



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

5th April 2023

Jean Gauthier

RE: BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of your concerns about business and human rights. I have read your comments with interest.

Let me begin by assuring you that HM Government (HMG) is committed to promoting the protection and respect of human rights in business, both at home and abroad.

The UK was the first country to create a 'National Action Plan' to implement the 'UN's Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights' (UNGPs), widely regarded as the authoritative international framework to steer practical action by governments and businesses worldwide on this important and pressing agenda.

This plan sets out what is expected in regard to the conduct of UK businesses, including compliance with relevant laws and respect for human rights; treating the risk of causing human rights abuses as a legal compliance issue; adopting appropriate due diligence policies; and consulting those who could potentially be affected. HMG expects all UK businesses to respect human rights throughout their operations, in line with the UNGPs, including in regard to their supply chains.

HMG is also taking a number of steps, through the *Modern Slavery Act 2015*, to ensure no British organisation, public or private, unwittingly or otherwise, is complicit, through their supply chains, in human rights violations. Section 54 of the Act established the UK as the first country in the world to require businesses (with a turnover of £36 million or more) to report annually on steps taken to prevent modern slavery in their operations and supply chains.

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Department of Business and Trade also produce guidance to assist businesses in exercising such due diligence in countries where concerns around human rights exist. Indeed, although trade is vital for our economy and future prosperity, it need not come at the expense of our values or international obligations on human rights. I can assure you that the Government continues to assess and consider appropriate action in response to egregious human rights violations and abuses globally, and that this goes much wider than considering trade alone, drawing on the wider tools at the Government's disposal.

As President and host of COP26, the UK has led the way on securing agreement from 141 world leaders to work together to halt and reverse forest loss by 2030 under the 'Glasgow Leader's Declaration on Forests and Land Use'. Signatory countries account for over 90 percent of the world's forests, including first-time commitments from Brazil and China. At home, HMG has introduced world-leading due diligence legislation through the *Environment Act* to tackle illegal deforestation in UK supply chains.

The UK's Presidency of the G7 in 2021, and the resulting commitments from G7 members to tackle forced labour in global supply chains, clearly demonstrates our country's ongoing commitment to ending modern slavery. I have no doubt that Ministers will continue these efforts going forward.



In light of the full range of action across Government, outlined above, I do not, as you suggest, think that a new business, human rights and environment law is required.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Tom Pursglove', with a horizontal line underneath.

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**