

MEDIA RELEASE

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Leading UK charities call on government to tackle corporate human rights abuses abroad

A group of leading UK charities has launched a manifesto setting out recommendations to improve sustainability and corporate accountability practices.

The CORE Coalition, whose members include ActionAid, Amnesty International, CAFOD, Friends of the Earth, Traidcraft and WWF, is calling on the UK's political parties to commit to make companies more accountable on corporate tax avoidance, human rights abuses within their supply chains and access to justice for victims of corporate abuse.

The CORE Coalition argues that greater clarity from the government on what's expected from companies will help to reinforce responsible business practices. The manifesto, titled 'Doing Business Better', has been launched just in time for the autumn political party conferences.

Marilyn Croser, Director of CORE, said, "Consumers and investors' expectations of ethical business standards are growing. The next government will need to take clear, urgent and coherent action to address irresponsible corporate behaviour.

"There is no shortage of opportunities to make a difference. 'Doing Business Better' lays out its recommendations for government to ensure its policies go beyond simple lip service. Political will is needed now to translate policy commitments into practical changes."

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Notes

Business people, consumers, campaigners, and investors are already talking about what they expect from government. The run-up to the 2015 General Election is the time for political parties to join the conversation.

- **70% rise in global human rights abuses**, since 2008 – workers' rights seriously compromised as demand for low-cost labour and resources intensifies.
- **Business leaders**, such as Richard Branson¹ and Unilever's Paul Polman², agree that greater transparency is necessary to build trust, the basis for prosperity.
- **Overwhelming UK public support** for calls by the CORE coalition and other campaigners. In a survey conducted by the Department of Business Innovation and Skills, two-thirds of the public stated that retail companies should be clear about where they source their raw materials, components or ingredients, and that it's not enough for retail companies to say that they are ethical; they need to prove it.

Resources

- 'Doing Business Better: Recommendations for Political Leadership on Corporate Accountability and Sustainability', CORE Coalition, Sep 2014
<http://corporate-responsibility.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Doing-Business-Better-CORE-Manifesto2.pdf>
- 'Public views on ethical retail', Research Series No. 177, June 2014, Department for Business Innovation and Skills
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/322624/Public-views-on-ethical-retail.pdf
- '70% increase in countries identified as 'extreme risk' for human rights since 2008', Maplecroft Human Rights Risk Atlas 2014
<http://maplecroft.com/portfolio/new-analysis/2013/12/04/70-increase-countries-identified-extreme-risk-human-rights-2008-bhuman-rights-risk-atlas-2014b/>
- Business and Human Rights Action Plan, UK Government, 4 September 2013
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/236901/BHR_Action_Plan_-_final_online_version_1_.pdf
- The CORE response to the plan is at http://corporate-responsibility.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/GoodBusiness_COREcommentonUKNAP_final_Dec2013.pdf

¹ <http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/blog/richard-branson-jochen-zeitz-b-team>

² <http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/paul-polman-unilever-sustainable-living-plan>