



International
Labour
Organization

Promotion of the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration) at the country level by tripartite appointed national focal points

An operational tool of the MNE Declaration

Questions and Answers

Multinational Enterprises and Responsible Business Conduct Unit (MULTI/RBC)

May 2026

The Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration) provides practical guidance on how to encourage the positive contribution of multinational enterprises to economic and social progress and the realization of decent work for all; and to minimize and resolve the difficulties to which their various operations may give rise.

The principles of the Declaration are intended to guide governments, employers' and workers' organizations of home and host countries of multinational enterprises (MNEs) as well as MNEs themselves in taking measures and actions based on the principles laid down in the ILO Constitution and the relevant ILO Conventions and Recommendations. It recommends that governments adopt appropriate laws and policies and take action—including in the areas of labour administration and public labour inspection—to advance the objectives of the Declaration. It underscores the role of governments of host countries of MNEs in promoting good social practices in accordance with the Declaration among MNEs operating in their territories as well as the role of governments of home countries to promote good practices among their MNEs operating abroad. It also underlines that both host and home country governments should be prepared to have consultations with each other, whenever the need arises, on the initiative of either.

Recognizing that enhancing the impact and contribution of the principles of the MNE Declaration to inclusive growth and decent work at the country level requires firm commitment from the tripartite constituents, national constituents – governments, employers and workers – are encouraged to appoint **national focal points on a tripartite basis (taking guidance from Convention No. 144) to promote the use of the MNE Declaration and its principles**, whenever appropriate and meaningful in the national context.

The promotion of the MNE Declaration at the national level by tripartite appointed national focal points is one of the operational tools adopted by the Governing Body of the International Labour Office to stimulate the uptake of the principles of the MNE Declaration by all parties addressed in the Declaration. All operational tools are listed in annex II of the MNE Declaration.

Since the Governing Body's adoption of the revised MNE Declaration in 2017 and its request to the ILO Director General (ii) to support the appointment and functioning of the national focal points to promote the use of the MNE Declaration and its principles, whenever appropriate and meaningful in the national context¹, 23 ILO Member States

¹ [Decision on the seventh item on the agenda: Recommendations of the tripartite ad hoc working group concerning the review of the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy text, annex and addenda and the interpretation procedure | International Labour Organization \(ilo.org\)](#)

(as of April 2026) have informed the ILO of the appointment of national focal points for the promotion of the MNE Declaration:

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| 1. Argentina | 13. Nepal |
| 2. Botswana | 14. Nigeria |
| 3. Brazil | 15. Norway |
| 4. Cabo Verde | 16. Pakistan |
| 5. Cameroon | 17. Peru |
| 6. Côte d'Ivoire | 18. Portugal |
| 7. Ghana | 19. Senegal |
| 8. Jamaica | 20. Sierra Leone |
| 9. Lesotho | 21. South Africa |
| 10. Madagascar | 22. Togo |
| 11. Mozambique | 23. Türkiye |
| 12. Namibia | |

The promotion of the principles of the MNE Declaration at the global, regional and national level is done through several means, as outlined in the most recent report to the ILO Governing Body on the promotion of the MNE Declaration.²

This Q&A specifically provides information on the promotion of the MNE Declaration at the national level through national focal points in response to questions the Office has received regarding the appointment process, the mandate and composition of such national focal points as well as their main activities. The document builds both on the guidance in the MNE Declaration itself and the experiences of the ILO member States that have appointed national focal points to promote the MNE Declaration and the uptake of its principles at the national level.

² For the Office report see [Promotion of the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy and responsible business conduct | International Labour Organization](#) and the decision adopted: [Decision concerning the promotion of the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy and responsible business conduct | International Labour Organization](#)

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Why are ILO member States encouraged to promote the MNE Declaration at the national level?

The aim of this Declaration is to encourage the positive contribution which multinational enterprises can make to economic and social progress and the realization of decent work for all; and to minimize and resolve the difficulties to which their various operations may give rise.

