

PRESS RELEASE

EU Action Plan on SDGs overlooks human rights risks of corporate activity

Brussels, 23 November

New EU Commission plan to implement the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) overlooks the urgent need to address the negative impacts the private sector has on people and the planet.

ECCJ, the European civil society coalition working on corporate accountability, believes the Commission's plan does not reflect the responsibility of companies to respect human rights, throughout their operations and supply chains, and their primary obligation to do no harm by preventing and mitigating abuses.

"The SDGs propose a vision of a socially and environmentally inclusive, equitable and resilient future. However, they are only as effective as States allow them to be, and the success of their implementation relies strongly on addressing the serious human rights issues created by the complexity of today's globalised market," says ECCJ Coordinator, Jerome Chaplier.

The EU has a vital role to play in creating a more sustainable future, being a global leader for progress, the home of a large number of companies operating in global value chains, and, by far, the [biggest development aid donor](#) in the world.

Unfortunately, the Commission Communication on SDGs does not offer any new and concrete information about implementation, as the proposed next steps mainly consist of existing policy plans. And while it mentions the positive role of the private sector in achieving the SDGs, it does not make any reference to the negative impacts businesses can have on people, the environment, and the capacities for development of states and local communities.

"A successful implementation of the SDGs will only be possible if we look beyond the positive aspects of private sector engagement, and truly address the negative social and environmental repercussions of business activity," says ECCJ Coordinator, Jerome Chaplier.

Currently, [37 of the world's 100](#) largest economies are corporations, and [up to two billion people](#) are part of multinational value chains, adding up to a quarter of the total global population.

Numerous instances of corporate malpractice also make headlines. The examples are plenty and impact all areas of society – from profiting from child labour to the absence of a living wage, from oil spills to mass deforestation, from harassment of human rights defenders to land grabbing.

"Given the scale of corporations' impact on people and the planet, the EU's ambitions will not materialise in the absence of a legally binding business and human rights framework. When reckless companies are not held accountable, it discredits efforts made by others striving towards a sustainable business model."

"The SDGs are a welcomed contribution to the business and human rights debate. But stimulating shared value and encouraging good practices need to come together with robust legislation and effective enforcement mechanisms," concludes Mr Chaplier. - END -

ECCJ is the only European coalition bringing together campaigns and national platforms of NGOs, trade unions, consumer organisations and academics in order to promote corporate accountability, with 21 member groups representing over 250 organisations from 15 countries.

Contact: ECCJ Communications Officer, Sandra Juncu: communication@corporatejustice.org; +32 2 893 10 27