



Declaration on Promoting and
Enabling Responsible Business
Conduct in the Global Economy

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Background Information

The Declaration on Promoting and Enabling Responsible Business Conduct in the Global Economy was adopted on 15 February 2023 on the occasion of the Ministerial Meeting on Responsible Business Conduct (RBC) held at the OECD in Paris, France.

RBC sets out an expectation that all businesses – regardless of their legal status, size, ownership or sector – avoid and address negative impacts of their operations, while contributing to sustainable development in the countries where they operate. The OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises [OECD/LEGAL/0144] (the Guidelines) are the most comprehensive international standard on RBC. They cover all key areas of business responsibility, including human rights, labour rights, environment, bribery, consumer interests, as well as information disclosure, science and technology, competition, and taxation. The OECD also provides practical support on the implementation of the Guidelines through plain language explanations of its due diligence recommendations and associated provisions in different sector and thematic guidances, in addition to supporting policymakers promote and enabling RBC. The OECD's Working Party on Responsible Business Conduct (WPRBC), a subsidiary body of the OECD's Investment Committee (IC), oversees the range of OECD standards in this area. To contribute to effective implementation, the WPRBC and the IC engage with governments, businesses, social and international partners, institutional stakeholders and civil society.

The Declaration was developed through extensive consultation and an iterative process by the 51 Adherent countries to the OECD Investment Declaration (including 13 non-OECD Member country Adherents), and benefitted from inputs from institutional stakeholders (BIAC, TUAC, and OECD Watch).

At a critical juncture of disruptions to global supply chains, recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, lingering effects of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, and challenges to the green transition and energy and food security for millions across the globe, the Declaration underscores shared values and commitment to RBC standards as a baseline for a global level-playing field and as a cornerstone of the international rules-based trading and investment system.

In the main sections of the Declaration, Adherents to it (i) reiterate the importance of RBC for resilience and sustainability in the global economy; (ii) signal policy priorities, including the role of RBC in supporting climate action, sustainable finance, digitalisation, and resilient supply chains; (iii) welcome the OECD Recommendation on the Role of Government in Promoting Responsible Business Conduct [OECD/LEGAL/0486], (iv) stress the unique role of National Contact Points (NCPs) in implementing RBC standards and (v) call on the OECD to further assist Adherents and facilitate cooperation on RBC.

For further information please consult the OECD RBC Ministerial Meeting website: <https://www.oecd-events.org/rbc-ministerial/en> or contact rbc@oecd.org.

WE, THE MINISTERS AND REPRESENTATIVES of Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, Morocco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Türkiye, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Uruguay - [Adherents](#) to the Declaration on International Investment and Multinational Enterprises, and the European Union, met in Paris on 14-15 February 2023, under the leadership of France and the United States as Ministerial Co-Chairs, and Canada, Chile, Japan, Morocco and the United Kingdom as Vice-Chairs, in the context of the Ministerial Meeting on Responsible Business Conduct under the theme “Promoting and enabling responsible business conduct (RBC) in the global economy” to discuss the role of RBC as cornerstone of an inclusive, sustainable and resilient global economy.

WE STAND IN SOLIDARITY with the people and the democratically elected government of Ukraine. **WE RECALL** the 2 March 2022 resolution [A/RES/ES-11/1](#) in which the UN General Assembly deplored in the strongest terms possible the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine. **WE RECOGNISE** that this war has compounded human suffering for the people of Ukraine, disruptions to global supply chains, and has undermined economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and affected the green transition as well as energy and food security for millions across the globe.

WE RECALL the 2022 OECD Ministerial Council [Statement](#) in which OECD Members condemned Russia’s unjustifiable, unprovoked, and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine in the strongest possible terms as a flagrant violation of international law that shakes the very foundation of the international order as well as the decision of the OECD Council of 8 March 2022 to suspend with immediate effect the participation of the Russian Federation and Belarus in all OECD bodies.

WE UNDERLINE our commitment to market-based economic principles; an open, free, fair, inclusive, and rules-based multilateral trading system; transparency and accountability of governments; the rule of law; the protection of human rights; social dialogue; equality, diversity, and inclusion, including gender equality; and the promotion of environmental sustainability and climate protection. **WE RECOGNISE** RBC as a key component for realising these principles. **WE NOTE** the [OECD’s 60th Anniversary Vision Statement](#).

