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Annual Report VPSHR 2018

Government of Switzerland

A. Commitment to the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights

Commitment to the Rules of the VPI:

Switzerland continues to be strongly committed to the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VP) as expressed in its action plan submitted when joining the VP Initiative (VPI) as a participant government in September 2011. This includes:

- our commitment to promoting the VP, especially with regard to Swiss extractive companies and with governments for which the VP are relevant;
- to supporting priority in-country processes through Swiss embassies;
- to supporting VP implementation by companies;
- to trying creating synergies between the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers (ICOC), the VP and the Swiss strategy to implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGP).

The VP are also mentioned in the Swiss National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, adopted by the Federal Council on December 9th, 2016, and in Switzerland's Human Rights Strategy 2016-2019.

In November 2018, the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and the State Secretariat for Economy jointly issued a Human Rights sector guidance for the implementation of the UNGP by the commodity trading sector¹. This guidance includes a reference to the VP.

In November 2018, the Federal Council also issued a new report describing the commodity trading sector in Switzerland². The report includes 16 recommendations to address future challenges and opportunities. The report refers to the VP, and one recommendation addresses the future support of Switzerland to the VP.

¹ https://www.dfae.admin.ch/dam/eda/en/documents/aussenpolitik/menschenrechte-menschliche-sicherheit/Guidance-on-Implementing-UN-Guiding-Principles-Business-HR_en.pdf

² <https://www.news.admin.ch/news/message/attachments/55063.pdf>

Switzerland has reiterated its strong commitment to the VP through public statements, bilateral consultations and policy dialogues (for example in Senegal, Nigeria, Liberia, China, Perou, Columbia, France and Germany). Switzerland also agreed to join again the steering committee in March 2018 and will assume the chairmanship in 2019.

Engagement in the VPI:

Switzerland supports the transition of the VP to a stronger and more effective and accountable organization aligned with international norms and best practices in the field of business and human rights.

Switzerland continued to participate in all working groups, namely the implementation working group that is now developing the in-country implementation pilot groups, and the governance working group. Switzerland has been invited and participated to the Steering Committee retreat in 2018.

Switzerland also strongly supported the transition towards an independent secretariat, and participated in the relevant working groups, as well as in the selection committee.

Transparency and dialogue:

The government of Switzerland shares its efforts to support VP implementation regularly with other VP participants at the Plenary Meetings.

The VP have been a key topic in several bilateral consultations and dialogues with other governments.

The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs maintains a web page dedicated to the VP Initiative, which presents the main information and Switzerland's commitment: <https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/foreign-policy/human-rights/human-rights-policy/business-human-rights/voluntary-principles.html>.

B. Domestic Policies, Laws and Regulations

Rule of Law:

The protection of human rights is a cornerstone of Swiss foreign policy. This is anchored in the Swiss Constitution's art. 54.

The 2016 *Dispatch on International Cooperation* for the period 2017–2020 explicitly mentions the Swiss Government's participation to the VP as part of its main international commitments in the area of business and human rights, and of its efforts to establish international standards for better corporate social responsibility. The Dispatch is based on the conviction that peace and the respect of human rights are prerequisites for sustainable development.

The Swiss **national strategy of the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights** (UNGP) (National Action Plan) was published on 9th December 2016, as the result of broad consultations among stakeholders from the private sector, civil society and the academy, and between government agencies. The NAP includes 50 political

instruments to implement the UNGP. Political instrument 11 refers to Switzerland's engagement in voluntary multi-stakeholders initiatives and explicitly mentions its commitment to the VP and its involvement in developing and enhancing the initiative, in particular with respect to the promotion of better and more transparent accountability for participants and its participation in the discussions on reforming the governance of the VP initiative. As part of the National Action Plan, Switzerland organized regular meetings with extracting companies to raise awareness on human rights and security related issues.

Furthermore, Switzerland's **Human Rights Strategy 2016-2019** states that Switzerland promotes respect for human rights by the private sector including by supporting implementation of the UN Guiding Principles and multi-stakeholder initiatives that focus on specific industries, such as the VP.

In November 2018, the Federal Council issued a new report describing the commodity trading sector in Switzerland³. The report includes 16 recommendations to address future challenges and opportunities. The report refers to the VP, and one recommendation addresses the future support of Switzerland to the VP.

