

Draft text on Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights

National governments have also been using their convening power and diplomatic "good offices" to establish the norms they expect companies to follow. The ~~joint U.S./UK~~ Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights, announced by the US and UK governments in December 2000, set forth guidelines on risk assessment and relations with state security forces as well as private security providers for extractive sector companies operating internationally. Two mining companies joined five oil companies, human rights NGOs and corporate responsibility groups in developing and welcoming the public launch of the principles. Since the launch, the companies involved in the process have been working on implementing the Principles in their operations. The two governments organised visits to this end to Nigeria and Indonesia in late 2001/early 2002. The governments have also been working on outreach towards other potential participants. The Dutch government joined in late 2001, and several other mining companies are among those considering whether to engage in the process. (now joined by the Dutch government and another energy company at the end of 2001).

These principles have helped clarify company responsibilities with respect to security forces as they operate in conflict zones and other regions beset by violence and human rights abuses. Although the principles were drafted collectively by major companies, human rights NGOs and corporate responsibility groups (together with the U.S. and UK governments), they have been criticized for not so far including governments, companies and NGOs based in the developing world. ~~in the initial process~~. While the Voluntary Principles are gaining recognition as the emerging global standard on the specific issues they address, it remains to be determined how inclusive the process will become and how effective over time the principles can be in altering the conduct of companies and their relations with security forces on the ground.