

Time for a legally binding instrument on human rights and transnational corporations

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) should vote in favour of developing a *binding instrument* to hold transnational corporations (TNCs) and other businesses accountable for human rights violations, says CIDSE, the international alliance of Catholic development organisations.

CIDSE's work with local organisations and communities whose rights are affected has highlighted the gaps in current international regulation of the responsibilities of transnational companies.

CIDSE Secretary General Bernd Nilles said, *"We have seen too many cases over recent years where business activities have led to violations of labour rights or rights to land, livelihood, health and a clean environment. We call upon the governments at the UNHRC to agree to develop a treaty that would effectively protect communities and human rights defenders, who have seen their situation deteriorate in recent years, from abuses."*

CIDSE will be present at the UNHRC in Geneva and is organising a side event to bring attention to human rights violations connected to the extractive industries in Latin America, Asia and Africa, as part of a global week of mobilisation June 23 to 27. CIDSE has signed a call for a legally binding instrument, along with more than 500 civil society organisations. Today a coalition of those organisations published an ad in the Financial Times calling on governments to support a UN treaty on business and human rights.

CIDSE also warmly welcomes [Uthe Statement](#) of **His Excellency Archbishop Silvano M. Tomasi**, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, in favour of a binding treaty at the UNHRC. CIDSE wholeheartedly agrees with his question: *"how can we convince international corporations to rise up willingly to this responsibility if no national legal obligation binds them to do so?"*

Parallel to the UNHRC, a tour of European Bishops will be visiting Guatemala. The tour will take place June 22 to 27, 2014 and includes **Mgr. Juan Antonio Aznarez Cobo** from Spain, **Mgr. Aloys Jousten** from Belgium, **Mgr. Hugh Connolly** from Ireland and **Mgr. Felix Gmür** from Switzerland, as well as CIDSE Secretary General Bernd Nilles. The tour will meet indigenous communities who fight for justice, their dignity and their land, as well as communities at La Puya where, on May 23, 2014, police evicted peaceful protesters against a mining project led by Exmingua (Extracciones Mineras de Guatemala, subsidiary of Kappes Cassidy & Associates).

The [Global Week of Mobilisation](#) includes the **CIDSE Side Event**:

June 24, 12:00 – 14:00

Human Rights Defenders and Extractive Activities (Palais des Nations - Room XXIV)

Co-sponsored by: Franciscans, Fastenopfer, Tampakan Forum, CIDSE, MISEREOR.

[CIDSE](#) will closely follow the UNHRC process and [report on it here](#)

[CIDSE](#) and [ACT Alliance](#)'s new report addressing the problems human rights defenders face: [Space for civil Society: How to protect and expand an enabling environment](#).

The CIDSE report [Human Rights Due Diligence - Policy measures for effective implementation](#) documents numerous situations on the ground that demonstrate the need a binding treaty.

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Bishops' Tour:

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Notes to the editors

- **CIDSE** is an international alliance of Catholic development agencies. Its members share a common strategy in their efforts to eradicate poverty and establish global justice. www.cidse.org
- **CIDSE members:** Broederlijk Delen (Belgium), CAFOD (England and Wales), CCFD - Terre Solidaire (France), Center of Concern (USA), Cordaid (the Netherlands), Development & Peace (Canada), Entraide et Fraternité (Belgium), eRko (Slovakia), Fastenopfer (Switzerland), FEC (Portugal), FOCSIV (Italy), Fondation Bridderlech Deelen (Luxembourg), KOO (Austria), Manos Unidas (Spain), MISEREOR (Germany), SCIAF (Scotland), Trócaire (Ireland)

This CIDSE briefing explains what human rights due diligence is and, referring to examples of existing practice in due diligence, how it should be implemented by businesses and the essential role of States in this regard. Taking examples of concrete situations on the ground, it argues that if effectively implemented, human rights due diligence can help to prevent and address human rights abuses.