The principles of the MNE Declaration are intended to guide governments, the employers' and workers' organizations and enterprises in taking measures and actions and adopting social policies to further social progress and decent work. Its principles cover a comprehensive list of issues addressing all dimensions of the Decent Work Agenda, including job creation, skills development, social protection, formalization, working conditions and respect of fundamental principles and rights at work.

Why are ILO member States encouraged to promote MNE Declaration through tripartite appointed national focal points?

When the Governing Body adopted Annex II with the operational tools to stimulate the uptake of the principles of the MNE Declaration by all parties, it recognized that enhancing the impact and contribution of the principles of the MNE Declaration to inclusive growth and decent work at the country level requires firm commitment from the tripartite constituents. National constituents – governments, employers and workers – are therefore encouraged to appoint national focal points on a tripartite basis (taking guidance from Convention No. 144) to promote the use of the MNE Declaration and its principles, whenever appropriate and meaningful in the national context. To further stimulate the promotion at the national level, the Governing Body adopted in 2017 the decision requesting the ILO Director General (ii) to support the appointment and functioning of the national focal points to promote the use of the MNE Declaration and its principles, whenever appropriate and meaningful in the national context.

As the examples in this brief illustrate, the MNE Declaration can serve as a valuable tool for mainstreaming the Decent Work Agenda, promoting the participation of social partners and foster policy coherence across diverse national policy frameworks and support their effective implementation, including in areas such as trade and investment

policies, national labour law, investment promotion strategies, business and human rights, labour administration and labour inspection systems, social dialogue mechanisms, the enabling environment for sustainable enterprise development, productivity ecosystems, access to remedy, and support for local enterprises and workers. It offers governments and national employers' and workers' organizations the opportunity to promote decent work priorities in trade and investment, while creating space for dialogue. The MNE Declaration serves as a framework for dialogue highlighting the roles and responsibilities of the different actors to advance decent work. National focal points organize tripartite-plus dialogue platforms for the tripartite constituents and multinational enterprises to discuss opportunities and identify challenges presented by operations of multinational enterprises in the national context as well as in specific sectors. As dialogue facilitators, national focal points are also directly engaging with enterprises and investors on their contribution to job creation, skills development and the realization of decent work in the country.

1. Mandate and profile of national focal points and their appointment process

What does a national focal point for the promotion of the MNE Declaration do?

Annex II of the ILO MNE Declaration – Operational tools - provides information on the role and mandate of national focal points appointed to promote the use of the MNE Declaration and its principles.

It states that *"the national focal points' efforts to actively promote the principles of the MNE Declaration at country level could include:*

- raising awareness of principles of the MNE Declaration among government ministries and agencies, multinational enterprises and employers' and workers' organizations;
- organizing capacity-building events; and
- developing online information and dialogue platforms in local languages where possible.

National focal points with limited resources or capacity could progressively expand their outreach and activities."

It also indicates that "the national focal points may wish to organize tripartite-plus dialogue platforms for the tripartite constituents and multinational enterprises to discuss opportunities and identify challenges presented by operations of multinational enterprises in the national context. Such dialogues could build on past experiences, lessons learned and best practices; and they could also encompass dialogues between home and host countries, as outlined in paragraph 12³ of the MNE Declaration."

Experience indicates that many national focal points begin by developing a joint national plan of action or roadmap, outlining activities they may undertake—either jointly or individually—to promote the MNE Declaration in the country. This approach has proven useful in practice, including as a way to reflect on progress and, where relevant, to identify needs for ILO technical support. Such joint plans can also help facilitate coordination among national actors and highlight priorities that may be of interest to ILO development partners in areas such as responsible business conduct (RBC), trade, investment, the operations of multinational enterprises and supply chains, and the promotion of the MNE Declaration.

