

**Government of Canada 2024 Annual Report to the
Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights Initiative**

A. COMMITMENT TO THE VOLUNTARY PRINCIPLES

1. Statement of commitment or endorsement of the Voluntary Principles.

Canada is committed to the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPs) as a tool to help anticipate and mitigate human rights-related risks associated with the deployment of public and private security, particularly in the extractive sector. Canada supports the Voluntary Principles Initiative (VPI) as a forum that promotes multi-stakeholder dialogue, mutual learning, relationship building and collaborative problem-solving, making it possible to respond effectively to security and human rights challenges.

Canada welcomes the addition of new members to the VPI and discussions on expanding the scope of the Initiative. The VPs' risk assessment approach and strong emphasis on communication training and confidence-building have led to its widespread use and application, including by non-members and companies operating in complex environments.

2. Statement of commitment to implement National Plan(s).

N/A

B. DOMESTIC POLICIES, LAWS & REGULATIONS

3. As related to the Voluntary Principles, describe relevant policies, legislation, procedures, and/or guidelines relevant to promoting and protecting human rights, consistent with international human rights obligations.

Domestic promotion and protection of human rights:

Canada is party to the seven principal United Nations (UN) human rights conventions and covenants (also known as treaties). As a party to these treaties, Canada agrees to respect and ensure the human rights of all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction, without discrimination of any kind.

Under Canada's federal system of government, responsibility for ensuring respect for human rights is shared between federal, provincial and territorial governments.

Canada's domestic framework for the protection of human rights includes numerous guarantees for those in vulnerable situations:

- Human rights are constitutionally entrenched in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (adopted in 1982), which sets out those rights and freedoms that Canadians believe are necessary in a free and democratic society. The Charter applies to all government activities, at the federal, provincial, and territorial levels. It includes protections related to fundamental freedoms; democracy; mobility; life, liberty and personal security; equality; official languages; minority language education rights; Canada's multicultural heritage and Indigenous Peoples' rights.
- Canada's Constitution contains additional protections for the rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada. These include rights over lands and to self-government.
- Human rights are implemented in Canada through numerous federal, provincial and territorial government policies and programs.

More information on Canada's domestic legal framework for human rights protection can be found in Canada's core document on the website of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Forced labour:

Further to the commitment in the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA), in July 2020, Canada's *Customs Tariff* was amended to prohibit the importation of goods mined, manufactured or produced wholly or in part by forced labour. Canada's free trade agreements include obligations to address forced labour and Canada provides technical assistance to support partner countries in respecting these labour protections.

Canada's supply chain legislation, *The Fighting Against Forced Labour and Child Labour in Supply Chains Act*, came into force on January 1, 2024. This transparency legislation contains requirements for certain private sector entities and Canadian government institutions to report on the steps taken to prevent and reduce the risk of forced or child labour in their own operations or in their supply chains. Annual reports must be submitted to the Minister of Public Safety by May 31 of each year.

Canada's position is that active and meaningful engagement with UN human rights mechanisms is critical to progress. Canada welcomed a visit by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, in August/September 2023. The Special Rapporteur presented his follow-up report at the 57th session of the UN Human Rights Council in the Fall of 2024, providing recommendations on a wide array of topics, including related to temporary foreign workers and human rights due diligence in supply chains. Canada produced an addendum to the Special Rapporteur's report and remains open to continued cooperation with Special Procedures on human rights, including on issues related to forced labour.

International promotion and protection of human rights:

An obligation in the UN Charter is to promote universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms. Canada fulfills this obligation through international assistance, bilateral cooperation and active engagement with multilateral fora and human rights mechanisms.

Voices at risk: Canada's guidelines on supporting human rights defenders:

Canada's guidelines on supporting human rights defenders provide practical advice, tools and resources to Canadian officials working in Canada and abroad on how to support the vital work of human rights defenders, often at great risk to themselves, their loved ones and the organizations and movements they represent. The implementation of the Guidelines is tailored to local contexts and circumstances, and to the specific needs of the human rights defenders.

Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy:

Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) commits Canada to providing international assistance that is human rights-based and inclusive. This means that all people have the same human rights regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ability, and other aspects of identity. In keeping with this policy, Canada is supporting women's leadership and decision-making in climate change mitigation and adaptation, resilience-building, and sustainable natural resources management.

Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security:

In 2023, *Foundations for Peace: Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2023-2029)* was established. The action plan sustains a focus on advancing the women, peace and security agenda internationally and includes commitments that will be implemented domestically. It strengthens Canada's commitments to the full and meaningful inclusion of diverse women in all matters of peace and security. Canada's National Action Plan is one of the only action plans globally to formalize an official role for civil society.

Responsible Business Conduct Abroad (RBC):

The Government of Canada expects Canadian companies operating abroad to respect human rights, operate lawfully, and conduct their activities in a socially and environmentally responsible manner consistent with international principles and standards on RBC. These include the VPs, the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct (OECD Guidelines). Endorsement of the VPs is part of Canada's approach to RBC abroad, particularly as it relates to the extractive and agro-business sectors.

Canada's *RBC Abroad Strategy* provides support to Canadian companies active abroad to enable them to abide by relevant laws, respect human rights in their operations (including their supply chains), and adopt best practices and internationally respected guidelines (the UNGPs and the OECD Guidelines).

Over the past year, Canada continued to actively promote the Strategy through building awareness and championing action, supporting the uptake of due diligence and accountability, and strengthening the global RBC ecosystem. For example, Canada has included commitments in human rights to the modernized Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement (December 2023) and the new Canada-Ecuador Free Trade Agreement (February 2025). Both agreements include provisions recognizing the importance of RBC, affirming that companies operating within the parties' jurisdiction are required to comply with all applicable laws (human rights, the rights of Indigenous Peoples, gender equality, environmental

protection and labour) and encouraging companies to adopt internationally recognized standards, guidelines, and principles for RBC.

Inclusive Approach to Trade:

As part of its Export Diversification Strategy, Canada has advanced an inclusive approach to trade that seeks to share the benefits and opportunities that flow from trade, including with women, small and medium enterprises and Indigenous Peoples. Efforts to date have focused on engaging with Canadians before, during and after trade negotiations, conducting comprehensive and ongoing Gender Based Analysis (GBA) Plus of trade negotiations, and expanding gender responsive and inclusive trade content in trade agreements. Canada is also engaging with international partners such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the G7, G20, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) to promote and advance gender responsive and inclusive trade initiatives.

4. Within the context of the Voluntary Principles and in accordance with national and international law, describe how the government takes appropriate steps to prevent, investigate, punish, and redress human rights abuses within its territory and/or jurisdiction by third parties, including extractive companies and public and private security providers.

Canada's Domestic Policy:

All levels of governments in Canada (federal, provincial, and territorial) have adopted legislation prohibiting discrimination on various grounds. Individuals can pursue and seek redress for violations of anti-discrimination codes by third parties through federal and provincial/territorial human rights commissions, tribunals, or the courts. There are various avenues of redress for individuals who believe they are victims of human rights abuses committed in Canada by third parties.

- Canada's Criminal Code, which applies in every jurisdiction in Canada, provides a means of preventing, investigating, punishing, and providing redress for human rights abuses by third parties, most notably in relation to the right to life and security of the person.
- Legislation in relation to labour and employment helps to ensure that workers in both the public and private sectors have a safe and healthy workplace, are subject to fair employment practices, and can organize collectively.
- Some jurisdictions in Canada also have laws in place to protect individuals' privacy rights vis-à-vis both public- and private-sector entities.
- Certain provisions in the common law (judge-made law, which applies in most jurisdictions across Canada) contain remedies for abuses by third parties of some human rights. For example, damages (including compensation) may be sought for certain intentional or negligent behaviour that causes harm, wrongful dismissal from employment, defamation of character, libel or infringement of property rights.

Canada's international policy for dispute resolution:

Canada's dispute resolution mechanisms are anchored in the UNGPs and the OECD Guidelines. This includes:

The Canada Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise (CORE), established in 2019, the CORE is mandated to:

- Promote the implementation of the UNGPs and the OECD Guidelines.
- Advise Canadian companies on their policies and practices with respect to RBC.
- Review allegations of human rights abuses arising from a Canadian company's operations abroad in the mining, oil and gas and garment sectors.
- Offer informal mediation services.
- Provide advice to the Minister for International Trade on any matter relating to their mandate.

