

<p>Government of Australia National Action Plan - Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights</p>

A. Commitment to the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights

The Australia Government believes the protection and promotion of human rights is vital to global efforts to achieve lasting peace and security, and freedom and dignity for all.

Australia's commitment to human rights reflects our national values and is an underlying principle of Australia's engagement with the international community.

Australia's commitment to the aims and purposes of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reflects our national values and is an underlying principle of Australia's engagement with the international community.

The Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (Voluntary Principles) are a set of voluntary guidelines that provide a practical human rights framework for the security operations of companies working in the extractives sector.

They are the only human rights guidelines specifically designed for extractive sector companies, and sit in a broader international framework on human rights, including the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, the Natural Resources Charter and the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Providers.

Australia is committed to endorsing, promoting and proactively implementing the Voluntary Principles, particularly with respect to Australian companies in the extractive sector operating abroad.

Implementation of the Voluntary Principles falls within Australia's broader human rights commitments, and supports Australia's economic diplomacy agenda that brings together Australia's foreign, trade, growth, investment and business activities for shared prosperity.

The Voluntary Principles provide an opportunity to support Australian businesses operating overseas, particularly those working in complex environments that face challenges around their areas of operations. These challenges can undermine the safety and security of their operations and staff while also affecting the human rights of staff and local communities.

From a risk perspective, it is important that Australian businesses operating abroad do so responsibly so they cannot be implicated in human rights abuses.

The Voluntary Principles also provide an opportunity to support developing countries to maximise sustainable benefits from their natural resources through driving economic development, generating revenue for social spending, and contributing to peace and stability.

The Voluntary Principles Initiative (VPI) comprises companies, governments and NGOs dedicated to promoting the Voluntary Principles. The Australian Government recognises the constructive role governments, business and civil society can play in advancing these goals, especially when there is effective collaboration amongst the parties involved.

Australia was formally granted the status of an 'engaged government' in the Voluntary Principles Initiative in March 2013. We have been an active participant in the initiative during this time, and with the development of this National Plan, Australia requests status as a full 'participating government'.

B. Activities to be pursued by the Australian Government in Australia

The Australian Government will actively pursue awareness raising and implementation of the Voluntary Principles with Australian companies and civil society.

The Australian Government will also actively promote the Voluntary Principles to Australian companies operating in the extractive sector in fragile and complex environments overseas. Australia will prioritise small to medium companies, working in developing countries in the Indo Pacific region.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) will promote the Voluntary Principles at resource trade shows, conferences, seminars and other fora as appropriate in Australia, in partnership with industry. These broad promotional activities will focus on company heads to seek buy-in at the highest level, within the company.

DFAT will establish a community of practice hub bringing together Australian based extractive companies to share international best practice, tools and guidance, monitor and review implementation by signatory companies, and discuss challenges in implementation. The target audience for the hub will be security heads of companies with responsibility for implementing the Voluntary Principles.

DFAT will engage with the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) members to drive forward its implementation on the VPs. Civil society views will be important in the preparation of company situation and risk analyses, and for engagement with local communities. Following consultation, DFAT will communicate the views of civil society to the industry community of practice.

DFAT will coordinate the activities of other departments and agencies working in this space, including the Department of Industry Innovation and Science, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Attorney General's Department and the Australian Human Rights Commission.

C. Activities to be pursued by the Australian Government in other countries

Australia's focus on activities in other countries will be on facilitating the practical implementation of the Voluntary Principles, particularly in developing and fragile countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

For companies to effectively implement the Voluntary Principles, they must be able to establish a constructive relationship with other stakeholders in the field, particularly with host governments and local communities. To this end, Australian missions in priority countries will:

- Promote greater awareness of the Voluntary Principles in relevant parts of the countries' national governments and encourage them to become members of the Voluntary Principles Initiative, and cooperate with extractive companies and other stakeholders to protect the human rights of local communities. Where possible, Australian missions will identify and encourage a national champion in government circles
- Promote the Voluntary Principles to Australian based companies operating in the extractive sector and encourage them to become members of the Voluntary Principles Initiative
- Support Australian companies in their efforts to effectively implement the Voluntary Principles, including identifying entry points with the host government.

DFAT will support the development and distribution of advocacy materials, and guidance and toolkits for our overseas missions to use in their outreach to other governments and Australian companies.

Australia will leverage its aid program where possible to support implementation of the Voluntary Principles by host governments, public and private security companies and civil society.

At the government level, Australia will work with the World Bank through the Multi Donor Trust Fund for Extractives Global Programmatic Support to streamline the Voluntary Principles through its work with host governments in the sector.

At the public and private security company level, Australia will provide human rights training, either through the work of the Australian Federal Police International Development Group or through NGOs working in the region.

D. Activities to be pursued by the Australian government within the Voluntary Principles Initiative

Australia will actively engage in the Voluntary Principles Initiative, and its working groups. It will focus on improving implementation of the Voluntary Principles in-country, and monitoring and reporting on the operations and performance of mining companies.

The Community of Practice hub will bring together key Australian stakeholders to share experiences, develop and share best practice and guidance tools, and encourage and support implementation of the principles.

E. Coordination of activities

DFAT's, Trade Investment and Economic Diplomacy Division will lead and coordinate implementation of the Voluntary Principles. It will liaise closely with other Government departments and agencies working on human rights issues, including the Attorney General's Department the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, and the Australian Human Rights Commission.

DFAT will partner with the Global Compact Network Australia, the Australian arm of the United Nations Global Compact, to manage the Community of Practice, given their experience in advancing corporate sustainability, and private sector networks, and other industry bodies, such as the Australia-Africa Minerals and Energy Group that share similar priorities of engaging business to operate in a responsible manner.