

Guidelines Concerning Corporate Social Responsibility in the Area of Human Rights and Environment in the Americas

- a. Enterprises, in the course of their activities, should adopt internal preventive measures and measures to protect human rights, environmental law, and the labor rights of their workers and the populations where they operate.
To that end they should implement policies, for example, to eliminate all forms of discrimination, child labor, and forced labor; respect the right of workers to unionization, collective bargaining, and workplace health and safety; the use of clean technologies and ecologically efficient extraction procedures; among other measures, according to international law.
- b. Enterprises should respect the environment, property, customs, and ways of life of the communities where they operate, seeking to cooperate and contribute to their economic, social, and environmental development.
- c. Enterprises should encourage their providers and contractors to respect the rights mentioned in the first item of these Guidelines, so as not to become complicit in illegal or unethical practices.
- d. Enterprises should conduct training activities for their officers and employees, so that they will internalize the commitment to corporate social responsibility.
- e. Enterprises should conduct studies of the impact their activities will have, which should be presented both to the authorities and to the population in whose environment they will operate.
- f. Enterprises should have emergency plans for controlling or mitigating potential serious harm to the environment stemming from accidents in the course of their operations, as well as systems for alerting authorities and the population, so that swift and effective action may be taken.
- g. Enterprises should redress and deal with damage brought about by their operations.
- h. Corporate social responsibility pertains to all enterprises, regardless of size, structure, economic sector, or characteristics; however, policies and procedures established by them may vary according to these circumstances.
- i. Enterprises should take the necessary measures to ensure that consumers receive the goods or services they produce with the appropriate levels of quality in terms of health and safety. To that effect, it is essential that the good or service carry sufficient information on its content and composition, eliminating deceptive trade practices.
- j. Enterprises and the States where they operate should strengthen, respectively, their internal and external systems for the follow-up, monitoring, and control of compliance with labor rights, human rights, and environmental protection laws.
This necessarily involves State implementation of efficient policies for the inspection and supervision of enterprises in the course of their activities as well as the enterprises' establishment of policies to ensure respect for human rights and environmental laws in their operations.
Both monitoring mechanisms should consult outside sources, including the parties affected.
- k. Internal and external monitoring mechanisms should be transparent and independent of the businesses' control structures and of any sort of political influence.
- l. This should be complemented with the establishment of incentives or means of recognition, both governmental and private, to benefit or distinguish enterprises that are actively committed to corporate social responsibility.
- m. States should require enterprises with which they conduct commercial transactions or which present competitive bids to comply fully with the obligations noted in item (a) of these Guidelines.

- n. Enterprises should also guarantee that parties potentially affected by their activities have recourse to internal claim mechanisms that are swift, direct, and effective.
- o. Parties potentially affected by an enterprise's activities have the right of resource to administrative, judicial, and even extrajudicial claim mechanisms that are effective, transparent, and expeditious.
- p. The principles of corporate social responsibility should be publicized, as should good business practices that have benefited both the local communities where enterprises operate and the enterprises themselves.
Corporate social responsibility should be part of a culture shared and embraced by all, to which end it is essential to train and sensitize entrepreneurs, authorities, and public opinion in general.
- q. Other actors should participate in this effort, from universities and research centers, providing skills and ideas to improve business behavior, through NGOs, unions, social organizations, communications media, and churches, who can serve as instruments of pressure or condemnation but also as organs of support and cooperation.
- r. Business guilds or associations can be key actors in the conscious, voluntary strengthening of corporate social responsibility, providing technical advice and training, establishing networks for the exchange of information and discussion of experiences among enterprises, and creating incentives and prizes, among other measures.