

**Council of Europe, as an intergovernmental organisation seeking to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law in our 47 member States across Europe, takes great interest in the issue of business and human rights, and closely follows the debates within the OEWG since its inception.**

**On this occasion I would like to bring to the kind attention of my colleagues that European Convention on Human Rights as applied and interpreted by the European Court of Human Rights and the European Social Charter (revised) as applied and interpreted by the European Committee of Social Rights are the key Council of Europe instruments affording protection against business-related human rights abuses.**

**The** [**Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States on human rights and business**](https://www.coe.int/en/web/human-rights-rule-of-law/-/human-rights-and-busine-1)**, elaborated over the 2 past years by a drafting group composed of national experts, together with observers from both the private sector and civil society, was finally adopted on 2 March 2016.**

**In terms of content and added value, the CoE Recommendation builds on the 3 pillars of the UN Guiding Principles on human rights and business. It is meant to enhance the effective implementation of the UNGP, while closing existing gaps by building on specific CoE areas of expertise, notably in developing the pillar “access to remedy” and “access to justice”. The Recommendations also provides some thematic guidance as to the additional protection of workers, children, indigenous peoples and human rights defenders. Finally, this soft-law instrument will also contribute to awareness-raising and the exchange of good practices.**

**We welcomed the recent fruitful visit of Ambassador Espinosa Garces - Chair of the OEIWG - to the CoE on 10 June 2016 and express high interest in continued cooperation and exchanges.**

**The Council of Europe intends to organise a side-event in the margins of the UN Forum on Business and Human Rights later this year (November / December 2016).**

**In addition, the CoE /CDDH intends to organise a high level and multi-stakeholder seminar around the CM recommendation on  human rights and business in June 2017 (in Strasbourg), to which the United Nations will certainly be invited to contribute. With its programme currently being elaborated, the seminar could address implementation challenges, best practices and the complementarity between different (binding/ non-binding) standards and initiatives. In this context, we would be particularly honored to count on the personal participation of Ambassador Espinosa Garces in one of the high level Panels.**