Initiatives undertaken by national focal points in various geographical regions include, among others:

- Mainstreaming the MNE Declaration in the Decent Work Country Programme;
- Referencing the MNE Declaration in national and sectoral policies and strategies (investment, sectoral, industrial policies,...);
- Advocating for the ratification of ILO conventions and for labour law review in line with the guidance offered by the MNE Declaration;
- Organizing roundtables with enterprises and new corporate investors to introduce them to the MNE Declaration and discuss their contribution to the realization of decent work;

³ Paragraph 12 of the MNE Declaration states: "Governments of host countries should promote good social practice in accordance with this Declaration among multinational enterprises operating in their territories. Governments of home countries should promote good social practice in accordance with this Declaration among their multinational enterprises operating abroad, having regard to the social and labour law, regulations and practices in host countries as well as to relevant international standards. Both host and home country governments should be prepared to have consultations with each other, whenever the need arises, on the initiative of either."

- Conducting studies on the impact of operations of multinational enterprises in specific sectors in the country;
- Organizing a national forum or sectoral dialogues to discuss the challenges and opportunities that enterprises present for the realization of decent work;
- Documenting good practices of enterprises implementing the principles of the MNE Declaration through corporate policies and practice;
- Ensuring synergies between their work and other policy development processes, such as the development of National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights; review process of investment policy, local content policy, due diligence requirements;
- Establishing a specific unit within the Ministry of Labour tasked with facilitating dialogue between workers, employers, government and multinational enterprises on how to better link corporate investments and operations of MNEs with decent job creation and improved local economic development opportunities;
- Creating a Working Group to coordinate actions for the promotion of the MNE Declaration across national institutions and ministries;
- Establishing a trade union network to raise awareness and train workers' representatives on trade union's rights within the context of the MNE Declaration;
- Promoting the ILO Helpdesk for Business on International Labour Standards.

Who can be the national focal points for the promotion of the MNE Declaration?

The MNE Declaration states that "National constituents – governments, employers and workers – are encouraged to appoint national focal points on a tripartite basis taking guidance from the [Tripartite Consultation \(International Labour Standards\) Convention, 1976 \(No. 144\)](#)." Representatives of the tripartite constituents are therefore at the core of the different national set ups of national focal points.

In some countries, the tripartite set-up (Ministry of Labour, EBMO(s) and Trade Union (s)) is complemented by other relevant national agencies or institutions with the objective of strengthening coherence when it comes to promoting decent work among businesses and investors. In such cases, the Ministry of Labour usually assumes a coordinating role among the focal points.

Examples include:

Sierra Leone has four national focal points as the Sierra Leone **Local Content Agency** - in charge of stimulating linkages between MNEs and local companies – formally joined the Ministry of Labour, employers and workers to promote the MNE Declaration.

Similarly, Botswana, Cabo Verde, Cameroun, Namibia and Ghana appointed its **national investment promotion agency** – in charge of foreign direct investment attraction and facilitation - as one of the national focal points, recognizing the relevance of the mandate of the national investment promotion agency for ensuring a coordinated and coherent approach in measures needed to attract MNE investments and operations that contribute to advancing decent work in the country.

A distinctive aspect of the appointment of national focal points in Nigeria is the inclusion of **both the National Human Rights Commission (responsible for the implementation of the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights) and the national investment promotion agency** alongside the ILO tripartite constituents.

A number of countries have recognized the specific role played by **national social dialogue institutions**, often established based on **Convention No. 144**, that also guides the appointment of national focal points for the promotion of the MNE Declaration. This is the case in Senegal, South Africa and Togo where the national social dialogue institution is also part of the appointed national focal points for the promotion of the MNE Declaration. Jamaica opted for the appointment of one institution and appointed its tripartite Labour Advisory Council as the unique tripartite appointed national focal point.

At what level should the national focal points be appointed?

Experience shows that appointing focal points at both the senior (lead) and technical (alternate) levels can be highly effective. In several countries, including Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Madagascar, a senior-level focal point provides strategic direction and high-level commitment, while a technical-level alternate supports day-to-day coordination and implementation. This arrangement promotes continuity, strengthens coordination between strategic and operational levels, and ensures more effective and sustained progress toward the achievement of the defined objectives.

