

13th October, 2020

Mr Simon Coveney TD  
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence  
Department of Foreign Affairs  
Iveagh House  
80 St Stephen's Green  
Dublin 2

Dear Minister Coveney

As you know, the Inter-Governmental Working Group (IGWG) established to develop a binding international treaty on businesses and human rights will meet in its sixth session from 26-30 October 2020. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions believes that the second revised draft of the proposed Binding Treaty published by the Chairpersonship of the IWGB earlier this year presents States with a legally sound and politically viable text. This is a critical moment for Ireland (and the EU) to engage constructively in the upcoming negotiations. In this regard, we call on you to urge the European Union to adopt a negotiation mandate in order for the bloc to fully engage in the Binding Treaty process.

With the COVID-19 pandemic once again exposing the fragility of global supply chains and business models built on non-standard forms of employment and informality, the Binding Treaty represents a unique opportunity to end the impunity for corporate human rights abuses. The treaty, if adopted, would help to hold business accountable for the human rights violations they commit as well as to provide victims an effective legal remedy. However, it is incumbent on Ireland and the EU to actively participate in the treaty process to make it a reality.

For our part, we will continue to advocate for the following key priorities:

- A broad, substantive scope covering all internationally recognised human rights, including fundamental workers' and trade union rights, as defined by relevant international labour standards.
- The coverage of all business enterprises regardless of size, sector, operational context, ownership and structure.
- Parent company-based extraterritorial regulation and access to justice for victims of transnational corporate human rights violations in the home State of transnational corporations.
- Regulatory measures that require business to adopt and apply human rights due diligence policies and procedures.
- Reaffirmation of the applicability of human rights obligations to the operations of companies and their obligation to respect human rights.
- A strong international monitoring and enforcement mechanism.

We hereby enclose the joint statement of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and several Global Union Federations to the IGWG.

We urge you to participate in the next round of negotiations taking place in October 2020 by constructively contributing to the process and supporting the trade union positions.

Yours sincerely



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General Secretary

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