WE ENCOURAGE the positive contributions that business makes to economic, environmental and social progress, while noting that business activities can cause or contribute, or be directly linked to adverse impacts on people, societies and the planet. Sustainable development requires a whole of society approach and **WE HIGHLIGHT** the important role of business, social partners, and civil society as enablers in meeting the goals and objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Paris Agreement, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity including the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and other relevant multilateral instruments, as applicable. In this context, **WE UNDERSCORE** the rights of members of marginalised groups and human rights and environmental defenders and the need to promote and protect civic space.

WE RECALL the Declaration on International Investment and Multinational Enterprises [\[OECD/LEGAL/0144\]](#), in particular the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises set out therein (hereafter, “the Guidelines”) as a leading government-backed standard on RBC, and the OECD’s practical and actionable guidance on risk-based due diligence which contribute to the Guidelines’ impact and continued relevance. The OECD Recommendation on Foreign Direct Investment Qualities for Sustainable Development [\[OECD/LEGAL/0476\]](#), the Policy Framework for Investment [\[C/MIN\(2015\)5\]](#), as well as the OECD Recommendation on Principles of Corporate Governance [\[OECD/LEGAL/0413\]](#) are also relevant. Business at OECD (BIAC), Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC), and OECD Watch are close partners in promoting the Guidelines and **WE ACKNOWLEDGE** their continued contributions to the promotion of the OECD RBC agenda. **WE LOOK FORWARD** to completing the targeted update of the Guidelines to advance their implementation, promotion and to keep them fit for purpose.

WE REITERATE the importance of coherence of global standards and complementarity of domestic policies on RBC. The Guidelines, the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy are the leading international instruments in this regard.

WE REITERATE the importance of inclusive dialogue and co-operation for a rules-based international order, **WELCOME** the international and regional efforts to promote RBC in international and regional fora, including the United Nations (UN), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the G7, the G20, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and **CALL** for coherence among international partners in promoting robust RBC.

Coherence, alignment, and harmonisation of responsible business conduct standards

WE REAFFIRM our commitment to RBC as a baseline expectation for business. **WE ARE COMMITTED** to continuing our domestic efforts to promote the implementation of RBC standards.

WE WELCOME the OECD Recommendation on the Role of Government in Promoting Responsible Business Conduct [[OECD/LEGAL/0486](#)] and encourage governments to lead by example in promoting, widely disseminating, and implementing the Recommendation. **WE RECOGNISE** the importance for governments of creating an enabling policy environment for responsible business practices, including in their role as economic actors, for example, through their role as employers, procurers, and through state-owned enterprises, and **NOTE** that policy coherence at the national and international level can foster alignment and harmonisation of industry, government, and multi-stakeholder sustainability initiatives with international RBC standards. A smart mix of government approaches and measures, which may include mandatory as well as voluntary approaches and capacity building and other accompanying measures, are relevant in this regard. **WE REAFFIRM** our intention to leverage the Guidelines as a means to promote consistency of business conduct with OECD policy and work in other areas, such as environment and climate, trade, investment, financial markets, corporate governance, anti-corruption, public procurement, state-owned enterprises, small and medium-sized enterprises, export credits, science and technology, employment, and gender equality.

WE CALL on the OECD, through the Investment Committee (IC) and the Working Party on Responsible Business Conduct (WPRBC), to assist us with strengthening cooperation and coordination on due diligence policies, through an inclusive platform for dialogue, information sharing, capacity building and cooperation in order to address potential challenges for business and support effective implementation of RBC due diligence standards and to provide analysis to support alignment of legal and other policy expectations with OECD due diligence standards. Furthermore, expanding and strengthening the credibility of sustainability initiatives by improving their alignment with international RBC standards is of particular importance. **WE CALL** on the OECD, through the IC and the WPRBC, to continue its efforts to develop harmonised criteria to assess alignment and credibility of sustainability initiatives and to help address existing gaps on availability of relevant, comparable and reliable data on the global uptake and effectiveness of RBC due diligence.

