

Speech

Dear ladies and gentleman,

I would like to thank the representatives of the Canadian government for hosting this event and for their successful past year as Government Chair of the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights. Due to their hard work the VPs now have several In-Country Implementation Pilot Groups and we will surely hear of their success soon. I would also like to thank all the other participants for their continuing efforts on their commitment to the VPs. This is the first plenary I have attended for the VPs, but I am very impressed by the VPs themselves and the dedication of all of our members, NGOs, companies and governments alike.

To name just some successes, several NGO members have promoted the VPs to such extent that they introduced the principles to companies that are not in the extractive sector, but in the lumber and infrastructure industries in Africa. Together they have educated thousands of people on the working of VPs and their importance.

Also, one company decreased the level of anonymous VP related human rights abuses per employee by more than 39 percent due to the implementation of the VPs. Another company organized monthly meetings where various heads of government were present, together with NGOs and local communities. It also created a special reporting desk specifically for VP related human rights abuses and trained more than 600 people on the VPs. This morning I was deeply impressed by the story that Brian Gonsalves shared with us.

Similarly, several governments have been using their embassies to facilitate dialogue between relevant parties in various VP priority countries. Governments have also continuously been reaching out to companies and NGOs to promote the VPs and explore if they would be potential candidates to join.

These success stories inspire the Netherlands to continue working as an active participant of the VPs and to set ambitious aims for the next 12 months.

The VPs multi stakeholder approach is similar to our own method of problem solving in the Netherlands. Dutch NGOs, companies and the government all recognize the added value of incorporating multiple stakeholders and have addressed various domestic issues by using this cooperation to tackle environmental and social issues.

Since 2014, voluntary agreements have been signed by NGO's, labor unions, knowledge institutions, companies and the Dutch government. These agreements have been created for different sectors, such as coal mining, but also the textiles and the banking sector. They operate through constructive dialogue with all three pillars, in identifying risk factors, reducing abuses of employees and communicating between the parties on successful strategies. This cooperation results in a bigger leverage and helps in solving problems that cannot be solved by individual actors, similarly to the VPs.

Nor can it be solved by simply proclaiming legal acts or decrees. I will give you a recent example, which was discussed yesterday too. Companies are experiencing problems with pirates attacking their cargo vessels. Dutch law makers have proposed a new law, which would enable these companies to hire private security forces. As we have heard yesterday however, important issues are the legal position of the captain of the vessel in case violence is used and how to deal with security personnel that does not comply with the rules. As concluded yesterday, we should not expect too much from hard law in solving this issue. Our dialogue in the VP's might provide better solutions for the piracy problem too.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my deep conviction that through the sharing of experiences and successes, we can achieve even more progress. This brings us to one of the main priorities for the Government of the Netherlands as this year's chair. Transparency and sharing of information - in a constructive and confidential way - is key. In line with the 2016-2019 strategy, which was adopted this plenary, we feel that currently there is room for improving our transparency of the VPs and in particular the transparency of our annual reports.

The Government of the Netherlands is also committed to continue the work done by the Canadian government this year. Therefore, another priority for the government of the Netherlands is the success of the In-Country Implementation Pilot Groups. It aims to closely monitor the achievements being made by the pilots and aims to provide members with regular updates. Together with you, the members, we will make an inventory and discuss with you the

possibilities of creating more In-Country Implementation Pilot Groups. We strongly believe that in-country cooperation among stakeholders, rather than piling-up paper, is key for solving problems and therefore pre-eminently highlights the added value of the VPs in practice.

In conclusion, the Government of the Netherlands strongly believes that we all, through our commitment as members to the VPs will be able to further increase the security of communities in and surrounding operations in the extractive sector. We encourage you to continue the dialogue amongst each other and share your experiences, difficulties, questions and best practices. And let's not forget to share worst practices, which often learn us more. In our experience the best results of sharing and learning are achieved in multi stakeholder initiatives with an open, though constructive and confidential environment where specific interests, vulnerabilities and difficulties of each member are taken into consideration. According to several members I've spoken there have been improvements in this field over the last few years. I hope this will continue coming year and the years to come. With your contributions we are looking forward to a successful year for the VPs.

Thank you.