

# Concept

## Meaningful dialogue



# Table of Contents

- 1. CONCEPT OF MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE ..... 3**
  - PREFACE ..... 3
  - INTRODUCTION ..... 3
  - CONCEPT DESIGN ..... 5
- 2. ELEMENTS OF MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE ..... 7**
  - BUSINESS CASE ..... 7
  - COMMITMENT ..... 7
  - INCLUSION ..... 9
  - TRANSPARENCY ..... 11
  - PROCESS DESIGN ..... 13
  - CONTACT ..... 15
  - ORGANISING DIALOGUE MEETINGS ..... 18
  - INTERNAL PROCESSES ..... 19
  - COLLABORATION ..... 20
  - KNOWLEDGE ..... 22
- 3. FOUNDATIONS OF MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE ..... 24**
  - OECD GUIDELINES FOR DUE DILIGENCE ..... 24
  - SER DIALOGUE SKILLS ..... 26
  - HUMANIZING BUSINESS ..... 27
  - MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE ACTION RESEARCH ..... 29
- ATTACHMENTS ..... 30**
  - ATTACHMENT 1 – POLICY ELEMENTS OF MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE ACCORDING TO THE OECD ..... 30
  - ATTACHMENT 2 – QUESTIONS FOR FINDING A SUITABLE FACILITATOR ..... 30
  - ATTACHMENT 3 – QUESTIONS TO ASSESS A POTENTIAL COLLABORATING PARTY ..... 30
  - ATTACHMENT 4 – SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR ENGAGING IN MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE ..... 31
  - ATTACHMENT 5 – LIST OF CASE STUDIES ..... 31
  - ATTACHMENT 6 – LIST OF ADVISORY GROUP MEMBERS ..... 32
  - ATTACHMENT 7 – LIST OF COMPANIES IN FOCUS GROUP ..... 32
  - ATTACHMENT 8 – LIST OF EXPERTS ..... 32
  - ATTACHMENT 9 - BIBLIOGRAPHY ..... 33
- COLOPHON ..... 34**

# 1. Concept of meaningful dialogue

## Preface

Companies with international supply chains often want to engage in dialogue with their stakeholders. They do this for a variety of reasons, for example because they want to pay attention to people and the environment, they wish to comply with the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises (OECD Guidelines) or because a civil society organisation made them aware about issues or risks in their supply chain.

This document is a first step toward a generally applicable concept of meaningful stakeholder dialogue. It provides an understanding of what meaningful stakeholder dialogue is, how companies should approach it and what actions they could take to engage in dialogue.

The SER wrote this concept in light of its project 'Meaningful dialogue in international chains', which was supported by the Goldschmeding Foundation.

### Reading guide

Chapter 2 presents 10 elements of meaningful dialogue. These form the building blocks for entering into meaningful dialogue with stakeholders and are the result of an extensive study of theory and practice of stakeholder dialogue in international supply chains. The elements provide insight into the considerations, preconditions and suggested actions to conduct stakeholder dialogue in a meaningful manner. The third chapter sets out the foundations of the project.

This working document is a living document that will be updated and further developed with new insights and perspectives based on practical experience. The information in the document forms the basis for tools, training and handouts to be developed later in the project, which will present priorities and specific suggested actions for companies. This document is therefore not a final product and should not be assessed as such.

## Introduction

Many companies with international supply chains want to have a dialogue with the people who are directly or indirectly affected by their business activities. As prescribed by the OECD, this dialogue should take place in a meaningful way.<sup>1</sup>

Practice shows, however, that for many companies it is a great challenge to enter into dialogue or to make it meaningful. For example, there is insufficient understanding about what 'meaningful' means in practice and how to achieve this. In addition, companies are seeking ways to scale up meaningful stakeholder dialogue.

The concept set out below offers guidance for companies that – for the first time or otherwise – enter into dialogue with their stakeholders. It includes an overview of considerations, core values, preconditions and suggested actions that a company can apply to the specific context of the dialogue to be conducted. If a company considers the 10 elements integrally and recognizes their interrelatedness, a dialogue will be prepared, implemented and followed through in a manner that is meaningful to all parties involved.

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<sup>1</sup> Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2018), *OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct*, p. 18.

