

THE CHURCH LEADERS CALL FOR RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENT

1 We call for social stewardship and protection of the environment for present and future generations.



We have a responsibility to take care of the land and environment. Private corporations operating within a system of aggressive competition, pursue profit with disregard to the destruction caused to land and the environment. Governments and government officials operating under the influence of private corporations tend to be inconsistent and unreliable in carrying out their responsibilities over land and the environment. Communities are called to take on the challenge of stewardship for the environment.

2 We call for support for a system of production which serves the needs of all people and preserves the environment.



A system of production that is based on cheap labour, insecure work and results in mass unemployment is the cause for large scale poverty, crime, ill health and death and is therefore not sustainable. A system of production that depletes and destroys the earth's resources (soil, water, air and forests) is a threat to the future of the earth and is therefore not sustainable. A system of production that is based on greed, destructive competition and which creates wealth for only a few is not sustainable. We believe it is possible to redesign our system of production so that it is sustainable.

3 We call for respect for the land, people, and local resources where business is conducted.



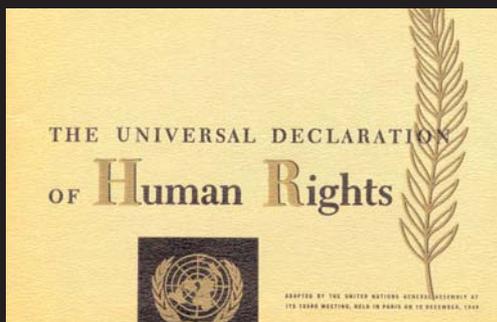
Business places profit for shareholders above respect for the rights of people, their land and way of life. People who reside in areas where there are mineral resources do not benefit from the wealth that this land generates. Often these communities are worse off because of mining activity. In fact they subsidise mining activities by losing land, and living in an environment which is heavily polluted by mining operations. Our call is for local and national communities to be better off and not subsidise business costs.

4 We call for pollution free and environmentally responsible business operations.



Businesses today have access to technology that could reduce pollution and environmentally destructive operations down to a very low level. However these changes would increase their costs of production and therefore their profits. The consequence of this is the large scale pollution of our air, water and soil resources. Rather than bear the costs of pollution, businesses pass off and externalise these costs to the local community and larger society. Communities are made responsible to solve the problem of pollution.

5 We call for the implementation of the rights of workers and communities as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international protocols.



The centuries of struggle by the workers and community movement has led to the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which enshrines respect for human dignity and labour. These rights include the right to a living wage, the right to belong to a trade union, to collective bargaining and the abolition of child labour. Like all rights, these will not be implemented by corporations unless workers and the community insist on and monitor their implementation.

6 We call for the provision of free access to healthcare for all workers and family members. Where the activities of a corporation in any way negatively impact on the health of communities, such access to be extended to the affected communities.



The healthcare of workers increases the cost for companies. Companies therefore employ strategies to limit their responsibility for the healthcare of their workers. Workers who suffer ill-health are often retrenched or 'boarded'. This frees the company from any further responsibility to the worker. The company limits health care to the permanent worker and ignores the healthcare needs of the worker's family. Temporary or casual workers, even though they are regular employees of the company, are denied any healthcare benefits. In mining areas the company denies any responsibility for the healthcare needs of the local community where they are located, even though these communities are affected by mining operations.

7 We call for an acknowledgement of the important role women play in social and economic life and the end of all forms of gender discrimination.



In spite of gender equality laws and policies, women continue to suffer discrimination. Women carry the larger burden in communities located around mines. Within companies, women do not receive equal wages and are blocked from holding senior positions in government departments and company organisations. We believe that this situation will not change without community pressure.

8 We call for affirmation of indigenous peoples' right to full participation in the business decisions that pertain to their environment, ancestral lands and way of life.



Indigenous communities have lived off their land for centuries and their survival depends on their continued control over their land. Any disruption leads to a terrible destruction of the communities' way of life and means of survival. Private corporations deny these communities the right to control their land because they do not wish to share the profits they make. Nor do they want to consult communities on their operations and the impacts.

9 We call for the end to all forms of forced seizure of land and removals or relocations of communities by governments and corporations.



Forced seizure of land by governments and corporations still continues in many countries in the region. In countries like South Africa more sophisticated strategies are used to forcibly 'relocate' communities who are reluctant to move off their land which is targeted by corporations.

10 We call for government and companies to recognise the principle of Free Prior and Continuous Consent and grant adequate compensation based on the mineral value of the land which the community occupies.



Companies tend not to enter into proper negotiations which communities whose land they seek to use for business operations. There are a large number of cases which show companies using divide and rule tactics and talking only with individuals whom they can control. Our call is that there should be proper negotiations which the entire community, that the land must be properly evaluated and communities must be compensated for the value of their mineral resources and reserves. There should be free prior consent for every phase of the life of the mine through to closure and completion.

11 We call for legislation to prohibit government officials sitting on boards of private companies or holding any position where any benefit would accrue to them because of their official position.



Private corporations exert influence on government by forming close associations with senior officials and offering them future business opportunities. This practice undermines the independence of government institutions and enables corporations to exert influence over important government policy and decision making powers. Government officials must serve the interest of the electorate and the people and not be influenced by private business interests.

12 We call for government investment policies which prioritise the needs of people and protection of the environment.



All government funds are monies held in trust on behalf of the people of the country. This money therefore must be invested and used in a way that serves the interests of the people. Government must invest in the creation of decent jobs and on projects which preserve the environment. Government should resist the pressure of direct investment to promote private interests, especially at the cost of public interest.

13 We call for companies to pay all taxes required by law and not use elaborate schemes to avoid paying tax.



Companies use their power in economies to demand 'tax holidays' as a condition for investment. They use the loopholes in tax regulations to reduce the level of tax they pay. Our call is for company taxes to be based on actual earnings, to account for proportional impacts, to be just and redistributive in nature. Mining corporations should pay royalties for the use of land and resources.

14 We call for companies to demonstrate that they operate in a way that balances the needs of their employees and communities and those most impacted upon and not make profit for shareholders at the expense of other interest groups.



Companies in their media reports refer to workers and local communities as 'stakeholders' in their business; however their practice shows that they do not take these stakeholders seriously. Employers involve workers in meaningless shareholders' schemes which hardly give workers any meaningful stake in the company. Company engagement with communities is often superficial. They pick and choose community leaders and groups who serve company interest.

15 We call for commitment by corporations to responsible reporting and providing free access to information on all company activities to the public.



Companies are in a cycle of destructive competition with other companies and fear community pressure on their business decisions. They tend to hide information by reporting selectively, ignoring some and talking down other impacts. Access to information is denied and every law is used to block the free flow of information to the public.

16 We call for independent monitoring of the conduct of corporations and their suppliers by local non-government and community organisations.



Audit firms linked to corporations are responsible for monitoring the company's impact on the environment. Besides being influenced by the corporations, they also avoid talking with local communities and organisations. Government departments are required by law to monitor business activities; however they tend to have low capacity and are therefore weak in their monitoring tasks. Community groups and NGOs therefore have an important role to play in monitoring the activities of governments and corporations.