

Statement by the African Coalition for Corporate Accountability (ACCA) on the occasion of the first-ever African Regional Forum on Business and Human Rights

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On the occasion of the African Regional Forum on Business and Human Rights, held from 16 to 18 September 2014 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the African Coalition for Corporate Accountability (ACCA) welcomes the first meeting of this kind on the continent, and makes the following observations and recommendations.

ACCA is grateful for the support of the African Union Commission (AU), the United Nations Economic Commission on Africa (UNECA), the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Working Group on Business and Human Rights to bring together civil society organisations, community-based organisations, affected community members, governments, and business to grapple with issues critical to the continent in this Forum. These in-person gatherings are essential to building a shared momentum to advance respect for human rights affected by business activity.

ACCA notes with concern the weak participation by business, both domestic and foreign, by state-owned enterprises, as well as by our governments. We hope that in the future there will be a stronger presence of both business and governments, and greater interest by them in this debate. We additionally urge the co-hosts to continue to facilitate greater participation of affected communities to share their first-hand experiences whenever our governments and the co-hosts make decisions concerning people's lives, welfare and human rights as affected by business activity. More generally, we note that corruption, poor governance, and the lack of an enabling environment for human rights are urgent and cross-cutting barriers for the realisation of respect for human rights, poverty eradication and inclusive development.

ACCA hopes and recommends that future initiatives building on this Forum will:

- Include the development of concrete, time-bound strategies to address not only the development of national action plans, but also strategies to address the implementation gaps of existing human rights mechanisms and legislative tools;
- Ensure that decision-making concerning business and human rights be broadly inclusive by engaging stakeholders, especially affected communities;
- Work to link existing agendas and more deliberately coordinate our efforts in partnerships to make concrete progress, because although the issues concerning business and human rights have long been debated and discussed, we remain dismayed at the minimal progress that has been made on the ground;
- Develop together with critical stakeholders an African strategy to implement the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

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In addition to this statement, several ACCA members also wish to emphasize and recall the four pillars of its [Declaration](#) endorsed by all ACCA members, in particular:

- Collective rights and the right of communities to full participation and recognition as primary partner in any business contracts affecting them;
- The consent principle and making free prior informed consent a non-negotiable threshold for every aspect of projects likely to affect communities;
- Labour and health rights issues;
- Effective reparation and directive remedies for human rights violations;

We shall monitor and examine the current and future strategies and agendas of the AU, the UNECA, the OHCHR and the United Nations Working Group on Business and Human Rights in taking forward the implementation of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and report on the extent to which they address the concern of our members.

We call on all stakeholders to promote the effective use of instruments associated with the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights as part of any strategy to implement and enforce corporate accountability and liability whether through the United Nations Guiding Principles, treaty law, justiciable or otherwise.

About the ACCA

The African Coalition for Corporate Accountability is a coalition of 89 organizations from 28 African countries supporting our communities and individuals whose human rights are adversely impacted daily by the activities of corporations. Please contact us via the-acca.org or by sending an email to accacoordinator@gmail.com.