### Demarcation of stakeholder dialogue

In the context of due diligence literature and OECD Guidelines, many speak of the concept of 'stakeholder engagement'.<sup>2</sup> This concept, however, specifically focuses on stakeholder dialogue rather than the broader concept of stakeholder engagement. Stakeholder engagement focuses on the interaction between a company and its stakeholders in a broad sense. This includes all contacts between these parties, including (unilaterally) informing, consulting, negotiating, meeting and speaking with each other.<sup>3</sup> Stakeholders are people or groups of people with interests that can be harmed by the activities of a company.

Stakeholder dialogue is a far-reaching form of stakeholder engagement and focuses on the actual exchange of perspectives, ideas, experiences, needs and concerns between a company and its stakeholders to understand and value each other better, and reinforce relationships. By sincerely listening to each other and by free exchange of views, new insights and meanings can arise. This is the basis for mutual understanding of short- and long-term interests and a sustainable business relationship that goes beyond just a monetary transaction.

### Dialogue types

This concept design is predominantly developed for companies to engage in two common types of dialogue. Some sections of the concept will be more widely applicable, e.g. by NGOs and trade unions and/or for dialogue types. The primary focus, however, is on the perspective of companies in conducting

- 1) multi-stakeholder dialogues in the Netherlands or abroad within supply chains in which possible risks and solutions are talked about more broadly;
- 2) conversations regarding identified risks and/or wrongdoings in the supply chain.

These two dialogue types differ from each other.

Multi-stakeholder dialogues are often broader in terms of subject-matter and are conducted over a longer term. Their goal is to listen to different perspectives and interests and to search for possible problems and solutions by gaining a mutual understanding. There is more emphasis on building mutual trust, designing an inclusive process, and the collaboration of parties with conflicting interests.

In contrast, conversations regarding identified risks and/or wrongdoings are focused on solving a specific issue – identified by either the company or the (external) stakeholders – in the short term. Important factors to consider are transparency between the parties and contact based on equality, knowledge about the alleged issue and clear internal processes to be able to implement solutions.

This document contains a concept that applies to both types of dialogues. The premise of the concept is that within every dialogue, there must be continuous consideration of the elements that should receive greater emphasis. No dialogue breakdown has been made within this document, as the theoretical underpinnings to do so are too limited and the evidence of the weight of a precondition or action is currently insufficient. This will be further studied in the following stage of the project and incorporated in the end products if necessary.

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<sup>2</sup> OECD (2018), *OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct*, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> OECD (2017), *OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement in the Extractive Sector*, p. 20.

## Concept design

The concept design consists of 10 elements, that are divided into four categories:

- Business case
- Criteria
- Implementation
- Support

Every element contains 2 to 5 preconditions and every precondition is connected to suggested activities. This section summarizes both the conceptual and practical description of each element.

Element	Description
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### BUSINESS CASE

Business case	Companies engage in dialogue with their stakeholders for three reasons: sincere interest in the needs, concerns and wants of their stakeholders; willingness or need to meet due diligence requirements; financial and economic benefits.
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### CRITERIA

Commitment	Companies have an influence on, and a responsibility for, the risks in their supply chain. Companies must be receptive to understanding the situation and experiences of their stakeholders in this respect, and should allocate time, resources and effort to accommodate this.
Inclusion	Stakeholders must be appropriately and effectively identified and represented, and must be actively supported in their participation in a dialogue to ensure that their needs and concerns are heard and included in the business considerations.
Transparency	The provision of sufficient, relevant and correct information enables stakeholders to be able to take informed decisions during a dialogue trajectory. Transparency contributes to building trust between stakeholders and diminishes power unbalances in relationships.

### IMPLEMENTATION

Process design	Pre-designing the dialogue process brings focus to the dialogue. A key point is the critical assessment of goals and the drafting of a realistic timeline.
Contact	Contact between the company and its stakeholders forms the basis of a dialogue process and contributes to the building trust and constructive collaboration. Interpersonal contact, listening, and a long-term perspective are fundamental in this respect.
Organising dialogue meetings	When organizing meetings, coordination of the purpose and form of the dialogue, careful preparation and appropriate moderation are important to ensure that stakeholders are sufficiently heard and that the objectives of the dialogue are achieved.

### SUPPORT

Internal processes	Operational, governance and supporting activities within the company need to be aligned to create a business context in which stakeholder dialogue can have an impact. Specific attention must be paid to management, communication and budget.
Collaboration	Preparing and/or following up on a dialogue together with others will result in a more effective and richer process, which enjoys broader support.