The recommendation 7 states that 'Switzerland should pursue its commitment to the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights, in particular by promoting the accession of private security service providers of commodities companies to the International Code of Conduct (ICoC)''.

Since Switzerland joined the VPI in 2011, most of the goals set forth in the national VP action plan were achieved or are being pursued continuously, such as raising Swiss companies' awareness of the VPs or mainstreaming the VPs in the federal government. Following the adoption of the VP Strategy 2014-2016, negotiated during the Swiss chairmanship of the VPs, as well as the outcome document of the follow-up strategic meeting in Washington in June 2015, Switzerland worked on the new goals set forth, in particular on verification.

Switzerland participated in the Outreach and Implementation Working Group where it regularly provided updates on its outreach activities that are shared with Plenary via the VP website. Furthermore, Switzerland updates fellow Participants on its support to VP implementation regularly at Plenary Meetings.

At the Washington Plenary in 2018, Switzerland participated in the assessment team of Ghana's verification presentation.

C. Promotion and Implementation

1. Promoting awareness of the VP within the government (12):

The Human Security Division (HSD) of the FDFA leads the Swiss Government's engagement in the VPI and is mainstreaming the VP within the Department, as well as in other Ministries, for instance in the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO).

³ <https://www.news.admin.ch/news/message/attachments/55063.pdf>

HSD holds regular communications and information exchange with embassies in VP priority countries, as well as with some non-VP priority countries, on outreach and VP-relevant topics, as well as to inform them on developments within the VPI. In-country processes are supported by expert staff from the capital. This also serves to increase the embassy staff's knowledge of the VP, as well as their capacity to promote the VP and implementation support in host countries.

Since 2012 the VP have been an integral part of many briefings for newly appointed Ambassadors as well as of trainings for newly recruited diplomats and experts of the Swiss Expert Pool for Civilian Peace-building. In 2018 FDFA and SECO collaborated in a joint training session for new diplomats on corporate social responsibility and business and human rights including the VP in order to raise awareness on this important and growing issue among future generations of Swiss representatives.

The follow-up work to implement the recommendations made by Switzerland's background report on commodities has been used as an opportunity to mainstream among Swiss Government's staff the knowledge about challenges, practices and initiatives related to operations of the extractive sector, including the VP (see also B. Rule of Law).

2. Promoting the VP in Switzerland (10, 11, 14):

Throughout the reporting period the Swiss Government has been active in promoting the VP in various national processes, for instance with regard to Switzerland's process of implementing the UNGPs. In 2016, Switzerland has been working on its National Action Plan on business and human rights based on an assessment conducted inside the federal administration as well as on a series of multi-stakeholder dialogues and consultations held on this topic to gather feedback and input. The VP are part of the National Action Plan that was adopted and published in December 2016 and the implementation of the National Action Plan started then in 2017.

Constant dialogue between the Swiss government, industry and civil society on business and human rights issues, including the VP, has taken place regularly during the reporting period.

For example, as a follow-up to the Swiss background report on **commodities** (2013) and its recommendations, promoting the implementation of the UNGP, and after consultation with all stakeholders, the Swiss Government supports the elaboration of a guide for the implementation of the UNGP for the commodities trading sector in Switzerland. The FDFA and SECO have submitted for public scrutiny and discussion a draft version of the guidelines on ensuring respect for human rights in the commodity trading industry, which was finalized in 2017. The Institute for Human Rights and Business (IHRB) based in London developed the recommendations for the FDFA and SECO in close cooperation with these two federal agencies, the cantons, the commodity trading industry and non-governmental organisations. The final version of this guidance ("The Commodity Trading Sector – Guidance on Implementing the UNGP on Business and Human Rights") was officially presented at the UN in Geneva during the Global Forum on Business and Human Rights in November 2018. This event gathered representatives from various governments, NGOs and companies.

HSD contributes regularly as a speaker on business and human rights issues, including the VP, to academic courses and workshops or panel discussions by civil society or private sector organizations.

The FDFA participates in the Global Compact Network Switzerland using the opportunity to promote the business and human rights initiatives, in which Switzerland is engaged. Furthermore, HSD participates in the multi-stakeholder network on business and human rights of the Business School Lausanne created in 2015.