How often should national focal points meet? What is the time investment for a national focal point?

Focal points typically determine the frequency of their meetings based on national needs, ensuring regular follow-up and progress monitoring. The time investment varies depending on the scope of activities and country context, but generally includes participation in periodic coordination meetings, follow-up on agreed actions, and ongoing communication with relevant stakeholders. It may also involve the organization and facilitation of key activities, such as awareness-raising and capacity building efforts, national dialogues and home-host country exchanges, which play a key role in advancing implementation of the principles of the MNE Declaration and in strengthening coordination among partners.

Is there any process in place to look at progress on the national action plan or roadmap for promoting the MNE Declaration?

When meeting together national focal points monitor the progress made and make any necessary adjustments to their roadmap or national plan of action. Implementation is also reviewed through multi-stakeholder national dialogues organized by the national focal points.

These dialogues provide an opportunity to:

- Present progress on key actions;
- Discuss challenges and emerging opportunities related to the realization of decent work;
- Gather feedback from national stakeholders; and
- Identify and agree on any necessary updates to the plan or roadmap.

Does the ILO have standardized terms of reference for national focal points?

The MNE Declaration encourages tripartite constituents to make a firm commitment to promoting the use of the MNE Declaration and its principles, whenever appropriate and

meaningful in the national context. The text in Annex II of the MNE Declaration provides the tripartite agreed guidance on such national focal points. The Office has not developed any standardized TORs for national focal points as it is up to the member States to define what is relevant and meaningful in the national context. Experience shows that the Ministry of Labour usually plays a lead role in coordinating the appointment of national focal points, defining their responsibilities and orchestrating national efforts for the promotion of the MNE Declaration. Each country has developed its own terms of reference taking into account Annex II of the MNE Declaration and its national context.

What process should an ILO member State follow if it wants to appoint national focal points?

The guidance provided by Convention No. 144 should inform the composition as well as appointment process of the tripartite national focal points. The Governing Body has requested the Office to support member States to establish national focal points and to develop their promotional and dialogue facilities on the MNE Declaration.

Following tripartite consultations, ILO member States are invited to inform the Office of the appointment of such national focal points and of their activities. This is generally done through a communication from the Ministry of Labour to the ILO Director General or the Director of the ILO field Office or Decent Work Team who subsequently informs the Multinational Enterprises and Responsible Business Conduct Unit (multi@ilo.org) of the appointment. Some ILO member States such as Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal decided to further formalize the appointment of their focal points by adopting a Ministerial Decree.

Are tripartite appointed focal points for the promotion of the MNE Declaration different than a tripartite project advisory board or committee?

Many ILO development cooperation projects operate with tripartite project advisory boards or committees that oversee or accompany the implementation of the project to ensure it responds to national needs and is well embedded in the national context.

National focal points for the promotion of the MNE Declaration is a national promotional mechanism linked to an ILO instrument – the MNE Declaration – and their appointment

is therefore institutional and going beyond any project duration. It reflects a firm commitment of a member State to promote the use and principles of the MNE Declaration.

Given the multiple roles that ILO tripartite constituents may play at the country level—both in policy development and in supporting programmes—members of advisory boards or committees of ILO development cooperation projects may also be appointed as national focal points for promoting the MNE Declaration. Conversely, national focal points may be invited to serve on ILO project advisory boards or committees.

2. Support offered by the ILO

What support does the ILO offer to national focal points?

“The Office supports its Member States to establish national focal points and to develop their promotional and dialogue facilitation activities on the MNE Declaration.”

The ILO provides technical assistance and specific expertise to the national focal points to support their initiatives. It also facilitates experience-sharing among the focal points, notably through the Community of Practice for the promotion of the MNE Declaration that have been created.