Knowledge	Knowledge of the legal, political, cultural and social context is necessary during all stages of dialogue in order to understand issues, propose realistic solutions, and identify opportunities and challenges.
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CONCEPT

## **2. Elements of meaningful dialogue**

### **Business Case**

This overarching element provides insight into the reasons why a company should - or should want to - engage in meaningful dialogue. What is the added value to the company?

#### Added value for companies

Engaging in meaningful stakeholder dialogue creates added value for companies in three areas. First of all, meaningful stakeholder dialogue enables companies to act on the behalf of others. If a company strives to act with respect for others and to avoid causing negative impact, meaningful dialogue contributes to the understanding and actions needed to achieve this goal.

Second, meaningful stakeholder dialogue offers benefits in terms of sustainability. Engaging in dialogue with stakeholders will improve the relationships between the parties, often resulting in long-term partnerships. Engaging with stakeholders aligns with the OECD Guidelines and increases a company's knowledge regarding risks and possible actions.

Third, meaningful stakeholder dialogue can offer financial benefits. Identifying risks at an early stage prevents emerging issues from escalating. Escalation can lead, among others, to strikes, formal complaints or lawsuits, resulting in lengthy legal proceedings for the company which cost a lot of time and money and damage the company's reputation.

#### Added value for stakeholders

In addition to the benefits for the company itself, the other stakeholders in a dialogue will also benefit.

For suppliers, dialogue will result in a better relationship with customers, a better understanding of IRBC risks, commercial perspectives for mitigating these risks and improved knowledge. In addition, suppliers can use the experience gained through dialogue with a (Dutch) company to discuss topics, risks and/or wrongdoings with their own suppliers and with other customers. This can improve their competitive position; in addition, this will contribute to increasing interest in and support for IRBC topics in the relevant sector.

Civil society organisations have an intrinsic reason to tackle risks in international supply chains through dialogue. At the same time, they cannot go into all requests for participation due to time and capacity considerations. Civil society organisations will seek participation when a dialogue aligns with their (strategic) goals, when they can establish new and relevant contact, can learn something from other parties involved and can benefit from collaboration with companies in relation to due diligence.

### **Commitment**

Commitment is the willingness to take action and is necessary to guarantee that the company does in fact engage in dialogue with stakeholders. In the context of meaningful dialogue it is particularly important to bear in mind that a dialogue is often not a one-off project with a beginning and an end. Rather, it is a lengthy process that is subject to continual change, is very context-dependent and, more importantly, a process that does not always lead to the desired results. It requires dedication, learning capacity and willingness within the company to fail and start over.

Meaningful dialogue cannot be approached as a 'tick the box' exercise. If it is approached as a process with intrinsic value<sup>4</sup>, the options within the company are increased to carefully shape and implement meaningful stakeholder dialogue based on a long-term approach. When complex or systemic problems are concerned, such as freedom of association, dialogue often requires a great deal of time and resources. The commitment of the CEO or the management team is essential to ensure these resources are made available.

#### Commitment of companies

A company's primary interest is generally to make profit or grow (rapidly). These interests can influence the reason for engaging in dialogue with stakeholders. Although commitment is difficult to measure, in this concept the following requirements are fundamental for commitment:

- There is awareness of the responsibility and influence that you have as a company regarding the risks in production countries, respecting and promoting fundamental (employment) rights and compliance with the legislation of countries where you procure products and materials.
- Willingness to sincerely try to understand the different perspectives and interests that the various parties have of the situation. Willingness to learn from the others, again and again.

This commitment is reflected by including meaningful dialogue in the company's IRBC policy (see Attachment 1 for further instructions from the OECD Guidelines) and by preparing a strategy to implement the policy on stakeholder dialogue. Commitment is also reflected by actively supporting the policy and taking all signals and complaints that reach the company seriously.

Establishing a policy regarding meaningful dialogue should be accompanied by answering questions which require careful internal discussion and review. For example, how to determine how much support is offered to stakeholders in preventing or solving a problem that has been identified by means of a dialogue. It is a point for attention to determine where precisely the maximum lies and what the consequences are in relation to the approach to meaningful dialogue.