Resilience and sustainability of global supply chains

WE REITERATE the importance of a level playing field, predictability, transparency, and risk-based due diligence in promoting resilience and sustainability in the global economy and supply chains, including for preventing and mitigating adverse impacts, such as child labour and forced labour, as well as climate impacts and for supporting inclusive growth and gender equality. **WE ARE COMMITTED** to continued co-operation in this regard based on internationally agreed standards. This includes strengthening our efforts to make global markets more inclusive and sustainable and in mitigating risks and inequalities exacerbated from global supply chain disruption, in a way that is consistent with the rules-based international trade and investment system and takes into account the circumstances of enterprises, including small and medium sized enterprises and enterprises from developing economies. This also includes promoting RBC in business engagement in recovery contexts, such as for example post-conflict reconstruction and post-

pandemic recovery, and in the context of building resilient and sustainable agriculture and food systems. Quality investment in general, and investment in quality infrastructure, are important components for recovery, green transition and sustainable development overall, and we take note of some OECD Members' approaches to quality infrastructure investment, such as the Global Gateway strategy, and the Blue Dot Network and FAST-INFRA certification schemes.

WE CALL on the OECD, through the IC and the WPRBC, and in collaboration with other relevant OECD bodies, to advance the effective implementation of RBC standards to promote openness, resilience, transparency, and sustainability of global supply chains for critical goods and raw materials for the climate and digital transitions. **WE CALL** on the OECD to provide further clarity and good practice on application of RBC standards in support of: better outcomes for at-risk groups and communities; Indigenous Peoples; gender equality; just transition towards a net-zero economy; and small and medium-sized enterprises, taking into account their specificities and circumstances; as well as providing further guidance on application of RBC standards in high-risk and conflict settings, including on responsible disengagement.

Environment and climate change

WE UNDERSCORE the importance of business contributions and innovations, including credible net-zero plans, for achieving sustainable production patterns, a just transition to climate neutrality by 2050, reducing threats to biodiversity by 2030 and for supporting a circular economy. **WE RECOGNISE** the need to avoid and minimise environmental harm associated with economic activities, particularly in light of the crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, and the impact of these crises on our societies, as well as the importance of transfer and diffusion of know-how and technologies to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and pollution and build resilience. **WE ARE COMMITTED** to leveraging RBC standards as a key contribution to meeting these challenges. **WE ACKNOWLEDGE** the need for RBC standards to guide and promote a common understanding of the role of business in addressing the crises and support coherence and credibility of related corporate initiatives, commitments, and transition plans consistent with internationally agreed principles and targets and best available science.

WE RECOGNISE the indispensable role of minerals in achieving the transition to a low-carbon economy, and that RBC will be paramount in enabling a sustainable, diversified, and reliable supply in light of the increasing global demand. **WE ARE COMMITTED** to promoting RBC in global mineral supply chains and its important role in attracting quality investment. **WE CALL** on the OECD, through the IC and the WPRBC and in cooperation with relevant OECD bodies and other international organisations, including the International Energy Agency, to work with us and partners to mainstream RBC expectations for the production, processing, trade, and recycling of mineral resources, and to promote strong linkages between initiatives on the strategic supply of minerals and RBC expectations on responsible sourcing.

WE CALL on the OECD, through the IC and the WPRBC and in cooperation with relevant OECD bodies and international organisations, to facilitate inclusive cooperation on policy, regulation and initiatives, and further develop due diligence practice on environmental matters, including initiatives to enhance the credibility, comparability and tracking of financial sector and real economy net-zero transition commitments. **WE RECOGNISE** that the Guidelines are particularly well-placed to promote a holistic and comprehensive approach to environmental management and climate action that also takes into account social impacts.

Sustainable finance

WE RECOGNISE the need to promote and mainstream RBC in the financial sector, including in development, climate and infrastructure finance, as a lever for change. **WE RECOGNISE** that sustainable finance should contribute to global sustainability objectives and be inclusive of emerging economies and that RBC standards, due diligence, and disclosure can enhance the credibility and impact of sustainable finance strategies and policy. **WE CALL** on the OECD, through the IC and WPRBC and in collaboration with other relevant OECD bodies, to assist us with strengthening the uptake of due diligence in the sector by developing operational tools for financial service providers (including for minority shareholders); assessing needs for due diligence in critical or emerging areas within the financial sector ecosystem, such

as commodity trade finance, supply chain finance, crypto asset, and venture capital; and identifying opportunities for innovative financial products to support due diligence processes and activities.