3. Promoting and advancing implementation of the VP internationally:

Outreach and implementation support in priority countries:

During the reporting period outreach efforts continued in the two VP priority countries where Switzerland is (co-)leading outreach to the host governments: **Peru, DRC and Nigeria.**

The Swiss Embassy in **Peru** continued to facilitate outreach and implementation support activities, particularly supporting the Peruvian VP multi-stakeholder Working Group, and increasing the awareness of the VP at a national level in Peru. In 2018 Switzerland provided a financial contribution to the NGO Socios Peru for ensuring the coordination and secretariat of the local VP Working Group, in order to actively support outreach and implementation in the country. The Working Group held several meetings and organized several outreach events.

In September 2018, DCAF organised a mission in Peru to oversee projects funded by the HSD to support the VPs Working Groups in Lima and Cusco. During the mission, DCAF representative also undertook a lessons learnt study on the experience of the Working Groups. Findings from the study will be presented during the VPI Plenary in March 2019. This mission also served at identifying ways to support the national and regional Working Groups in 2019. Socios Peru has indeed announced its intention not to renew its position as chair of the national group.

Moreover, in September 2018, a workshop was organised in Cusco to sensitize public security forces, companies and civil society organisations on the VPI. The objectives of the workshop were to inform about the work of the VPs Working Group in Cusco and foster interest for more participation from the three pillars. Many companies (Glencore, MMG Las Bambas, Anglo American, Newmont) provided positive feedback about tools developed by DCAF and the ICRC.

In addition, Switzerland works to promote open dialogue and transparency on security and human rights issues as well as trust-building between the different VP stakeholders in Peru, including those involved in social conflicts. The Embassy plays a facilitating role, sometimes in collaboration with the VP working group, in discussions on specific cases of grievances or facilitating visits to extractive projects.

The Swiss Embassy in the **DRC** is convening regular meetings of the multi-stakeholder VP Working Group in Kinshasa to discuss and coordinate VP outreach. Switzerland is co-chairing the VP stakeholder group in Kinshasa with the government of Canada. Switzerland holds the

Secretariat of the national Working Group. The national group is implementing its Action Plan for 2017-2018.

Since August 2018, Switzerland supports a project led by DCAF that aims at reinforcing the local implementation of the VP in the DRC, and more specifically in the provinces of Lualaba and Haut-Katanga, through the **relaunch of a regional VP Working Group** in these provinces and human rights based trainings for police officers located around extractive industries. DCAF is currently working on finding the best ways to relaunch the VP Working Group in the former Katanga, and was notably in contact with organisations that have been highly involved in VP implementation in the DRC.

In December 2018, a capacity building workshop for the members of the **Voluntary Principles Technical working group** was organized in Bukavu. Two staff members from DCAF facilitated the workshop which was attended by more than 35 participants from the private sector, government and civil society. During the first day, presentations were made in relation to ongoing initiatives taking place to improve business practices in the extractive sector in South Kivu. These presentations showed how the current VPs working group could reinforce ongoing initiatives. During the second and third days of the workshop, presentations were made on the VPs, and participants then worked in small groups to identify risks in relation to the mining sector in South Kivu, and how to prevent and on respond to these risks. At the end of the workshop, participants held discussions about the organization and mandate of the working group.

In addition, the Swiss Government co-finances a project by IMPACT that assesses the impact of gold mining on human rights and human security of women in the East of the DRC and aims at promoting a conflict-free supply chain of gold from artisanal mining.

In **Nigeria**, the Embassy of Switzerland has been able to provide effective leadership which was not only integral to the inauguration of the group, but also to its continuity. Without effective leadership, it is clear that the group would not have been able to take off, stabilize and maintain continuity. Through its leadership role the Embassy has ensured the convening of regular meetings at its Abuja office, with eight meetings held since its inauguration in June 2017. Working with its co-chair, the Embassy ensured the group has a methodical approach to its operations with the development and subsequent update of work plans, by the NGO co-chair of the group, which factored in suggestions by group members. The work plan incorporates a set of activities it could engage in towards the objective of promoting the implementation of the VPs in Nigeria.

Moreover, the Swiss Embassy has continued to conduct outreach to the Nigerian government and coordinated to this end with other VP participants in-country. The VP will remain an important part of the annual bilateral dialogue between the two countries, especially in view of Switzerland's leadership of the Nigerian Working Group.