This discussion should be accompanied by establishing the company's position on IRBC topics and to what extent the company wishes to discuss these topics during a stakeholder dialogue. In order to create support for the policy and to take account of the voice of relevant stakeholders, the policy will ideally be drawn up in consultation with stakeholders. This ensures that the stakeholders are familiar with the most recent policy and they can hold the company to account. Lastly, the policy should be regularly updated with changes in business activities or approach to stakeholder dialogue, based on experiences and understanding gained through dialogue.

#### Commitment of other parties

If the initiating company shows commitment, this will increase the commitment of the stakeholders in a dialogue. In turn, they are more likely to help prepare and attend the dialogue, and take any necessary actions. Commitment of other stakeholders often depends on the commitment of the company itself.

Mutual commitment is necessary to create co-ownership of the process, with all parties willing to actively contribute. It is, however, often difficult to determine or estimate the commitment

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<sup>4</sup> OECD, *Due Diligence Guidance for Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement*, pp. 28-29; Frank Peters (2022), *Van winst naar waarde*, p. 182.



of the relevant stakeholders to a dialogue. This can lead to uncertainty regarding the process within the company, resulting in the dialogue being conducted with a lack of conviction. That is why it is extremely important that a company is aware of the context of the other stakeholders.

There are various reasons for changing or limited commitment on the part of stakeholders. With civil society organisations in production countries such a decrease in commitment can, for example, be a result of the narrowing scope for these organisations to operate at both the local and the international level. Civil society is under pressure in many countries, which results in limited room for manoeuvre, capacity and financial resources. As a result, they can no longer speak openly, and find it more difficult to share information and to commit to (lengthy) dialogues.

For suppliers, limited commitment usually arises from a lack of long-term commitment regarding the buying company's willingness to order, and fear of reprisals in case of shortcomings in addressing IRBC topics. Limited commitment is reinforced by indirect business relationships, if the intermediary does not demonstrate sufficient support for the importance of IRBC and does not emphasise the importance of IRBC to the supplier.

## **Inclusion**

A dialogue is inclusive if stakeholders are identified, represented and actively supported in their participation in a suitable and effective manner.

### Importance

Involving the right parties and individuals is necessary for a meaningful dialogue, as this ensures that the needs and concerns of (affected) stakeholders are heard and considered.<sup>5</sup> Companies should avoid engaging only those stakeholders with whom they have existing relationships. By speaking with stakeholders directly – or with representatives of stakeholders – instead of speaking with third parties or only existing contacts, a company will obtain reliable information at the source, getting to the core of an issue more quickly. This will lead to sustainable solutions that are supported by stakeholders. In addition, an inclusive process results in greater credibility of the company initiating the dialogue, as it shows that the company is willing to listen to all stakeholders - including critical ones.

### Challenges

Conducting an inclusive dialogue is not easy in practice. It is often difficult to identify who should participate in the dialogue and to engage these stakeholders in a meaningful manner. In some cases, stakeholders are represented by third parties and it must be verified whether this representation is appropriate.

It is also often a challenge to come into contact with the most vulnerable stakeholders or to enable them to safely participate in a dialogue due to their marginalised position.

In particular, investing in establishing a relationship of trust with these vulnerable groups takes time and effort. Nevertheless, it is key to tackling these challenges. The earlier a first step is taken, the quicker experience is gained and relationships established.

### Preconditions and possible actions

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<sup>5</sup> Peters, *Van winst naar waarde*, p. 181; UN Global Compact Network Germany (UN GCG) (2022), What makes stakeholder engagement meaningful? 5 insights from practice, p. 9.

1) Identify the right stakeholders for the dialogue.<sup>6</sup> An inclusive dialogue starts with identifying the right stakeholders. Stakeholders are people or groups of people with interests which can be harmed by the company's activities. The OECD draws a distinction between relevant stakeholders and affected stakeholders.<sup>7</sup> Relevant stakeholders are stakeholders who must be engaged in connection with specific business activities. Affected stakeholders are stakeholders who experience or have experienced actual negative impact.<sup>8</sup>

- Take the time to do an accurate and thorough stakeholder analysis, to avoid ending up at the table with illegitimate and/or irrelevant representatives, or that a group of stakeholders is overlooked.
- Collaboration with (local) parties like (factory) trade unions, NGOs, informal action groups, embassies or direct suppliers, contributes to approaching and engaging the right stakeholders. They often have relevant contacts, information and networks. The local company representation can help with this. For more information, see the element 'Collaboration'.
- Keep the stakeholder analysis up-to-date to ensure that you engage in dialogue with the most relevant stakeholders.<sup>9</sup>

2) The right stakeholders are at the table.