The office of the CORE began accepting cases in 2021 and has published eleven initial assessment reports, four final reports, and one follow-up report as of December 2024.

Canada's National Contact Point (NCP):

As an adherent to the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, Canada is legally required to maintain a National Contact Point (NCP) to promote the Guidelines, handle complaints, and facilitate dialogue on responsible business conduct. The global network of NCPs includes 51 offices around the world.

Established in 2000, the NCP serves as a non-judicial grievance mechanism to facilitate the resolution of disputes —either through dialogue or mediation— related to the observance of the OECD Guidelines by multinational enterprises operating in or from Canada.

Common issues reviewed include adverse human rights impacts, environmental harm, employment, industrial relations and supply chain due diligence. Canada's NCP is an interdepartmental committee composed of representatives from eight federal departments. It also engages with social partners to enhance transparency and effectiveness in promoting awareness and uptake of the OECD Guidelines. Global Affairs Canada serves as the NCP's administrator, facilitating its operations, handling disputes, and coordinating interdepartmental efforts to promote RBC.

Since its establishment, Canada's NCP has reviewed 30 complaints concerning alleged corporate misconduct by Canadian multinationals and their foreign subsidiaries. Final statements for all cases are publicly available on the NP's website. In 2022, to further enhance transparency, the NCP revised its procedures to include the publication of initial assessments, outlining decisions on whether to accept cases, along with summaries of follow-up actions taken with the parties involved. To date, three initial assessments and one follow-up statement have been published.

C. PROMOTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

5. Describe how the government publicly communicates its commitment to the Voluntary Principles.

Canada shares information about VP implementation through this annual public report, as well as by providing updates to the relevant working groups of the Steering Committee. General information on the VPs and Canada's RBC Strategy and international RBC standards is available on websites maintained by Global Affairs Canada and Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada.

Through its network of more than 1,000 Trade Commissioners at over 160 offices in Canada and at diplomatic missions around the world, the Government of Canada actively promotes RBC best practices and provides advice on RBC to Canadian companies, including the VPs. In 2024, Canadian officials promoted the VPs at various natural resources and/or responsible business events and engagements, including at the Prospectors and Development Association Conference in March in Toronto.

6. Describe how the government conducts outreach to, and awareness-raising activities with, NGOs, extractive companies, and governments to encourage them to implement the Voluntary Principles and/or join the Voluntary Principles Initiative.

Canadian officials engage regularly with civil society, industry associations (including the Mining Association of Canada) and extractives companies to discuss and promote human rights and the voluntary principles in the natural resource sector.

Multilaterally, Canada promotes internationally recognized RBC standards, including the VPs, at the OECD, the G7, the G20, the APEC, the Organization of American States, the United Nations Forum on Business and Human Rights, the Francophonie, and the Commonwealth.

In 2024, Canada's diplomatic missions abroad continued to engage in the VPI In-Country Working Groups and other outreach, promotion, and implementation activities as outlined in the table below.

Country	Initiatives to promote the VPs/Human Rights in the mining sector
Argentina	The Embassy of Canada in Buenos Aires hosted a meeting at the VPI Secretariat in October with two officials from the Argentine Secretariat of Mining in Ottawa. In December, a webinar was organized in collaboration with the Secretariat to update participants on key developments in VPs-related activities across Latin America. Topics included global leadership on best practices, progress on new mandatory due diligence guidance, and the launch of new working groups in the region. The webinar saw participation from representatives of the private sector and civil society.
Brazil	In 2024, Canada continued to participate in the Brazil Working Group by attending quarterly meetings.
Burkina Faso	In June, Canadian trade commissioners at the embassy of Canada in Ouagadougou participated in a multi-stakeholder dialogue on VPs best practices organized by the Chamber of Mines of Burkina Faso, in collaboration with Endeavor Mining. The Canadian embassy also held meetings with the National Office for Mining Site Security (ONASSIM), as well with several mining companies to discuss the VPs.
Chile	In June 2024, the Canadian embassy in Santiago hosted a roundtable featuring Matthew Floss, Vice President of Research and Public Policy for the Canadian Council for

