



Government must act on supply chain abuses

4 June 2019

The final report of the Modern Slavery Act independent review, commissioned by the Home Office, was published in May. The review finds that while the flagship supply chain reporting requirement has had some impact, this has been limited by vague requirements and weak enforcement. Our organisations have reached the same conclusion after several years tracking companies' responses to the 2015 law.

We agree with the reviewers' conclusion that tougher government action is needed to ensure companies make serious efforts to eradicate modern slavery from their supply chains.

The Act should be amended to require companies to report on specific actions taken to address modern slavery and human trafficking. Meaningful sanctions that go beyond fines and that could ultimately lead to company directors' disqualification should be introduced for firms that fail to publish annual modern slavery statements. Government departments, local authorities, health care trusts and other public bodies should also be required to publish supply chain reports, to ensure they are using their buying power to tackle labour rights abuses.

While corporate reporting is part of the solution, it is insufficient on its own to tackle the root causes of human rights abuses in supply chains. Businesses should be required to assess and address their human rights risks, and labour market inspection and enforcement should be properly resourced.

Signatures

Alastair Harper, Director of Advocacy, UNICEF UK

Caroline Robinson, Chief Executive, Focus on Labour Exploitation (FLEX)

Dave Prentis, General Secretary, UNISON

Esther Stevenson, Chief Executive, Traidcraft Exchange

Jasmine O'Connor, CEO, Anti-Slavery International

Joanna Ewart-James, Executive Director, Freedom United

John David, Head, Rathbone Greenbank Investments

Kate Bell, Head of Rights, International, Social and Economics Department, TUC

Kristen Growney, Acting Director of Campaigns Policy and Influencing Team, Oxfam

Marilyn Croser, Director, CORE Coalition

Michael Quicke, Chief Executive, CCLA Investment Management

Peter Frankental, Economic Relations Programme Director, Amnesty International UK

Peter McAllister, CEO, Ethical Trading Initiative

Phil Bloomer, Executive Director, Business and Human Rights Resource Centre

Steve Trent, Director and Co-Founder, Environmental Justice Foundation

Tim Aldred, Head of Policy, Fairtrade Foundation