- When the right stakeholders have been identified, make sure that they are at the table during the dialogue. This requires paying attention to the relationship and transparent communication about the goal and the premise of the dialogue. See the elements 'Contact' and 'Transparency' for further guidance.
- Prioritise the most vulnerable or most disadvantaged stakeholders. Always ask who is not at the table and how those who are not participating, can still be given the opportunity to contribute. Input can be requested separately, e.g., before or after a dialogue.
- Think about who should represent a party during the dialogue. Consider an employee's knowledge, background, seniority and decision-making authority or mandate. Determine who is the appropriate person to engage in dialogue.
  - The presence of a senior employee or CEO will indicate the urgency of a topic. Their presence can, however, also act as an inhibition to others.
  - An IRBC employee often has specific knowledge of background information about a problem.
  - An employee with decision-making authority at the table ensures that decisions can be made quickly.
  - An employee who has a lot of influence within a company can make changes and ensure impact.
- Consider the size of the group. What number of participants is effective? A small group makes it possible to quickly achieve a result by means of a pragmatic approach. Achieving quick results is less likely with a big group. A bigger group, however, does allow varied perspectives to be shared.
- Offer support to stakeholders to enable their participation. Remove barriers to participation by offering translation services, training, child care, transportation, compensation for missed work time, but also by taking local public holidays into consideration.<sup>10</sup>

3) Stakeholders are properly represented: be critical about the way in which (vulnerable) stakeholders are represented by a (local) party. Where necessary, representation of stakeholders must be legitimate (legally representative). Representatives must feel they can

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<sup>6</sup> OECD, *OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement*, p. 44.

<sup>7</sup> OECD, *OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct*, p. 48.

<sup>8</sup> Rightsholders are a special category of stakeholders. These are stakeholders whose human rights or collective rights are or may be harmed. They are often the most vulnerable stakeholders.

<sup>9</sup> OECD, *Due Diligence Guidance for Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement*, p. 25.

<sup>10</sup> OECD, *OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement*, pp. 55 – 56.

be open about how they communicate with their rank and file and how they present the views of their rank and file.<sup>11</sup>

- Verify whether the stakeholders representatives are appropriately serving the rank and file. Ask questions such as: Is stakeholder diversity acknowledged by the representatives?; Are stakeholders involved when choosing representatives?; Is feedback on the information from a dialogue presented to the rank and file in a correct and inclusive manner?

4) The unequal power relationship among stakeholders is addressed by taking the position of marginalised groups like women, migrants, minorities and people with a disability into account.<sup>12</sup>

- Apply a gender and minority lens in stakeholder analysis and selection to prevent vulnerable groups from being excluded.
- Choose the right language for communicating with different stakeholders. If necessary, provide support to address language barriers. For example, by communicating in writing and verbally, having stakeholders participate in their native language or minimising the use of (technical) jargon.<sup>13</sup>
- Consider the composition of the group of participants during a meeting. There might be an unequal power relationship between participants, e.g. between vulnerable employees and company representatives or between trade union members and management. This can limit the openness of the dialogue and give participants the feeling that they are not equal. A diverse participant field can decrease the effect of differences in power.
- Work with your company's inclusion and diversity team to address unconscious bias during dialogues as much as possible.

5) The safety of (vulnerable) stakeholders is guaranteed. Participation may not lead to negative consequences, such as dismissal or intimidation.<sup>14</sup>

- Enshrine your commitment to protecting the rights of stakeholders in your IRBC or stakeholder policy<sup>15</sup> and actively demonstrate your commitment.
- Work together with (local) parties who can make vulnerable stakeholders feel at ease.
- As a company, actively demonstrate that participation in a dialogue has no negative commercial consequences for stakeholders. Also emphasise that sharing insights with companies and/or investors can in time ensure that problems are addressed.
- Monitor the impact of participation by (vulnerable) stakeholders and ensure that their participation does not lead to repercussions.
- Verify with vulnerable stakeholders whether the agreements that were made have reached them.

