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Participants in the Voluntary Principles Initiative Gather for Discussions on Outreach and Implementation and Welcome Six New Participants

15 March 2013 (The Hague, The Netherlands): Participants in the Initiative of the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (the “Voluntary Principles Initiative”), a multi-stakeholder initiative focused on security and human rights concerns, convened in The Hague this week for a two-day Annual Plenary Meeting on 13-14 March 2013.

During this week’s meetings, participants focused their discussions on initiatives and activities consistent with a vision statement first adopted by the Plenary at the 2010 Annual Plenary Meeting. Pursuant to this statement, participants agreed to work together to:

Strengthen the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights’ significance as a business and human rights best practice framework by: increasing our participants base, strengthening accountability, and actively promoting universal respect for human rights.

At the 2013 Annual Plenary Meeting, participants specifically discussed:

- The efforts of participants to engage governments around the world in discussions regarding the benefits of Voluntary Principles participation and implementation, including the governments of Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Indonesia, Nigeria, Peru, South Africa, and Tanzania which attended the meetings as guests of the Plenary;
- Participant initiatives to implement, or promote the implementation of, the Voluntary Principles in countries around the world, with specific presentations on activities in Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Indonesia, Iraq, Nigeria, and Panama;
- The outcomes and lessons learned from a series of workshops held in Indonesia, Peru, and South Africa during 2012 to promote the Implementation Guidance Tools, a practical guidance document first published by ICMM, ICRC, IFC, and IPIECA in 2011;
- The work of a volunteer group of companies and other participants to develop a set of Key Performance Indicators to assess Voluntary Principles implementation;

- A concept paper prepared by a participant working group outlining a study on the extent to which implementation of the Voluntary Principles impacts human rights outcomes on the ground.

During the two days of meeting, participants were also honored to hear:

- An opening address by the Dutch Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, H.E. Lilianne Ploumen;
- A [keynote address](#) by Professor John Ruggie, the former U.N. Special Representative on Business and Human Rights;
- A [speech](#) by Dr. Margaret Jungk, from the U.N. Working Group on Business and Human Rights;
- A speech by the Secretary of State for Cooperation and Foreign Affairs for Angola, H.E. Ângela Bragança; and
- A speech by the Minister of Lands and Natural Resources from Ghana, H.E. Alhaji Inusah Fuseini.

The Plenary Meeting also offered participants the opportunity to welcome six entities that had joined the Voluntary Principles Initiative since the 2012 Annual Plenary Meeting:

- Tullow Oil, a multinational oil and gas company based in the United Kingdom;
- Xstrata, a multinational oil and gas company based in Switzerland;
- The Government of Australia;
- Global Rights, a NGO based in the United States that focuses on human rights capacity building in Africa, Asia, and Latin America;
- Partners for Democratic Change International, a NGO based in the United States and Belgium that focuses on democracy building, conflict management and transformation, and sustainable development; and
- The Pearson Centre, a NGO based in Canada that focuses on peace and security issues in countries around the world.

Finally, participants welcomed the Government of Switzerland as the new Government Chair for the Voluntary Principles Initiative. Switzerland will serve as the Government Chair until the 2014 Annual Plenary Meeting. Participants offered their thanks to the Government of The Netherlands for its service as Government Chair from March 2012 to March 2013.

Background on the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights

Participants in the Voluntary Principles Initiative include representatives from three pillars: governments, companies, and NGOs. There are currently twenty-two participant companies, eight participant governments, and thirteen participant NGOs.

The Voluntary Principles provide guidance to extractive companies on ensuring the safety of their personnel and the security of their installations in insecure environments while also respecting human rights. Implementation of the Voluntary Principles entails steps to:

- Conduct comprehensive assessments of the human rights risks associated with security, with a particular focus on complicity.
- Institute proactive human rights screenings of and trainings for public and private security forces.
- Ensure that the use of force is proportional and lawful.
- Develop systems for reporting and investigating allegations of human rights abuses.

The Voluntary Principles were established in 2000 in an initiative launched by the British Foreign & Commonwealth Office and the U.S. Department of State. Since their inception, the Voluntary Principles have been used by extractive companies to strengthen their capacity to address complex security and human rights issues in their operations around the world. By ensuring that human rights are upheld, the Voluntary Principles aim to mitigate potential tensions between extractive companies and the communities within which they work.

The Corporate Social Responsibility practice of Foley Hoag LLP serves as the Secretariat for the Voluntary Principles. For questions on how to participate, contact the Secretariat at VoluntaryPrinciples@foleyhoag.com.

For more information about the Voluntary Principles, visit www.voluntaryprinciples.org.

Participants in the Voluntary Principles Initiative include:

Governments:

Australia
Canada
Colombia
The Netherlands
Norway
Switzerland
United Kingdom
United States

Companies:

Anglo American
AngloGold Ashanti
Barrick Gold Corporation
BG Group
BHP Billiton
BP
Chevron
ConocoPhillips
ExxonMobil
Freeport McMoRan Copper and Gold
Hess Corporation
Inmet Mining
Marathon Oil

Newmont Mining Corporation
Occidental Petroleum Corporation
Rio Tinto
Shell
Statoil
Total
Tullow Oil
Talisman Energy
Xstrata

NGOs:

Amnesty International
The Fund for Peace
Global Rights
Human Rights First
Human Rights Watch
IKV Pax Christi
International Alert
Oxfam
Pact
Partners for Democratic Change International
Partnership Africa Canada
Pearson Centre
Search for Common Ground

Observers:

DCAF (Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces)
International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
International Council on Mining & Metals (ICMM)
International Finance Corporation (IFC)
International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association (IPIECA)