In February 2018, in collaboration with the Netherlands Embassy and other members of the Nigerian Working Group on the VPs, Switzerland played an important role in the successful visit of the Steering Committee to Nigeria, which helped raise awareness about the initiative in the country, while also facilitating high-level engagement with government entities. The Swiss Embassy helped design the programme of the visit; identified stakeholders to be engaged; and held pre-visit engagement with the Nigerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the

Ministry of Mines and Steel Development and the National Human Rights Commission to solicit their cooperation. Apart from contributing significantly to securing the meetings at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Mines and Steel Development (MMSD), the Embassy also delivered on the activities it was directly committed to: (i) the meeting with the Acting Executive Secretary of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC); (ii) the meeting with the Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment; (iii) the organization of the meeting of the Nigerian Working Group; (iv) the reception for the delegation; (v) and support for the field visit to a mining site in Nasarawa.

In addition, encouraged by the Embassy and other members of the NWG, a number of participants from all three pillars in the Nigerian Working Group participated at the VP plenary in March 2018 in Washington.

In order to support the priorities of the working group, the HSD supported trainings, sensitization meetings and town hall meetings for different stakeholders including the Nigerian Police Force and the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) working on extractive sites; and host communities of extractive activities. These activities were organized by the NGOs Lite-Africa and COMPPART, between August and December 2018, in different localities within Rivers State, Cross Rivers State and Akwa Ibom State. In total, about 515 people benefited from the training. VP communication materials were also developed and distributed to beneficiaries in order to reinforce the training.

Furthermore, the Swiss Embassy in Abuja participated in three events organized by Global Rights, a member of the NWG, which focused on business and human rights. Stakeholders who participated at the meetings include CSOs, journalists and some entities from the Nigerian government. The events served as platform to spread the message of the VP, the NWGVP and to underscore the importance of the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights as an integral platform for utilizing the VPs to address security-related human right infringements in Nigeria's extractive sector. As a consequence, the Embassy of Switzerland supported Global Rights to implement a project targeted at improving Nigeria's draft National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights. The improved draft has a VP component which will contribute greatly to mainstreaming the VP in the Nigerian context when the plan is eventually launched. Sequel to completion of the work of the consultant commissioned to improve the draft, the Embassy delivered a goodwill message on 13 February 2019 during a programmed organized by Global Rights, captioned "Stakeholders' Engagement: Review of the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights." The goodwill message had as key messages the importance of a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights general and in the Nigerian context; the useful role the VP could play as a component of the plan and the work of the NWG.

International promotion of VP in general:

Switzerland puts the VP regularly on the agenda of high level **political and human rights consultations or dialogues**. In the reporting period, the VP were addressed during human rights consultations with **Mexico**, in the framework of political high-level consultations with **Nigeria** in January 2018 and **South Africa** in October 2018, and in the political dialogues with **Brazil**. In November 2018, discussions have taken place with official representatives from

France and **Germany** to encourage them to join the VP.

The Swiss Ambassador in **Kenya** is fully committed to organize events to foster the interest of the Kenyan Government to become participant of the VPI, even though accession to the initiative is not a current priority for the Government of Kenya.

In the framework of the Swiss Innovation Week organized by the Swiss Embassy in Beijing, DCAF, the ICRC and Global Compact China Network, organized an event titled "A Pressing Challenge: Security Management for Chinese Business Operators along the Belt & Road Initiative" to launch the **Chinese version** of the "Addressing Security and Human Rights Challenges in Complex Environments Toolkit" on 6th July, 2018. The launch was a success with the presence and active participation of Embassies, but also industry associations like the China Chamber of Commerce of Metals, Minerals and Chemical Importers and Exporters (CCCME). Opportunities to build on this event and disseminate the DCAF/ICRC project products, and supporting Chinese businesses into improving their security and human rights practices were identified.

In Colombia, Switzerland supports since 2006 the *Fundación Ideas para la Paz* in the creation of the so-called "**Guías Colombia**". The **Guías Colombia** is a project that is based on the VP, and extends its principles beyond the extractive industry to other types of businesses. "Guías Colombia" developed a guidance tool on security and human rights in 2014 (<http://www.ideaspaz.org/tools/download/72991>) making reference to the VP. After this development phase, the project started its implementation phase in 2017.

