



Doc. 11673

30 June 2008

Human rights and business

Motion for a recommendation¹

tabled by Mr René van der LINDEN and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

Globalisation, which can contribute to raising living standards everywhere, also poses new challenges to the effectiveness of international human rights protection. Increasingly, companies are becoming aware of the contribution they can make to promoting not only sustainable development and good governance, but also to advancing human rights and the advantages such an approach can have for their business.

While ensuring respect for human rights is the primary responsibility of states, international human rights organisations can play a crucial role in providing a framework for states, companies and civil society actors willing to find new approaches to integrate protection of human rights into business and business-related activities.

Initiatives to encourage private companies to adopt codes of conduct and other tools based on international human rights standards have been taken by several international organisations. In 2005, the United Nations Secretary General appointed a special rapporteur to explore options on how to deal with the issue of business and human rights.

The Council of Europe's human rights and legal standards cover a wide range of issues of direct relevance to business activities (social rights, equality rights, bioethics, child protection, data protection, anti-corruption measures, anti-money laundering measures) and are recognised as the most advanced at the international level. The Council of Europe also has a long-standing experience in monitoring the implementation of those standards.

The Assembly believes that it is time for the Council of Europe to explore how its standards can be best integrated into business practice. Designing innovative methods of co-operation between states, companies and non-governmental organisations, encouraging companies to adopt self-regulation at the national and international levels, and raising awareness about the Council of Europe's human rights standards among leading companies would significantly contribute to the concrete implementation of human rights within the business sphere.

The Assembly is also convinced that partnerships can be established between the Council of Europe and private companies in order to improve the dissemination of the Council of Europe's human rights standards within the business sphere.

Therefore, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

1. explore ways and means how to enhance the role of business in respecting and promoting human rights;

1. Referred to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, for report, and the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, for opinion: Reference No. 3480 (29th Sitting, 29 September 2008).



Doc. 11673 Motion for a recommendation

2. invite representatives of the business community as observers in the standard-setting activities in those areas where such participation might constitute an added value for the Council of Europe, such as in the field of information society;
3. instruct its steering committee to examine ways of developing partnerships with the business community in order to promote the Council of Europe's standards.

Signed (see overleaf)

Signed²:

LINDEN René, van der, Netherlands
BRANDE Luc, Van den, Belgium, EPP/CD
EÖRSI Mátyás, Hungary, ALDE
GLESENER Marcel, Luxembourg
GROSS Andreas, Switzerland, SOC
HANCOCK Mike, United Kingdom, ALDE
LAMBERT Geert, Belgium
MARGELOV Mikhail, Russian Federation
MIGNON Jean-Claude, France, EPP/CD
TOMLINSON John E., United Kingdom, SOC

2. ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
SOC: Socialist Group