

At the invitation of the SDG Unit at the

Department of Environment, Climate and Communications

## Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network Ireland



**Africa Europe Faith  
and Justice Network  
Ireland**

<https://www.amri.ie/justice/aefjn-ireland/>

Make this submission for inclusion in

**Ireland's 2023 Voluntary National Review (VNR)**

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The **Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN)** is a faith-based international network committed to economic justice between the European Union and sub-Saharan Africa. AEFJN

Ireland is the Irish National Branch (Antenna) and comprises of ten religious congregations.<sup>1</sup> AEFJN-Ireland is a member of the **Irish Coalition for Business and Human Rights (ICBHR)** who are advocating for a UN binding Treaty and EU regulation of multi-national value chains.<sup>2</sup>

The effective achievement of the SDGs creates the conditions for the full realization of human rights. By building capacity and marshalling resources in line with Agenda 2030, national governments make the exercise of human rights possible. The integrated nature of the SDGs and human rights means working towards the comprehensive achievement of the SDGs must first and foremost include a response to the violation of human rights. Indeed, those whose human rights are being violated represent those left furthest behind. As such, the principle of “Build Back Better while Leaving No One Behind,” ought to see efforts to enhance legislation and regulation to that protect human rights and our environment be incorporated into any SDG National Plan.

Of particular concern to the AEFJN are the reported human rights abuses committed with impunity by transnational corporations. Companies have an enormous impact on people’s lives and the communities in which they operate. We believe that transnational corporations have a role to play in the achievement of the SDGs, contributing positively to SDGs 1, 2, 8 and 10. However, we also know that their impact can be negative – when corporations exploit weak and poorly enforced domestic regulation. The complexity of globalized business relationships allow some corporations to turn a blind eye to human rights abuses in their value chains. The activities of corporations, both directly and indirectly, have contributed to the erosion of workers’ rights, environmental destruction, and forced and child labour. All of which undermine human rights and the achievement of the SDGs.

The universal nature of human rights and Agenda 2030 mean that their full achievement rests on the principle that they be achieved everywhere. This is especially pertinent in relation to an increasingly globalized market, where we really are connected to people in far-flung parts of the world by a common participation in globalized corporate value chains. In such a market, no state can hope to regulate corporate activity alone, when so much of that corporate activity take place beyond its borders. Robust international regulation guided by human rights, rather than economic self-interest, is essential if the SDGs and human rights are to be realized in the context of a global market. Indeed, Agenda 2030 recognises the importance of adherence to “relevant international standards and agreements,”<sup>3</sup> specifically referencing the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

Ireland’s record in supporting human rights is significant and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Irish Aid are to be commended for their consistent ongoing efforts. Notwithstanding such generosity, we suggest that the creation of a global regulatory environment, that is mandatory rather than optional, is not only in line with Ireland’s commitment to achieve the SDGs and human rights, but a logical outcome of that commitment. Therefore we recommend that, as part of the support of the SDGs in our foreign

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<sup>1</sup> For more information visit our website: <https://www.amri.ie/justice/aefjn-ireland/>

<sup>2</sup> For more information visit the ICBHR website: <https://www.icbhr.org/>

<sup>3</sup> [OECD Guidelines NCP - DETE \(enterprise.gov.ie\)](#) Ireland Second National Implementation Plan Page 100

policy, Ireland should include the agreement of mandatory global regulation as a diplomatic goal for the DFA and our ambassador to the UN.

While the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights have been an important first step, ultimately they are only guiding principles and fall short of the mandatory due diligence necessary to root out human rights abuses in corporate value chains. In the short to medium term, we urge Ireland to take a lead role in negotiating a strong Corporate Sustainability and Due Diligence Directive at the EU, and the effective transposition of that directive into Irish Law with an equally robust national law on corporate accountability. In the longer term, we ask that Ireland take up a leading role in progressing the negotiations on the proposed Binding Treaty on Business at the UN.<sup>4</sup> We believe that these diplomatic objectives should be part of any national plan for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

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<sup>4</sup> For more information see: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/wg-trans-corp/igwg-on-tnc>