Through the Institute for Human Rights and Business (**IHRB**), Switzerland has supported the so-called **Nairobi Process**, a pact for responsible business established in 2013 by IHRB and the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (<http://www.ihrb.org/our-work/nairobi-process.html>). The Nairobi Process brings together oil, gas and mining companies around the table with home and host governments and major civil society platforms with the aim of embedding human rights due diligence through the application of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights in the emerging oil and gas sector in Kenya. The Nairobi Process contributes to promoting the VP and the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers in the region. In the context of this process the Extractive Sector Forum (ESF) was created in 2015 with the aim to facilitate regular dialogue among businesses from the extractive sector and other stakeholders with an interest in the sector, including civil society organizations, community representatives and academics.

During 2018, the Swiss government continued to support a number of initiatives on various business and human rights issues which we believe have similar objectives and are complementary with the VP:

- Switzerland was involved in the **OECD** process to implement the gold and the '3 T' supplement to the "Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas". Switzerland financially supports the implementation and participates in the governance group that assists the implementation process.
- The **Better Gold Initiative**, which seeks to increase the supply of sustainably

produced gold from small and medium-sized mines, to reinforce the relevant voluntary sustainability standards and to bring together the various stakeholders along the value chain, through targeted interventions in production, trade and demand. This will enable small and medium-sized mines to meet the growing requirements regarding traceability and responsible production. This should secure them a better income and long-term access to international markets. The project is being run as a public-private partnership between SECO and the Swiss Better Gold Association. This approach is being taken for the first time in Peru, and there are plans to scale up the project to other countries. The total budget for three years is CHF 2.9 million. The Better Gold Initiative represents a concrete contribution towards implementation of the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas.

- The Swiss government contributes to the **Institute for Human Rights and Business (IHRB)**. The Institute has carried out desk research, interviews, and workshops in order to develop a guidance on human rights for the commodity trade sector on behalf of the Swiss government and in dialogue with stakeholders from the private sector and civil society. It also leads the 'Nairobi Process that seeks to promote the VP among stakeholders in Kenya.
- Switzerland financially supports the **Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business (MCRB)** which seeks to encourage responsible business activities throughout Myanmar. The Centre is a joint initiative of the Institute for Human Rights and Business (IHRB) and the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR). MCRB has undertaken sector-wide impact assessments of the oil and gas and mining sectors in Myanmar, both of which recommended the use of the VPs by companies and other stakeholders to manage their human rights impacts.

Risk assessment:

Switzerland has contributed to the financing of practical tools that help companies ascertain their key human rights risks and impacts. For example, the HSD is supporting since beginning of 2013 a project launched and implemented jointly by the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), to develop guidance and toolkits for VP Member Companies and Governments in relation to companies' engagement with public and private security forces as well as with communities in complex environments. The project has created a knowledge hub to share existing tools and good practices (<http://www.securityhumanrightshub.org/>). It is an ongoing project which is constantly adopting and developing guidance tools that take experiences of companies' into account. It has begun an implementation phase in 2016 to support local implementation activities and develop an implementation mechanism and support tools including adapting the toolkit to different local contexts, translating it into other languages, and having it tested by companies on the ground. Thereby, the project aims to contribute significantly to the improvement of VP implementation on the ground.

Private Security:

The Swiss Government has been strongly engaged in developing the governance and oversight mechanism of the **International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers (ICoC)**. The International Code of Conduct Association (ICoCA) was launched in September 2013. The overarching purpose of the Association is to promote the responsible provision of private security services and respect for human rights and national and international law by exercising independent governance and oversight of the ICoC. Under the Articles of Association, the ICoCA has three main functions, namely certification of private security service providers, monitoring their activities, and maintaining a complaints process for alleged victims of ICoC violations. In 2016, the ICoCA General Assembly approved the procedures for reporting, monitoring and assessing performance, and a complaints process, in addition to certification procedures adopted in 2015. Switzerland chairs the Board of Directors of the Association. 91 private security companies, 17 NGOs and 7 governments (among them 6 VP members) are current ICoCA members. Given the Swiss government's leadership of the ICoC, which is of direct relevance to the VP, complementarities are being sought between both initiatives. The ICoCA is an observer of the VPI and the VPI is an observer to the ICoCA. 5 VP member companies are observers to the ICoCA.

The **Montreux Document** on Pertinent International Legal Obligations and Good Practices for States related to Operations of Private Military and Security Companies during Armed Conflict which sets forth how international law applies to the activities of private military and security companies (PMSCs) when they are operating in an armed conflict zone. It contains a set of good practices designed to help states take measures nationally in order to fulfil their obligations under international law. In December 2014, the Montreux Document Forum was launched. It provides a platform for member states to continue working on the implementation of the Montreux Document, to discuss challenges regarding the regulation of PMSCs and to exchange good practices for example with the ICoCA. The Montreux Document is now supported by 53 states and three international organizations: the EU, the OSCE and NATO.