## Transparency

Sufficient and correct provision of information and communication form the basis of transparency. Transparent communication with stakeholders – regarding, among other things, the intended goal of a dialogue, background information on agenda items, relevant process updates and follow ups – ensures that they engage in dialogue with the right expectations and know what can and cannot be achieved and whether their interests are sufficiently recognised

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<sup>11</sup> OECD, *OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement*, p. 49.

<sup>12</sup> OECD, *OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement*, p. 44.

<sup>13</sup> OECD, *OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement*, p. 55; UN GCG, *Stakeholder Engagement in Human Rights Due Diligence*, p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> UN GCG, twentyfifty Ltd. (2014), *Stakeholder Engagement in Human Rights Due Diligence*, p. 40; UN Global Compact Network Netherlands, Oxfam Novib, Shift, (2016) *Doing business with respect for human rights, A guidance tool for companies*, p. 99.

<sup>15</sup> Based on recommendations from the UN: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/EXECUTIVE-SUMMARY-Human-Rights-Defenders-and-the-role-of-business-en.pdf>

and considered in the process.<sup>16</sup> Full transparency of all parties involved is not always possible. Providing sufficient information implies that a company at all times strives for full transparency and does not intentionally withhold or distort information.

### Importance

Transparency from companies (and stakeholders) is necessary for meaningful dialogue because it helps minimize existing power relationships, as information is often equal to power, thereby contributing to equality between stakeholders and the company. If a company engages in transparent dialogue, it shows that it is willing to provide openness, even if the matter concerns sensitive topics or harms the company's knowledge position. This contributes to the company's credibility when sincerely considering stakeholder interests and needs. This places transparency at the basis of trust and mutual understanding. If a company does not act transparently, stakeholders might become suspicious as to the company's intentions, which – in the worst case scenario – might result in a crisis of trust.<sup>17</sup>

It is beneficial to be transparent within the company about the company's own intentions, goals and ambitions regarding stakeholder dialogue.<sup>18</sup> This will manage internal expectations and increase the understanding at the (top) management level and among other colleagues about existing stakeholder dialogues. More information on internal transparency can be found under 'Internal Processes'.

### Preconditions and possible actions

Transparency presumes the following core values and actions to achieve compliance:

- 1) Clarity
  - Communicate clearly with participants regarding all aspects of a dialogue so that participants can come to the table with the right expectations.
  - Refer to policy and/or strategy regarding stakeholder dialogue, so that it is clear for stakeholders when, how often and with what goal they will be involved.
- 2) Timeliness, relevance and completeness.<sup>19</sup> As the driver of the dialogue process, take responsibility to:
  - Share information in time and proactively, in particular relating to important decision making. For example, when new business activities are initiated or when remediation measures are developed.<sup>20</sup>
  - Prior to a dialogue, hand out the agenda, relevant documents and, if necessary, the participants list of the meeting so that stakeholders can prepare properly. During and after the dialogue, hand out updates about the process, the decisions made and the follow-up steps, including if the outcome were to be that no further action is/can be taken. Give feedback on the performance of agreements that have been made.
  - Be consistent when providing information. Be predictable in the timing of information sharing and the contents of the communication.<sup>21</sup>
- 3) Equality and two-way communication between company and stakeholders.
  - During a dialogue, make sure that all stakeholders have the same information and the same amount of information. If not, rectify this knowledge discrepancy.

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<sup>16</sup> UN GCG, *What makes stakeholder engagement meaningful?*, p. 66.

<sup>17</sup> Multilateral Financial Institutions Group on Environmental and Social Standards (MFI) (2019), *Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement*, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Peters, *Van winst naar waarde*, p. 182.

<sup>19</sup> OECD, *OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement*, p. 53.

<sup>20</sup> OECD, *OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement*, p. 53.

<sup>21</sup> UN GCG, *What Makes Stakeholder Engagement Meaningful?*, p. 6.

- In particular, when information is retrieved from or shared with vulnerable stakeholders, it is important to be clear about the goal and the consequences of the dialogue in order to create the right expectations.
- 4) Willingness and openness
- Be willing to share information relating to sensitive topics if necessary, such as regarding the origin of raw materials and goods. Be willing to be open about what you do not know.
  - Do not share inaccurate information. <sup>22</sup>
  - Indicate how the results of the dialogue will be used and do not avoid discussing challenges in the process. <sup>23</sup>
  - Be as open as possible with each other regarding the source of information.
  - Observe international laws regarding data protection and respect participants' privacy.<sup>24</sup> Do not share any information with third parties – including the media – without having obtained explicit consent in order to avoid others being made to feel unsafe or disrupting trust in the relationship.
- 5) Suitability
- Share information via an appropriate means of communication (verbal, email, during a dialogue, in reports) that aligns with the stakeholder's circumstances.

