**Submission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in response to the open call for input from the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises to the dated 17 January 2020.**

In response to the Working Group’s open call for input, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK) welcomes the opportunity to submit information on the issue of business, human rights and the anti-corruption agenda.

The UK Government recognises that there are a number of areas where the anti-corruption and human rights agendas interlink. We note that there has generally been a separation between the two issues in international principles and guidelines for responsible business, but we look forward to hearing from the Working Group about how these two issue areas overlap and the steps that the international community can take to address them.

The UK’s work in promoting Business and Human Rights is centred around the Government’s National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights (NAP), for the implementation of the United Nations’ Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. In line with these Principles, the UK’s NAP sets out how we meet the State’s duty to protect against human rights abuses involving businesses within our borders, and how we support access to remedy for victims of human rights abuses. As referenced in our NAP, the UK has created a number of instruments that motivate different aspects of good corporate behaviour and respect for human rights, including the UK Bribery Act, where the UK sets an international gold standard in ensuring that UK companies can now be held accountable for acts of bribery committed anywhere in the world.

The UK is acting robustly to tackle corruption through a broad legislative framework – including through the Bribery Act, the Criminal Finances Act, public registers of beneficial ownership information, and by actively enforcing anti-bribery legislation. Transparency International rates the UK as one of seven ‘active enforcers’ of the Anti-Bribery Convention. Corruption is a key barrier to economic growth, particularly in developing countries.  It reduces investment in public services, harms the business environment and holds back trade.  Tackling corruption is integral to promoting a sustainable global economy where business can compete fairly and where the benefits of economic growth can be shared across society. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office-led ‘Prosperity Fund Global Anti-Corruption Programme’ is deploying £45m over five years (2017-22) to promote inclusive sustainable growth and increase global prosperity through tackling corruption.

The UK Government recognises that human rights abuses and corruption need to be tackled from all sides. The UK Government’s Business Integrity Initiative (BII) helps international businesses guard against bribery, corruption and human rights abuses when trading with emerging markets in developing countries. Support includes practical guidance online, a tailored service for Small and Medium-Sized businesses, and grant funding for collective action initiatives. In-country support from diplomatic missions is also being trialled in Kenya, Mexico and Pakistan. We would like to encourage Working Group members and their governments to consider launching similar initiatives and would be happy to participate in any efforts to share best practice from activities, including the UK’s BII. In line with the UK Anti-Corruption Strategy, we are also exploring how transparency and anti-corruption can best be supported through our future bilateral and regional trade dialogues and trading agreements.

In other areas where there is policy alignment that will benefit both the business and human rights and anti-corruption agendas, the Working Group may want to note the UK’s updated ['Supplier Code of Conduct'](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/779660/20190220-Supplier_Code_of_Conduct.pdf), which sets the standards and behaviours expected from Government suppliers (and separately grant recipients), and reiterates the government's approach to working with suppliers. It states a zero tolerance of any form of corrupt practices. In particular, the standards set out that 'Government and suppliers must comply with all applicable human rights and employment laws in the jurisdictions in which they work.’ This includes complying with the provisions of the Modern Slavery Act 2015. In addition, suppliers must have robust means of ensuring that the subcontractors in their supply chain also comply.[[1]](#endnote-1)

The UK Government would welcome any further research into sectors where the connection between corruption and the abuse of human rights poses particular risks. We are aware of research explaining how modern slavery and other forms of exploitation are facilitated and exacerbated by corruption, e.g. reports by [Liberty Asia](https://d1r4g0yjvcc7lx.cloudfront.net/uploads/Liberty-Asia-Corruption-Briefing-Paper-FINAL-FOR-EMAIL.pdf) and [Verite and Freedom Fund](https://www.verite.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Verite-Report-Intl-Labour-Recruitment.pdf), and look forward to gaining broader insights from the Working Group as a result of the report to be published at the 44th session of the Human Rights Council in June 2020.

1. The UK Government has undertaken significant steps to advance the protection of human rights through our work to prevent modern slavery in government procurement. This year the UK will be publishing a modern slavery statement setting out the steps we are taking to identify and prevent modern slavery in central government supply chains. From 2021 onwards, ministerial departments will publish individual annual statements. In September 2019, the Cabinet Office published a [Policy Procurement Note](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/procurement-policy-note-0519-tackling-modern-slavery-in-government-supply-chains?utm_source=24547101-5fd5-4d67-9943-3b62730698a5&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate) and detailed guidance document, setting out a risk-based approach to mitigating modern slavery in government supply chains and specific measures to be adopted at each stage of the commercial life-cycle. It contains tools to support departments in this important work, including: the [Modern Slavery Assessment Tool](https://supplierregistration.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/msat), to support UK public sector organisations’ work with their suppliers to introduce robust anti-slavery practices, (following a pilot with 200 suppliers, over 1000 organisations have now completed the tool); and a refreshed [online training course](https://www.cips.org/uk-public-sector-ethics) on ethical procurement following a partnership between the Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply (CIPS), Government Commercial Function and the Home Office. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)