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**Participation in panel: *“The Global Outlook for business and human rights - key themes, drivers, trends, challenges”***

**Thank you chair and thank you for your interesting introductions. When listening to you, the following three realizations came to my mind:**

1. We all share a vision of respect for human rights in global value chains, a vision of policy coherence.
2. But there is a huge gap between that vision and realities on the ground.
3. However, there are reasons to be optimistic: From whichever angle you look at it, respect for human rights has become an important part of sustainable development. We hear from the investors that human rights is increasingly becoming the “S” in their Environmental, Social and Governance analysis. Buyers and producers increasingly work together on health, safety and labour rights issues. Building sustainable relationships with local communities has become a big driver for companies’ commitment to respect human rights. So let’s not make that perfect vision an enemy for good.

Ten years ago, the situation was quite different. NGOs and business did not share a common understanding. Since then the UNGPs (United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights) have become a tool and a common language for how to respect human rights in all sorts of business transactions.

There is a broad agreement among States of the need to step up their efforts. Whether or not we need a new international treaty is not the real divide. The real issue is between those committed to advance implementation of respect for human rights on a daily basis and those who are not demonstrating this will. For now, we see National Action Plans as the best tool for governments to turn the Guiding Principles into practice.

An increasing number of countries have already developed or decided to develop national action plans. So far, the majority have been European Union countries but several countries from Latin America and Africa have also “joined in”.

The Norwegian action plan is currently in the making. We thank those ahead of us. We see the Action Plan as an opportunity to lay the foundations for increased policy coherence. To other states “on the fence”, I will say, do embark on this National Action Plan process. It is truly a useful exercise to map practices and to engage with all key

stakeholders, in particular business. Like us, you might find that companies more than welcome the process.

National action is, however, not enough in a globalised economy. Companies should meet the same expectations wherever they operate. We need to establish a level playing field. In this respect, adjusting policies of multilateral organisations and institutions is a powerful incentive.

We are on a right track: Elements of the UNGP are found in policies of international bodies, including the OECD, the International Standards Organisation, the International Finance Corporation. They are being referred to in regional initiatives, including the European Union, the African Union, the Organization of American States, and ASEAN. But our efforts must be intensified.

One last point. States regulate markets. We are also buyers, we own companies, we grant export credits and we enter into various partnerships with business. While giving clear expectations to business is crucial, we should be cautious in giving expectations that we do not fulfil ourselves. It is therefore key that States go through their own processes to improve coherence between expectations to business and state practices. That is also levelling the playing field and a step towards more sustainable markets, for people and for the economy.

Thank you.