Digitalisation and technology

WE RECOGNISE that scientific research and technological innovation have driven productivity in all sectors, as well as the ability of enterprises to conduct due diligence and contribute to sustainable development. Digitalisation has profound and transformational implications for our societies and economies, including its immense potential but also its significant challenges, risks, and potential harms, including those arising from digital divides. **WE REITERATE** that RBC standards can enable enterprises to address the harmful impacts of digitalisation, while also maximising its positive potential, noting this is particularly important for improvement of the environmental footprint, the protection of human rights and navigating unintended side effects, flawed design, or misuse of technology.

WE CALL on the OECD, through the IC and the WPRBC, in collaboration in particular with the Committee on Digital Economy Policy and its Working Party on Artificial Intelligence (AI) Governance as well as with other relevant OECD bodies, and in support of the outcomes of the 2022 Meetings of the Committee on Digital Economy Policy and the Public Governance Committee at Ministerial Level, to assist in our efforts to better understand the specific roles and responsibilities of different actors, including enterprises in the digital ecosystem, by looking at real-life experiences in implementing due diligence standards in the digital economy and addressing digitalisation specific opportunities and risks. This is particularly useful in the context of risks such as mis- and disinformation online and threats to human rights and freedoms online; misleading, manipulative, deceptive, fraudulent, unlawful, and unfair commercial practices in the digital environment; risks relevant for labour markets and the workplace, including impact on job quality, fairness and inclusion, potential bias, accessibility and working conditions; and promoting responsible use, access to, and sharing of data. The OECD is well-placed to support knowledge sharing on how digital tools, such as privacy-enhancing technologies, distributed ledger technology, regulatory innovation or real-time information processing, can enable RBC and support due diligence efforts.

National Contact Points

WE STRESS the unique role of National Contact Points (NCPs) in promoting implementation of the Guidelines by companies. **WE RECOGNISE** their achievements in this regard as well as in informing public policies on RBC. **WE STRESS** the need to further scale-up awareness and implementation of RBC and due diligence standards globally.

WE COMMEND the NCPs for their contributions to this broader landscape in serving as non-judicial grievance mechanisms contributing to the resolution of issues that arise relating to the implementation of the Guidelines. **WE RECOGNISE** that effective remedy for those affected by corporate activities, particularly for groups experiencing vulnerability, remains a challenge in the global economy.

WE RECOGNISE the pressing need to further strengthen the NCP system to realise its full potential in furthering the effectiveness of the Guidelines in light of the urgent need to scale up responsible business conduct as an enabler of sustainable development.

WE REAFFIRM our commitment to having fully functioning and adequately resourced NCPs, noting the importance of flexibility to take into account national contexts, and **HIGHLIGHT** the need to achieve full effectiveness of NCPs across the board, both at domestic level and through the NCP network supported by the Secretariat, including through targeted updates of the Guidelines' Implementation Procedures to strengthen NCPs and the NCP network.

WE ARE COMMITTED to increasing efforts in this regard, including through the full and timely delivery of OECD Action Plans to Strengthen NCPs, ensuring adequate resources for NCPs, improving stakeholder confidence by developing and maintaining meaningful relations with stakeholders, and regularly engaging in peer reviews as an important part of driving effectiveness throughout the NCP network.

WE ARE DETERMINED to work together on all areas covered in this Declaration, including in future Ministerial Meetings.

About the OECD

The OECD is a unique forum where governments work together to address the economic, social and environmental challenges of globalisation. The OECD is also at the forefront of efforts to understand and to help governments respond to new developments and concerns, such as corporate governance, the information economy and the challenges of an ageing population. The Organisation provides a setting where governments can compare policy experiences, seek answers to common problems, identify good practice and work to co-ordinate domestic and international policies.

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- **Substantive Outcome Documents** are adopted by the individual listed Adherents rather than by an OECD body, as the outcome of a ministerial, high-level or other meeting within the framework of the Organisation. They usually set general principles or long-term goals and have a solemn character.
- **International Agreements** are negotiated and concluded within the framework of the Organisation. They are legally binding on the Parties.
- **Arrangement, Understanding and Others:** several other types of substantive legal instruments have been developed within the OECD framework over time, such as the Arrangement on Officially Supported Export Credits, the International Understanding on Maritime Transport Principles and the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Recommendations.