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RESPONSABILITÉ DES ENTREPRISES

Emily Dwyer  
Coordinator, Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability

*SENT VIA EMAIL*

February 21, 2020

**Re: Public Letter: Canadian civil society questions and concerns regarding upcoming CORE visit to South America**

Dear Ms. Dwyer,

Thank you for your letter of February 14 sent on behalf of CNCA member organizations who work in partnership with Colombian and Brazilian organizations, unions and peoples.

As you correctly note, the CORE is planning a mission to Colombia and Brazil from March 23-April 3. The mission is at the invitation of the Canadian Embassies in Bogota and Brasilia for the purpose of playing a key role in their Government of Canada Responsible Business Conduct programming. Participation in these events provides the CORE with an opportunity to raise awareness of its mandate, draft standard operating procedures (SOPs), and anticipated complaint and review mechanism with Canadian Trade Commissioners as well as with local government officials, civil society organizations, academics, intergovernmental organizations, and representatives of Canadian companies.

We have received a briefing from both Embassies that includes information on situations and risks related to HRDs and other vulnerable groups. We are working directly with each mission to ensure compliance with the Voices at Risk guidelines.

CORE's overarching approach for any mission is to meet with representative from its three key stakeholder groups: public (government), private (companies) and plural (individuals, communities and organizations). This protocol flows from the international Ombud value to be neutral and objective: a value achieved through the best practice of hearing the positions and perspectives of all parties. As such, while this mission is initiated by government invitation, CORE began reaching out to Canadian civil society, including the CNCA and members of its network, in January for meeting recommendations to ensure it receives a balanced perspective of the issues and concerns in both countries related to CORE's mandate. We are still in the planning stage with the ability to incorporate your recommendations into the mission program. Having said that, responding to recommendations will become increasingly challenging the closer we get to the date of the mission.

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At this point in the planning stage, the only meetings scheduled outside of the events hosted by the Embassies, is the visit to Gran Tierra's operations in the Department of Putumayo. The Shift Project referred Gran Tierra to the CORE as a company actively engaged with them to improve its RBC in Colombia. The visit to Putumayo is to provide the CORE with an opportunity to learn about the company's human rights portfolio and directly observe the environmental and cultural programs it has implemented to address local concerns. A CORE only meeting with indigenous and afro-descendants communities is included in the program.

As the trip to Putumayo involves meeting with indigenous communities, the CORE is in the process of identifying a Canadian indigenous person to participate in the Colombia mission as a special advisor to the Ombud. Our search is ongoing and I re-invite you to suggest possible candidates for this role. If we are unable to identify the right person in time to participate in this mission, all names received will go on a roster of indigenous experts for future engagement possibly for missions but most certainly to conduct research and provide advice on business and human rights issues related to internationally recognized indigenous rights.

The CORE values and needs the input of the CNCA and its member organizations to optimize its effectiveness and avoid the risks clearly articulated in your letter. I accept that informal meetings and email inquiries should not be the only way in which the CORE engages with stakeholders when it is planning visits to countries affected by Canadian corporate activity. CORE has relied on GAC protocols and guidelines for country missions as a starting point with the intention of developing CORE specific protocols. We will reach out to all our stakeholders, including the CNCA and its member organizations, for input on it.

Warm regards,



Sheri Meyerhoffer

Ombud

Office of Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise|

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