

NGO PILLAR VERIFICATION FRAMEWORK

Background

The extractive sector often operates in countries or areas of elevated security risk and faces the difficult challenge of how to safeguard company personnel and property in a way that respects human rights and the security of local communities.

In December 2000, the United States and United Kingdom governments, along with a group of extractive companies and non-governmental organizations, agreed on a set of principles, known as the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (“Voluntary Principles”), to guide companies on security and human rights. The Voluntary Principles provide an outline of actions companies should take to assess risks and implement public and private security measures in a manner that respects human rights. This document outlines the roles and obligations of Participants that are accountable for implementing and managing the Voluntary Principles.

Accountability Framework

The Accountability framework within the Voluntary Principles Initiative consists of:

1. A formal participation criteria (Mandatory)
2. A formal reporting criteria (Mandatory)
3. Written annual report (Mandatory)
4. Internal complaints/grievance mechanism mediated by the Secretariat
5. Verification framework for verifying that a Participant is meeting their responsibilities
6. Public report prepared annually by the Secretariat (Mandatory)

Verification Process

Within the framework of the Voluntary Principles, the most direct implementation of the Principles is done by members of the corporate pillar. Nevertheless, as a multi-stakeholder initiative, each of the pillars has an important role to play in implementation.

Verification within the Voluntary Principles Initiative has been defined as “have a credible process to verify fulfillment, by all Participants, of their Voluntary Principles Initiative responsibilities, including public reporting and engagement where appropriate”.

For NGOs, the Verification Framework is intended to act as a benchmark against which Participants can demonstrate that they are meeting the mandatory participation requirements of the Voluntary Principles, and are positively contributing to the furtherance of the Voluntary Principles in regard to implementation and/or promotion. As such, this Framework will draw upon the formal participation criteria and formal reporting criteria, as well as the established Roles & Responsibilities for NGO Participants.

This framework recognizes that the Participants of the NGO pillar range significantly in their core mandate and approach to tackling the issue of security and human rights in the extractive sector. For example, while some NGOs are significantly involved in working with companies, governments and other NGOs on the implementation of the Voluntary Principles at the site level, others may be more involved in promoting change at the corporate policy level or at the level of the Voluntary Principles as an initiative. As such, the criteria established in this Framework may apply to each NGO at varying levels.

Annual Report to the Plenary

Each Participant is responsible to produce an annual report to the plenary. This report will include their verification process. Given that the performance indicators will be selected by the Participant, Participants' reports will include a description of the various methodologies employed in determining their success in implementing the Voluntary Principles. The report will also include a representation of the findings of the review. The report will be drafted in accordance with the reporting guidelines.

Publication of Annual Report

NGO Participants have the option of submitting a copy of their annual report to the Secretariat to be posted on the Voluntary Principles website. The version submitted for public release may be modified from the version submitted to the Voluntary Principles Initiative in advance of the Annual Plenary Meeting. NGO Participants strive to use a consistent framework for their public reports

Presentation of Results

Presentations to the Annual Plenary Meeting

Each Participant is responsible to prepare presentations of the process, indicators and headline results of their respective reviews at the Annual Plenary meeting. This presentation will include an overview of the key issues raised as a result of the review and key learning's derived. Ideally the review will have been designed such that the results will provide an indication of the success of the implementation and operation of Voluntary Principles program(s) and will provide an opportunity for Participants to share their evaluation techniques and lessons learned from the evaluation.

A proportionate number of Participants from the pillars will present case studies of Voluntary Principles implementation at the Annual Plenary. These case studies will include a more in-depth analysis of specific methodologies employed and the results achieved.

The intention is for all Participants to learn from the experience of the other Participants (from all three pillars).

Presentations to the Verification Working Group

Each year, Participants who did not present to the previous Annual Plenary Meeting will be invited to present their case studies to the Verification Working Group.

These presentations will include a peer review component, whereby two volunteer peer reviewers, at least one of which must be from another Pillar, will be given an advance version of the presenting NGO's report and will provide questions/comments/suggestions to the presenting NGO with enough time for the presenting NGO to prepare responses for presentation.

The presentation to the Verification Working Group will be a one-hour virtual presentation, consisting of a 15-minute presentation, followed by 15 minutes of responses to peer-review input, and up to 30-minutes of open Q&A (with priority given to peer reviewers for follow-up comments/questions).

Public Report by the Secretariat

The Secretariat will include in the annual public report a description of the process that was undertaken by Participants to verify their activities. This report will be posted on the Voluntary Principles web site. Prior to publication the draft public report will be distributed to all Participants for agreement and sign off.