



OUTLINE

An IOE Global Centre on Human Rights and Responsible Business Conduct

CURRENT SITUATION

The expectations for enterprises to run their businesses in alignment with internationally recognised principles and standards on human rights are on the rise. National governments and markets promote these expectations. There is a growing trend for policies and regulations that require enterprises:

- to integrate human rights due diligence into their operations and systems
- to effectively enhance and demonstrate respect for human rights in business activities throughout supply chains, making human rights a fundamental condition for access and retention of markets.

Companies of all sizes face important challenges trying to meet these requirements, especially micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and those with operations and/or business partners in countries with complex social/environmental challenges and State weaknesses. At the same time, there is a lack of information about country risks and data, and a lack of guidance from a business perspective on how to concretely integrate requirements into company operations and systems.

Against this backdrop, the **International Organisation of Employers (IOE)** is designing the creation of a **Centre on Human Rights and Responsible Business Conduct (RBC)** to promote respect for human rights in the framework of business activities globally.

As a part of this, IOE is actively seeking partnerships to level the playing field and further incorporate companies, small business associations, including MSMEs, and employer and business membership organisations (EBMOs).

AIMS

The proposed IOE Centre will promote respect for human rights and RBC in the framework of business activities. It will bridge the existing gap between increasing expectations and requirements, and the awareness, understanding, and capacity of companies and industry associations to live up to them.

The IOE Centre aims to

- Strengthen the capacities of the **business sector** to integrate human rights due diligence as part of strategic decision-making processes
- Provide effective guidance to improve companies' preventive approach to managing human rights risks along value chains.

Companies will also receive support from their national employer organisations. This will improve companies' preventive approach and management of human rights risks along value chains, potentially bettering the lives of

millions of rights holders. A particular focus shall be put on MSME support as this group faces specific implementation challenges.

Practical tools, information on existing regulations, sample cases and general guidance shall be provided to raise awareness and to support human rights due diligence and RBC of companies at regional and local levels.

ADDED VALUE

The future IOE Centre will engage IOE's global network of national and local employer organisations in over 150 countries to offer the most reliable and up-to-date local and regional developments and business-specific information on the responsibility to respect human rights and associated risks. Going beyond a superficial overview/risk assessment, the approach foresees bringing relevant information in multilingual formats to companies of all sizes, particularly those with operations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The Centre will also strive to provide companies with the required information to navigate human rights due diligence and RBC in specific national and regional contexts.

The selected approach will lead to creating a global centre and the establishment of regional one-stop shops/hubs, where business entities can acquire the most relevant information on BHRs and RBC in a regional context. It will seek to create synergies and partnerships with relevant global actors (e.g., UN OHCHR, UNGC, UNDP, ILO, OECD, EU, AU, etc) to build on existing knowledge and provide best practices. At the same time, it will still differ from other approaches like national help desks or training programs in consumer countries due to its international business-oriented design and global scale.

ABOUT IOE

The International Organisation of Employers (IOE) is a not-for-profit international business association that represents over 156 independent business and employer organisations in more than 150 countries. This means that IOE represents employers from both low-income countries and high-income countries in social and employment policy. IOE provides a vital business perspective to the many activities and initiatives that seek to advance the Business and Human Rights and Responsible Business Conduct agenda. It advocates on behalf of business for reasonable, realistic, and workable solutions to the world's myriad human rights-related challenges.

Through this diverse network, IOE represents over fifty million large, medium, and small companies, which in turn employ hundreds of millions of workers. This diverse representation gives IOE an unparalleled ability to convene local business actors. Due to its immense outreach, IOE is the voice of the business and the employer community, especially in social and employment policy.

The German Federal Foreign Ministry has funded IOE's pilot design project for a Global Centre on Human Rights and Responsible Business Conduct.