The **Federal Act on Private Security Services Provided Abroad (PSSA)** which builds on the Montreux Document on Private Military and Security Companies (Montreux Document) and on the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers (ICoC) entered into force in September 2015. Companies based in Switzerland that provide private security services abroad, are subject to a prior declaration requirement and are required to become a member of the ICoC Association. The purpose of the Act is, among others, to ensure respect for international law, in particular for human rights and international humanitarian law. It is complementary to the VPs as it promotes the responsible provision of private security services. The Private Security Services Section of the FDFA's Directorate of Political Affairs is responsible for implementing this Act. According to the second annual report on the implementation of the PSSA, there is growing recognition of the importance of the oversight mechanism introduced by the PSSA for private security services abroad and the pioneering role played by Switzerland in this field.

D. Lessons and Issues

Outreach in Peru unfortunately stagnated in 2018 and Switzerland made no significant progress in convincing the Peruvian government to join the initiative. However, the Swiss Embassy in Peru systematically discussed the VP during the meetings with the authorities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Justice). Outreach in Nigeria has been quite

successful, as the Nigerian government is now involved in the meetings of the In-Country Implementation Working Group. However, decision making on the issue of membership of international organizations is dependent on political will, and could be an extremely slow process due to the need for internal consultations amongst relevant government entities. Nigeria has currently placed an embargo on joining international organizations, and is currently working on exiting membership of some international organizations due to inability to pay subscriptions. In the DRC outreach to the government has been much more challenging due to the elections period and lack of continuous commitment of VP participants.

In Nigeria, the Working Group is facing a great challenge: funding is still needed to execute activities focused on implementation of the VPs, for example for conducting trainings, convening dialogues or running a proper secretariat that will allow the Swiss Embassy to focus on its other priorities in Nigeria. The present political context also presents its own challenges. With Nigeria holding its elections in February and March 2019, the Nigerian government might have other priorities that are higher in its scale of preference than the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights. 2019 will almost certainly witness changes in the personnel heading the government entities, irrespective of whether the incumbent wins, or if someone else assumes power. The implication of this is that advocacy and engagement of stakeholders will have to be done afresh.

Other challenges identified by the group in Nigeria were non-participation of some VP signatories in the NWG; non-membership of the VPI by Nigeria which limits the extent to which the VPI can be promoted; and the lack of a fully dedicated secretariat for the NWG; and lack of participation from some key government ministries.

In general, close engagement between governments and companies can contribute to a more transparent and open communication between all VP stakeholders, including civil society, about security and human rights issues.

Drafting a VP Strategy and developing it further during Steering Committee strategic retreats has been a useful experience. It helped to identify common interests among participants and to drive an agenda to strengthen the initiative. The process of reviewing progress on implementing the agenda and holding strategic retreats to develop “next goals” for the initiative should be continued.

Challenges in the VP Initiative:

- In-country implementation pilots are a good initiative that can contribute effectively to improved implementation, strengthened cooperation among participants at local level, and heightened awareness of host governments on the VP. It may also lead to the geographical expansion of the VPI membership which in turn will require adjustments in the VPI structure and functioning. However, for the in-country groups to set off and work effectively, the active participation and financial support of several members from all three pillars is required. Experiences in Nigeria and in Peru have shown that this cannot be taken for granted.
- In Nigeria, the Working Group is facing a great challenge: funding is still needed to execute activities focused on implementation of the VPs, for example for conducting

trainings, convening dialogues or running a proper secretariat that will allow the Swiss Embassy to focus on its other priorities in Nigeria.

- The efforts to reinvigorate the VP implementation in the DRC are putting the initiative back on the right tracks, but the road will be long. The establishment of a local group in South Kivu would represent a great success. However, this process risks to take some time and will need the implication of all the participants from the three pillars.
- Government pillar: it is important that new government participants as well as older ones that have not taken this role yet, join the StC and take on the role of Chair as soon as possible and as soon as their VP experience allows it. It is also important that the governments in which In-Country Implementation Groups are developed join the initiative to reinforce its legitimacy.
- Intensify outreach efforts in order to broaden the participation of both host and home governments of extractive companies.