



International Network for Economic,
Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR-Net)
Corporate Accountability Working Group

Statement of the ESCR-Net Corporate Accountability Working Group (CAWG)

June 30, 2014

The Corporate Accountability Working Group (CAWG) of the International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR-Net) broadly welcomes the establishment of an open-ended intergovernmental working group by the UN Human Rights Council during this XXVIth session. The working group has a mandate to “elaborate a binding instrument to regulate the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises”. The resolution establishing the working group passed the Human Rights Council on June 26th with the support of 20 member states.

This development aligns with the principle feature of a [Joint Statement](#), signed by 610 organizations and 400 individuals, calling for the UN to establish a process leading to the elaboration of a treaty to address corporate-related human rights abuses. The Joint Statement arose in November 2013 during the ESCR-Net Peoples’ Forum on Human Rights & Business. Since then members and partners of CAWG have supported the Joint Statement by conducting intensive advocacy in over twenty Human Rights Council member-countries, as well as at the United Nations in Geneva.

While acknowledging that the process established under this intergovernmental working group may produce an important advance in the protection against corporate-related human rights violations, particularly with regard to clarifying extraterritorial obligations to regulate corporations overseas, the CAWG also maintains previously expressed reservations regarding a late addition to the final resolution that limits the focus of the working group’s activities to “business enterprises that have a transnational character”, rather than the full range of business enterprises. The CAWG fears that this restriction may diminish the ability for the working group to deliver an effective outcome which can advance systems of protection against corporate-related human rights violations.

Together with continued efforts by States to effectively implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the CAWG is encouraged to see the Human Rights Council take further steps towards developing stronger protections for people affected by corporate-related human rights violations.