	Indigenous Business, along with local public and private sector stakeholders. The discussion centered on the representation of indigenous companies in both local and global value chains.
Ecuador	In 2024, the Embassy of Canada in Quito organized a workshop on responsible mining for Ecuadorian parliamentarians, with the participation of Henry Kronfle, President of Ecuador's National Assembly. The workshop, supported by the embassies of the United States, Australia, Chile, Peru and the UK, addressed the dynamics of responsible mining at large and middle-scale operations.
Ghana	The High Commission of Canada in Accra hosted a workshop on Sustainable Mining in November 2024, led by the Mining Association of Canada (MAC). MAC presented the <i>Towards Sustainable Mining</i> standard, which supports companies in managing their environmental and social risks, including related to human rights. The event brought together a wide range of stakeholders in the Ghanaian mining sector.
Mexico	The Canadian embassy in Mexico launched an initiative to tackle corruption within the Mexican public service and equip Canadian companies with the necessary tools to comply with local laws and uphold human rights. As part of this initiative, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) conducted webinars for Canadian trade commissioners in Mexico City, Monterrey, and Guadalajara. These sessions aimed to raise awareness about anti-corruption laws and provide mitigation strategies for both local and Canadian companies operating in Mexico. The webinars primarily focused on mining, oil and gas, infrastructure, construction, and the pharmaceutical industry.
Peru	In June and July, the Canadian embassy in Lima organized meetings with partner working groups <i>Grupo Impulsor</i> and <i>Grupo Ampliado</i> to address the challenges faced by human rights defenders amid escalating illegal mining activities and insufficient state protection. The discussions included insights from Maia Campbell, Associate Human Rights Officer at the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) in Geneva; Ángel González Ramírez, Director of Human Rights Policies and Management at the Peru Justice and Human Rights Ministry (MINJUSDH); and Bruce Barnaby, consultant for the Peru Institute for Democracy and Human Rights (IDEHPUCP).

7. Describe how the government promotes the Voluntary Principles within its own government.

Canada's engagement in the VPs is a responsibility of Global Affairs Canada, a government department led by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development and the Minister of International Trade and Intergovernmental Affairs. The portfolios of both ministers intersect with the VPs. Canada's promotion of the VPs and engagement in the VPI involves the engagement of various divisions within Global Affairs Canada (thematic, geographic, trade, legal), as well as Canadian embassies and high commissions abroad, and other Canadian government departments.

Prior to being posted abroad, Canada's Trade Commissioners receive training on Responsible Business Conduct, which includes information on the VPs. This training provides Trade Commissioners with tools

to proactively support clients in the planning and implementing of responsible business practices within their organizations, and learn how to develop strategies to effectively manage incidents.

8. Describe government engagement in the VPI.

Canada has been a member of the VPI Government Pillar since 2009, acting as chair in 2011-12, 2016-17, and 2021-23. Canada was a member of the Steering Committee from 2022-2024. Canada attends the annual plenary meeting and actively engages in working group and discussions with all members.

Canada provided funding to the project “Enhancing Gender Equality through the Voluntary Principles.” to enhance the effectiveness of the initiative in addressing gender considerations and to identify the unique human rights risks faced by groups in vulnerable situations. The project published an Implementation Guidance Companion Tool – Operationalizing the Voluntary Principles Through the Lens of Protecting and Respecting the Unique Needs and Rights of Women and Other Disadvantaged Groups.

9. Describe how the government works with companies, communities, and civil society organizations on Voluntary Principles implementation.

The VPs are part of the internationally recognized guidelines and standards related to responsible business conduct (RBC) that Global Affairs Canada promotes to Canadian companies active abroad. This is done through Canada’s Trade Commissioner Service network of over 160 trade offices and over 1,000 Trade Commissioners worldwide. The VPs are used by staff across Global Affairs Canada in the context of international diplomacy and the promotion of human rights in multilateral and bilateral settings.