ILO support includes:

- Training courses for tripartite constituents on the MNE Declaration and its operational tools, including promotion at the national level through tripartite appointed national focal points;
- Capacity building for national focal points and national stakeholders on responsible business conduct, the MNE Declaration and other relevant international instruments;
- Capacity building or technical assistance for the active participation of national focal points in relevant national policy development and implementation process to foster policy coherence (such as for building synergies between their actions and business and human rights processes);
- Methodologies for national focal points to facilitate national and home-host dialogues based on the approach of the MNE Declaration;

- Development of policy briefs and training tools (such as the self-guided E-learning module: Business and Decent Work – an introduction to the MNE Declaration);
- Self-assessment tool for enterprises based on the MNE Declaration;
- Guidance on how workers and trade unions can use the MNE Declaration in practice;
- Technical review of national policies and strategies;
- Support for the creation of working groups, networks and dialogue platforms;
- Assistance for the development of indicators;
- Technical review of studies on challenges and opportunities for the realization of decent work and the impact of multinational enterprises;
- Support for the documentation of good practices
- Facilitation of exchanges among national focal points, including home-host country dialogues as outlined in para 12 of the MNE Declaration and its annex II.

Through its own means as well as development cooperation projects, the ILO supports constituents in gaining a better understanding of the MNE Declaration so that they can make better use of the instrument. The Office also provides support – resources permitting – for the organization of key activities – promotional and dialogue facilitation – that are included in a national action plan or roadmap adopted by national focal points.

3. Synergies with other international instruments

How does the work of the national focal points relate to other international instruments promoting responsible business conduct and their follow-up mechanisms?

Three main instruments have become the key global reference points for responsible business conduct and outline how companies can operate in a responsible way – avoiding adverse business impacts and enhancing positive contribution to socio and economic development: the ILO MNE Declaration, **the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct (OECD MNE Guidelines)**

and the **UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UN Guiding Principles)**. Each instrument cross references the other instruments while recognizing the unique character of each instrument, their complementarity and alignment in outlining roles and responsibilities between governments and business. Therefore, by promoting the principles in one instrument, focal points can also help advance the principles reflected in the others.

For example:

- Chapter V on Employment and Industrial Relations of the OECD MNE Guidelines is aligned with ILO labour standards and echoes relevant provisions of the MNE Declaration. Its commentary refers to the MNE Declaration indicating that the ILO MNE Declaration can be of use in understanding the OECD MNE Guidelines to the extent that it is of a greater degree of elaboration.
- the due diligence approach set out in the UN Guiding Principles on business and human rights under its pillar “corporate responsibility to respect human rights” was incorporated in various chapters of the 2011 revision of the OECD MNE Guidelines, thus expanding the due diligence approach to other areas of business responsibilities. In 2017 the ILO MNE Declaration was substantially revised to include, inter alia, a new para 10 that references the UNGPs and due diligence. That para provides further orientations to enterprises on how to gauge human rights risks in their own operations and as a result of their business relationships: “(...) enterprises – including multinational enterprises – should identify and assess any actual or potential adverse human rights impacts with which they may be involved either through their own activities or as a result of their business relationships. This process should involve meaningful consultation with potentially affected groups and other relevant stakeholders including workers’ organizations, as appropriate to the size of the enterprise and the nature and context of the operation. For the purpose of achieving the aim of the MNE Declaration, this process should take account of the central role of freedom of association and collective bargaining as well as industrial relations and social dialogue as an ongoing process” (paragraph 10 e).

By promoting principles of the MNE Declaration, national focal points contribute to the promotion of responsible business conduct in line with the key international instruments and are fostering a better uptake of the labour and employment dimension of the RBC agenda.

What is the relationship between national focal points for the promotion of the MNE Declaration and the OECD National Contact Points (NCP) for Responsible Business Conduct?

