



Brussels, 27 October 2023

PRESS RELEASE

“The EU continues to sit on the sidelines while global South engages in the process of achieving a strong UN Binding Treaty against corporate impunity”.

Negotiations around an international treaty on business and human rights continued this week during the 9th Session of the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Working Group on Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises with Respect to Human Rights, in Geneva. CIDSE, the international family of Catholic social justice organisations, was present with a delegation of its members and partner organisations from Africa and Latin America, to advocate for a strong, binding international instrument that ensures access to justice and remedies for victims of corporate abuse.

Nine years into the discussions, participants demonstrated political will to move the negotiations on the updated draft text forward. *“The majority of states seemed to be on the good path, finally progressing discussion on the content of the Treaty”*, explained Clara Alibert, Advocacy officer for CCFD-Terre Solidaire.

As was the case in previous negotiations, several Latin American state delegates showed strong leadership in advancing a robust legally binding instrument. This session was also marked by a growing engagement of African states and civil society from the continent. Many local communities in both regions are facing abuses in the context of fossil fuels extraction, as well as of metals and minerals. *“The African voices in these negotiations are key to ensuring the protection of human rights and the environment from corporate abuses by extractive industries”*, said Fr. Germain Rajoelison, Deputy Secretary General and Coordinator of the Justice, Peace and Development Commission of SECAM, the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar.

In contrast, the EU came to Geneva without proper legal analysis and without a negotiation mandate. Once again, the EU just commented from the sidelines and ignored the negotiations.

This is despite the issue of binding rules on corporations for their impact on human rights and the planet being high on the EU’s political agenda since the publication in February 2022 of the European Commission’s draft Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD).

“We urge the EU to do its homework, to commission a legal analysis and to agree on a mandate based on the points of consensus already reached between the Commission, Council and Parliament with respect to the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD). There is clear support for a mandate from a critical number of EU member states”, said Wies Willems, Policy Officer for Broederlijk Delen.

To facilitate progress on this game changing treaty, CIDSE urges the EU to provide financial resources to the process with the aim of supporting intense and participatory regional and interregional consultations on the key points of debate in the draft Treaty, between the yearly sessions of the OEIWG. The EU cannot continue to walk away at the end of every session after not participating and ignoring the treaty process until the next year.

“Following Pope Francis’ latest apostolic exhortation, Laudate Deum, we are reminded to continue developing a new model of multilateralism, one capable of responding to the current crises the world faces”, commented Josianne Gauthier, CIDSE secretary general.

The Chair's proposal to discuss a new resolution, that would ensure financial resources to continue the process but also 'clarify' the scope of the treaty created surprise in the room and major discussion outside. Finally, this option was ruled out in favour of the possibility of adopting a decision to reinforce the human and financial resources of the process.

Before the 10th session, CIDSE calls on all states' delegations to pledge to advance these negotiations in good faith and for greater protection of all human rights and the environment. Particularly, CIDSE urges EU member states to actively engage in this process and advance on a text that would make respecting human rights a legal requirement for companies and open up legal avenues for victims to seek justice and reparations for harm caused to them. CIDSE and its partners will continue their engagement and closely monitor the UN process.

NOTES TO THE EDITORS:

CIDSE is an international family of Catholic social justice organisations. We work with global partners and allies to promote justice, harnessing the power of global solidarity to achieve transformational change for people and the planet. We challenge systemic injustice and its destructive impacts through connecting, mobilising, influencing and telling stories of change. We promote environmentally and socially just alternatives to allow everyone to thrive in our common home. www.cidse.org

MEDIA CONTACTS :

- Giorgio Gotra, CIDSE Communications Manager, [gotra\(at\)cidse.org](mailto:gotra(at)cidse.org)
- Clara Alibert, Advocacy Officer, CCFD-Terre Solidaire, [c.alibert\(at\)ccfd-terresolidaire.org](mailto:c.alibert(at)ccfd-terresolidaire.org)
- Wies Willems, Policy Officer, Broederlijk Delen, [wies.willems\(at\)broederlijkdelen.be](mailto:wies.willems(at)broederlijkdelen.be)