzte für Umweltschutz
- Basler Appell gegen Gentechnologie

Human rights organizations

- Amnesty International
- ASK - Arbeitsgruppe Schweiz-Kolumbien
- Bergbau Menschen Rechte
- CETIM
- BD – Berne Declaration
- GfbV – Society for threatened people
- Guatemalanetz Bern
- humanrights.ch / Mers
- Incomindios
- Multiwatch
- Solifonds
- Arbeitskreis Tourismus + Entwicklung
- PBI - Peace Brigades International
- Peace Watch Switzerland

Women's organizations

- EFS - Evangelische Frauen Schweiz
- SKF - Schweiz. Katholischer Frauenbund

Shareholders associations

- Ethos
- Actares

Church organizations

- Justitia et Pax
- KAB – Katholische Arbeitnehmerinnen- und Arbeitnehmer-Bewegung
- Missionskonferenz
- Eglises réformées Berne-Jura-Soleure, Bereich OeME-Migration

Trade unions

- SGB - Schweiz. Gewerkschaftsbund
- Travail.Suisse
- Unia
- vpod

Other organizations

- ACSI - Associazione consumatrici e consumatori della Svizzera italiana
- Botteghe del Mondo
- DJS - Demokratische JuristInnen Schweiz
- FIAN - Food first information and action network
- Magasins du monde
- Pingwin Planet
- Stiftung Abendrot
- Transparency International Schweiz
- Uniterre