

House of Commons
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Dear Prime Minister,

A new UK ‘mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence’ law with access to justice for victims – as called for by businesses, investors, civil society and the public.

Our congratulations to you in your new role as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

We, the undersigned 63 businesses, investors and civil society organisations, write to request that you urgently introduce a new law requiring companies to carry out human rights and environmental due diligence (HREDD) across their operations and value chains. Such legislation would ensure that Britain is at the forefront of setting standards for renewed prosperity and sustainable trade worldwide and would level the playing field for business.

UK businesses, investors and other financial actors have a responsibility to respect our shared human rights and the environment. The process of continuously conducting robust human rights and environmental due diligence (HREDD) is a core requirement for businesses and investors in fulfilling that responsibility, as outlined in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises - international standards to which the UK is a signatory.

Introducing a new HREDD law would help the UK maintain its pioneering leadership on shaping the standards expected of businesses, established by the Modern Slavery Act 2015 Transparency in Supply Chains regulation. While the Modern Slavery Act was a breakthrough when introduced, a more comprehensive approach which goes beyond modern slavery issues and reporting obligations alone is urgently needed. Introducing stronger legislation would position the UK at the forefront of an increasing number of states around the world, including some of our G7 partners, that are now introducing or preparing new laws which make due diligence mandatory and which cover a range of human rights and environmental standards. Notably, in 2022 G7 leaders committed to “*maximise the coherent implementation of and compliance with international standards relating to human rights, environment, and labour across global supply chains,*” including to introduce “*mandatory measures that protect rights-holders*”.

New mandatory due diligence legislation can contribute to a level playing field, increase legal coherence and certainty about the standards expected from businesses, clarify legal consequences when those standards are not met, and increase engagement and leverage with value chain partners. A new law should also harmonise expectations towards companies, irrespective of where they

operate; provide access to remedy for victims; and ultimately bring change of the necessary scale and speed to positively contribute to the lives of people and to the planet.

The UK now has a clear opportunity to retain its leading role on this issue and to shape global business conduct for the better - rather than following the footsteps of others. Yet, we are concerned that the UK Government is yet to confirm plans for a new UK law on this issue. Instead, it has repeatedly cited its support for voluntary frameworks - despite the gaps that voluntary approaches leave in regulating global business conduct. Continuing on this path will position the UK as a laggard on these issues, creating an uneven playing field for UK businesses operating in these markets and following these new, mandatory rules.

We therefore call on you to urgently bring forward ambitious primary legislation to mandate companies to carry out human rights and environmental due diligence. To level the playing field in practice, the requirement needs to be accompanied by consequences that will be strong enough to ensure that businesses that fall within the scope of the legislation carry out HREDD to a high standard and that victims have access to justice.

Signatories:

ABColumbia (Louise Winstanley, Programme and Advocacy Manager)

Abrdn

ALDI (Rose McGrath, National Corporate Responsibility Manager)

Alsico Laucuba Ltd (Louise Fallows, Compliance Manager)

Amnesty International

Anti Slavery International (Jasmine O'Connor OBE, Chief Executive Officer)

Ardevora

ASOS (José Antonio Ramos Calamonte, Chief Executive Officer)

Banana Link

Bond (Stephanie Draper, Chief Executive Officer)

British Retail Consortium (Andrew Opie, Director of Food & Sustainability)

Business & Human Rights Resource Centre (Phil Bloomer, Executive Director)

CAFOD (Christine Allen, Director)

CCLA (James Corah, Head of Sustainability)

CED Stone (Calum Fraser, Commercial Director)

Christian Aid

Comitato Lady Lawyer Village

Co-op (Shirine Khoury-Haq, Group Chief Executive Officer)

Corporate Justice Coalition (Mark Dearn, Director)

Erve Ltd (Tom Rossi, Managing Director)

Environmental Justice Foundation (Steve Trent, Chief Executive Officer & Founder)

Ethical Trading Initiative (Peter McAllister, Executive Director)

Fairtrade Foundation (Michael Gidney, Chief Executive Officer)

Fashion Roundtable (Tamara Cincik, Chief Executive Officer)

Fidelis Insurance

Friends of the Earth (Dave Timms, Head of Political Affairs)

Green Economy Coalition (Oliver Greenfield, Convener)

GRS Roadstone (Jon Fisher, Chief Executive Officer)

Homeworkers Worldwide (Lucy Brill, Director)

Hotsprings Australia

Human Rights Watch (Yasmine Ahmed, UK Director)

Investor Alliance for Human Rights (Rebecca DeWinter-Schmitt, Associate Program Director)

Labour Behind the Label (Dominique Muller, Policy Lead)

Lady Lawyer Fashion Archive

Lady Lawyer Foundation

LDH(La Doria) (Hannah Broscombe, Responsible Sourcing Manager)

Liberty (Adil Mehboob-Khan, Chief Executive Officer)

London Mining Network (Richard Solly, Coordinator)

Mars

Marshalls plc (Elaine Mitchel-Hill, ESG and Human Rights Director)

New Look Retailers Ltd (Helen Connolly, Chief Executive Officer)

Oliver Bonas (Tim Hollidge, Chief Operating Officer)

One+All (Neil Ward, Managing Director)

Oxfam

Peace Brigades International (PBI) UK (Ben Leather, Director)

Primark (Paul Marchant, Chief Executive)

RAID (Anneke Van Woudenberg, Executive Director)

Sainsbury's (Simon Roberts, Chief Executive Officer)

Seasalt Ltd (Paul Hayes, Chief Executive Officer)

TFG Brands (Francesca Mangano, Head of CSR & Sustainability)

The Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility (ECCR) (Sarah Edwards, Executive Director)

The Very Group (Henry Birch, Chief Executive Officer)

The Body Shop (Jo Webb, Head of Responsible Procurement)

The White Company

Tesco

Tony's Chocoloneley (Paul Schoenmakers, Head of Impact/Impactus Prime)

Transform Trade (Charlotte Timson, Chief Executive Officer)

Tulipshare Ltd (Antoine Argouges, Chief Executive Officer)

Typhoo Tea Ltd

Union Hand-Roasted Coffee (Steven Macatonia, Co-founder)

Unseen (Andrew Wallis OBE, Chief Executive Officer)

UNISON (Christina McAnea, General Secretary)

War on Want (Liz McKean, Director of Campaigns, Policy and Programmes)