

*GIFA Oral Statement*  
*1st session of IGWG on TNCs and human rights*  
*July 6, 10AM-1PM / General Comments*

Thank you Chair. I am speaking on behalf of the International Baby Food Action Network, the Pesticide Action Network Asia and Pacific and Friends of the Earth Europe, members of the Treaty Alliance.

We welcome the opening of the first session of the IGWG for the elaboration of an International Legally Binding Instrument on Transnational Corporations and other Business Enterprises with respect to human rights. We are very glad to see countries and civil society taking part in this crucial process and would like to encourage all States to engage constructively in the discussions.

This is a historical step for all citizens, particularly for those affected by corporate abuses, who have struggled for many years for justice. Therefore, we urge you to ensure meaningful involvement of affected communities in the treaty process in order to ensure that their needs are met.

To date, millions if not billions of people are negatively affected by corporate activities. Abuses are more frequent and apparent in the South, although communities from the North are also suffering from corporate misconduct such as chemical contamination and promotion of unsafe or unhealthy food. In addition, negative external costs related to corporate activities, including adverse impacts on health and environment, are often borne by affected communities themselves as well as by public institutions and national governments. Whenever the affected communities organize to claim their rights and seek for remedies, their leaders regularly face threats to their security and even to their life.

Besides, whistle-blowers are often harassed or fired for having reported or disclosed information on a threat or harm to the public interest. Human rights defenders and whistle-blowers are at the forefront to get corporations accountable and thus should be provided special protection by the treaty. During the side event that will take place at 1PM in room XXIV, we will have the opportunity to hear about the experience of a whistle-blower, Ms Yasmine Motarjemi, former Assistant Vice President in charge of food safety at Nestlé.

Finally, we would like to stress the necessity to implement adequate safeguards to ensure that the treaty process is not unduly influenced by the private sector. This should include concrete measures to avoid situations of personal or institutional conflicts of interests.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate our support to this treaty process. We will continue to provide information to the IGWG and mobilize our respective networks at international, regional and national levels. Thank you Chair.