## Process design

A process design is a description of the steps that are necessary and the factors that must be taken into account in order to make a stakeholder dialogue meaningful and to achieve the pre-defined goals. The process design includes making a problem analysis, selecting parties, determining the goals and method of the dialogue, organising actual dialogues, determining what resources are necessary for the procedure and making a timeline.

Pre-designing the process helps to add focus to the dialogue and the critical assessment of goals. This allows the participants to focus on contents instead of on preconditions during the dialogue. A good process design prevents disagreement on the expected results or disappointment on the part of stakeholders or the company afterwards. In addition, it helps to establish mutual trust between stakeholders; all stakeholders know where they stand and can anticipate and prepare accordingly. In case of a collaborative venture (see the element 'Collaboration'), making a process design will reinforce the relationship, because the parties have to be on the same line regarding the goals of and approach to a dialogue.

Points for attention when drawing up a process design:

1. A process design looks different depending on the goal of a dialogue; whether work is being carried out on a dialogue on an individual or a collaborative basis, the complexity of the topic and the positions and interests of different stakeholders.
2. Designing the process (and the process itself) can take a lot of time. Differences in opinion between the parties in question can continue to exist and do not all have to be resolved in the process design. The process design can be adjusted along the way.
3. Some dialogue types are less well suited to a detailed process design, e.g. dialogues about ad hoc interventions. A dialogue often develops pragmatically and gradually, and there is a limited time to stand still and review the process.
4. A good process design is a necessary, but not sufficient precondition for a good outcome

### Components of the process design

<sup>22</sup> MFI, *Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement*, p. 10.

<sup>23</sup> UN GCG, *What Makes Stakeholder Engagement Meaningful?*, p. 11.

<sup>24</sup> OECD, *OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement*, p. 51.

Depending on the context or the nature of the dialogue, more or less emphasis can be placed on the various components of a process design:

#### 1) Diagnosis

Answer the questions: *What problem, issue or topic is the focal point and why? What do we know at this time about the problem, issue or topic? What knowledge is necessary to deal with the issue?*

- Study the views (including interests and goals) of other stakeholders at the table and try to understand them to agree on a common agenda and goal.
- In consultation with your stakeholders, bring focus to the topic of the dialogue. A multitude of topics risks disappointing results on sub-topics and causes unrealistic expectations on the part of stakeholders.
- New insights can be gained during a dialogue procedure, in turn resulting in a change in the topic of the dialogue. Be flexible in the diagnosis and how to approach it.

#### 2) Goal

Answer the questions: *What does the company want to achieve? What do stakeholders want to achieve? What goal are the dialogue participants working toward? Does the dialogue have additional goals?*

- Formulate a goal for the dialogue to establish a clear direction for the process. This can be a general goal, such as learning how to understand each other better, or a concrete goal of solving a problem.<sup>25</sup> An overly narrow focus on a specific end goal stands in the way of an open dialogue, because it makes flexibility and ad hoc adjustments impossible. An overly open goal may lead to a lack of clarity. Make sure that the expected results are realistic.
- If there is a (multi-stakeholder) collaborative venture, first study the goals that the various parties at the table want to achieve and jointly establish the goals of the dialogue.
- Make sure that the dialogue is deemed relevant and/or urgent by all stakeholders, and that participation will benefit everyone.

3) Stakeholders. Stakeholders are people or groups of people with interests that can be harmed by the company's activities.

Answer the questions: *What stakeholders must be at the table during the dialogue? How and when should this take place? What are their concerns, interests and wants?*

- Clearly record roles, responsibilities and the minimum stakeholder commitment in a dialogue (and if necessary discuss them regularly) in order to prevent this from being interpreted incorrectly, resulting in mistrust or disappointment. It also prevents one-way traffic.
- With regard to engaging the right stakeholders, see the element 'Inclusion'.

4) Collaborating partners. Collaborating partners are parties that contribute to organising or supporting a dialogue.

