

Open-ended intergovernmental working group on transnational corporations and other business enterprises  
with respect to human rights  
*Third session (23-27 October 2017)*  
General statement under item 4

Thank you M. Chairperson Rapporteur,

We welcome and support your efforts in seeking to address in the Draft Elements the most significant governance and accountability gaps with regards to corporate-related human rights abuses. We also welcome your commitment to ensure the adoption of a legally binding instrument on transnational corporations and other business enterprises.

Women's rights organizations are following this process closely, considering the central gender dimension in all aspects of human rights violations, including corporate human rights abuse.

In this statement we focus on the need to integrate a gender and women's rights perspective into the treaty in a meaningful way. We have submitted a written contribution to this session with concrete proposals on how to do that, focussing on three key areas: mandatory gender impact assessments of the impacts on human rights of business operations; gender sensitive justice and remedy mechanisms; and ensuring respect, protection and an enabling environment for women human rights defenders. Hard copies of our submission are available at the back of the room. We invite all delegations to read it and support our recommendations.

Corporate human rights abuse harms women in specific ways, and access to justice and remedy is particularly out of reach for women in affected communities. Women often pay the highest price for environmental degradation, displacement of communities, militarisation of operations, such as mining sites, precarious working conditions, and increased violence, among others. Women human rights defenders are also subject to gender-specific violations from corporate and other actors. To address these concerns, it is imperative to ensure a meaningful integration of a gender perspective.

We stress that a gender perspective is not about treating women as a "vulnerable group"; it should not be a separate "tick the box" exercise; and it is not only about women and girls. Integrating a gender approach into the treaty means analysing how businesses activities may have different, disproportionate, or unanticipated impacts on women or men. This approach is essential to the very purpose of the prospective treaty if it is to put the concerns of rights holders at the centre and to ensure the effective prevention, protection from and remediation of business-related violations **for all**.

We call on all States to constructively engage in this process. We especially urge States committed to women's rights and gender equality, and with the resolve to eliminate discrimination and violence against women, to recognize corporate human rights abuse as deeply gendered, and as a women's rights issue.

Including a gender perspective in the binding instrument will help to ensure that States effectively discharge their obligations to respect, protect and fulfill the human rights of women and girls in the context of business activities.

We invite all delegations to attend our side event on this issue today at 13:00 in room 23 and a range of events this week on key issues, including human rights defenders.

Thank you.

Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)

International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)

International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAW-AP)

Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL)

Project on Organizing, Development, Education, and Research® (PODER)

International Federation for Human Rights (IFDH)