Canada’s diplomatic missions abroad provide support to Canadian companies for implementation of RBC best practices, including the VPs, which members of the Mining Association of Canada (MAC) have also committed to implementing.

Since 2019, Canada has supported in-market initiatives through a dedicated Responsible Business Fund. This fund allows Canadian missions abroad through Canada’s Trade Commissioner Service to facilitate workshops, seminars, roundtables, and information product dissemination to promote international guidelines and best practices, including the VPI.

10. Describe how the Government engages with companies on issues related to company risk assessment.

Canada is engaged in international norm-setting initiatives such as the OECD Due Diligence Guidelines for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas, which promotes a risk-based approach and provides risk mitigation measures. Canada participates in the working group for the OECD Due Diligence guidance for Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement in the Extractive Sector, which assists companies in identifying potential human rights impacts of security operations and recommends implementation of the VPs. Canada participates in the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme to regulate the international trade in rough diamonds and reduce the flow of conflict diamonds.

Canada contributed to the development of the 2021 Kimberley Process Declaration on Supporting Principles for Responsible Diamond Sourcing as Best Practices.

Canada's Trade Commissioner Service network is an information and support focal point for Canadian companies operating abroad, including in conflict-sensitive areas. Canada makes extensive use of Trade Commissioners at missions abroad to implement Canada's RBC approach and advise Canadian firms on responsible business practices. Moreover, Canada is a vocal supporter of the Model Clauses for Agreements between Government Security Forces and Companies with Respect to Security and Human Rights, a tool that is included in Canada's promotion of the VPs and the VPI.

Under the International Police Peacekeeping and Peace Operations (IPP) Program, Canadian Policing members are deployed to international peace support operations or other stabilization missions. The international deployment of Canadian police officers contributes to reducing crime, instability, and fragility in countries where they are engaged. All participating police members must complete training on human rights, gender diversity and sexual and gender-based violence. Canada also promotes the training of public security providers with international assistance through its Anti-Crime Capacity Building Program, which includes a focus on security sector reform and training.

11. Describe how the Government engages with companies around engagement with public and private security forces.

Canada strongly supports efforts to ensure that territorial, contracting and home states involved in the services of private military and security companies (PMSCs) understand, respect and act in a manner that is consistent with international human rights and humanitarian law. Canada was one of 17 States involved in the development of 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" in 2008. It was also involved in the development in 2010 of the "International Code of Conduct (ICoC) for Private Security Service Providers" to promote respect for human rights, compliance with international humanitarian law (IHL) and the responsible provision of security services by PMSCs. In 2016, Canada became one of seven State members of the "International Code of Conduct for Private Security Providers' Association" (ICoCA) which oversees implementation of the code of conduct. Canada continues to promote these instruments in our contracting policy for PMSCs.

In public procurement bidding processes, Global Affairs Canada favourably evaluates security firms that are ICoCA members and which include human rights awareness and training as an integral part of their corporate mandate and/or mission statement. Furthermore, in 2018, consistent with Canada's policy of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse, Canada helped to develop ICoCA's guidelines in this regard.

D. LESSONS AND ISSUES

12. To help determine what best practices and lessons learned can be leveraged going forward, provide a summary of issues from this reporting year, as well as plans or opportunities to advance the Voluntary Principles for the government.

- The planned implementation of the new VPI jurisdiction and structure in 2025, paired with the hiring of an Executive Director, will provide momentum for the initiative to grow and operate more strategically and efficiently.
- As the new Chair, the UK will aim to strengthen the In-Country Working Groups, address the challenges faced by companies operating locally and attract new members and funding.
- This focus on more strategic action on the ground aligns with Canada's goal to further engage missions in the local implementation of the VPs. Growing interest in the extractives sector in the context of increased demand for critical minerals for clean energy and digital products reaffirms the importance of the VPs as a mechanism for contributing to more stable, sustainable and responsible supply chains.
- Canada looks forward to engaging collaboratively in measures that advance gender equality and inclusion within the VPs, promote a balanced approach to mandatory and voluntary measures, as well as strengthen and improve the VPI.