In relation to promotion of the MNE Declaration at the national level Annex II states that *"Where similar tools and processes exist in relation to the principles of the MNE Declaration, governments are encouraged to facilitate involvement of the social partners in them."* Although not explicitly referenced, it is often understood that such a similar process or tool is undertaken by the National Contact Points for Responsible Business Conduct (NCP for RBC) established in accordance with the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct. The structure of these bodies as well as the scope and breath of their activities also differ according to the national context.⁴

All countries that are members of the OECD or adhere to the OECD MNE Guidelines have to duty to set up a NCP for RBC. The mandate of such NCP is twofold: 1) promote the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on RBC (which cover a wide range of topics from human rights, employment to environment, corruption and taxation), and 2) to handle cases (referred to as "specific instances") of non-observance of the Guidelines by a company operating in or from an Adherent country as a non-judicial grievance mechanism. To date, 52 governments have established an NCP for RBC.⁵

Tripartite appointed national focal points under the MNE Declaration are an expression of commitment of ILO Members States to promote the application of the ILO MNE Declaration and its principles at the national level. National focal points for the promotion of the MNE Declaration commit to raising awareness of the principles of the Declaration, organizing capacity-building events as well as dialogues bringing together governments and employers' and workers' organizations and multinational enterprises to identify decent work opportunities and challenges and agree on joint actions to address them. They also play a key role in home-host country dialogues to foster partnerships for advancing decent work in supply chains. Different to the NCPs for RBC, ILO member States have no obligation to appoint national focal points but are encouraged to do so to enhance the promotion of the MNE Declaration at the national level.

⁴ See <https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/networks/national-contact-points/OECD-2024-Annual-Report-on-NCP-Activity.pdf>

⁵ – [National Contact Points for Responsible Business Conduct | OECD](#) and the 2024 Annual report of the NCPs [OECD-2024-Annual-Report-on-NCP-Activity.pdf](#)

NCPs for RBC and national focal points for the promotion of the MNE Declaration work in synergy considering the complementarities of the instruments underpinning their respective mandate (as highlighted in the Q&A above).

In four ILO member States - Argentina, Brazil, Peru and Portugal - the national focal point for the promotion of the MNE Declaration operates separately from or in parallel to the NCP on RBC. They are initiated by different ministries (Ministry of Labour in case of the national focal point for the promotion of the MNE Declaration and Ministry of Economy in case of the NCP for RBC) and focus on other areas of work (promotional/dialogue-oriented for the national focal point for the promotion of the MNE Declaration; complaints handling for the NCP for RBC. It is interesting to note that Norway extended the mandate of its National Contact Point (NCP) for Responsible Business Conduct established in accordance with the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct to also include the promotion of the MNE Declaration.

How can national focal points contribute to National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights?

National Action Plans (NAPs) on Business and Human Rights (BHR) have become an important means for comprehensive implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights at the country level. They can help ensure that all government actors are working in a coherent manner on policies and other measures to enhance the protection and respect human rights in business operations and have also served as an important mechanism for governments to engage in dialogue with stakeholders, including enterprises, social partners and civil society.

The ILO has jointly produced with the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights, a [briefing note](#) and training materials⁶ that explain the interconnectivity between international labour standards, the UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights, and NAPs on Business and Human Rights. These resources are addressed to governments, employers' and workers' organizations, who all have a critical role in the development, adoption and implementation of such NAPs to assist them in identifying synergies and opportunities for enhancing the labour dimension of NAPs on BHR. The note and its accompanied materials also serve as a guide for national focal points for the promotion of the MNE Declaration to engage in the development process of a NAP, thus fostering policy coherence and ensuring synergies between efforts to promote the ILO

⁶ See The MNE Declaration and the Business and Human Rights agenda:
<https://www.ilo.org/resource/other/mne-declaration-and-business-and-human-rights-agenda>

MNE Declaration and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights at the country level.

A number of countries refer to the MNE Declaration in their National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights including Argentina, Belgium, Chile, Colombia, Malaysia, Pakistan, France, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Peru, Slovenia, South Korea, and the United States.

For further information: www.ilo.org/mnedeclaration or multi@ilo.org