Answer the questions: *With what parties and in what stage of the dialogue is collaboration necessary? What can these parties provide? What party is responsible for what?*

- Try to achieve synergy in the various expertises of the collaborating parties.
- For more information on collaboration with other parties, see the element 'Collaboration'

#### 5) Meetings

Answer the questions: *What meetings are necessary (goal, stakeholders, timing, experts, decision making, form)? Who are the participants in the meetings? What has to happen between the meetings in order to keep the process going?*

- For information on this process step, see the element 'Meetings'.

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<sup>25</sup> UN GCG, *What Makes Stakeholder Engagement Meaningful?*, p. 8.

## 6) Monitoring and evaluation

Answer the questions: *How and by whom will the performance of the agreements be monitored? How do I involve stakeholders in evaluating the dialogue? What measures will be taken if agreements are not performed? What indicators and assessment criteria are relevant?*

<sup>26</sup>

## 7) Timeline

Answer the questions: *What is the timeline? How much time can be spent on the various process steps? When must it be completed?*

- When making a timeline, take account of:<sup>27</sup>
  - The timing of a dialogue. Ideally, start as early as possible in engaging stakeholders in new industry activities or if an issue has come to light.
  - The necessary time for process steps. For example, retrieving knowledge, recruiting or selecting participants for the dialogue, reflecting and determining the position between the dialogue meetings and building trust (in particular if the parties do not have a relationship with each other or when they have different interests and/or views).
  - The complexity of an issue. The more complex an issue, the more time that is often needed to resolve the matter through dialogue.
  - Option for flexibility within the timeline.
- If you have to adhere to a specific timeline or deadline, adjust the expected outcomes accordingly.
- Make sure that it is clear when and whether a dialogue has come to an end, so that participating parties can take this into account and the dialogue can be evaluated.

## 8) Resources

Answer the questions: *How much time/budget have the parties made available for this process? Is there enough time and budget to achieve the goal?* Additional tips:

- Free up resources for retrieving, safeguarding and processing information, appointing or training staff, dialogue meetings, supporting stakeholders when participating in the dialogue, establishing a relationship of trust with stakeholders and following up on dialogue.<sup>28</sup>
- Determine what the most meaningful use of the available financial resources and capacities is. What makes the most impact?
- Bear in mind that it can be a challenge for stakeholders to make sufficient resources available to participate in a dialogue, even if they want to.

## Contact

Contact with stakeholders forms the basis of a dialogue and contributes to building trust in the relationships between the stakeholders and the company during the entire process. Stakeholders will be more willing to attend a dialogue and to contribute if there is good contact between them and the company. Existing contact between various participants contributes to an open and constructive atmosphere.

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<sup>26</sup> See an example of a monitoring and evaluation framework in: OECD, *OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement*, pp. 85 – 91.

<sup>27</sup> OECD, *OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement*, p. 60; UN GCG, *What Makes Stakeholder Engagement Meaningful?*, p. 10.

<sup>28</sup> OECD, *OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement*, p. 57; MFI, *Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement*, p. 10.

### Factors that influence contact

The form and intensity of contact between a company and the stakeholders change depending on the type of dialogue, the stage of the dialogue, the durability of the relationship, and the design of the dialogue process.

The optimal contact form for a dialogue with your stakeholder (physical, online, by telephone, by email) depends on the basic relationship and the culture. In the early stages of the contact, it is worth meeting in person to build up the relationship and to learn to understand the intentions of the other party, before engaging in dialogue on complex issues. In case of a long-term relationship, on the other hand, it is easier to proceed with non-physical forms of contact for stakeholder dialogue. The optimal form of contact is also dependent on the geographic location of the stakeholder and the urgency of the topic. See the element 'Organising dialogue meetings' for more information on considerations relating to choosing the form of contact during a dialogue.

The intensity of contact depends, in particular, on the stage of the dialogue. Before and after a dialogue, for example, there should be low-threshold contact in order to maintain the relationship with the stakeholder and to build trust. The intensity will increase the closer the actual dialogue comes.

### Good contact

Good contact is an interplay of the following factors:

- Interpersonal contact: stakeholder dialogue in essence takes place between different persons; interpersonal contact is therefore of great importance. Account is taken in this respect of a stakeholder's personality, (cultural) background, experience with dialogue and knowledge of the topics, so that the stakeholder feels comfortable and equal during a dialogue.
- Listening: pay attention to the other person and sincerely want to hear what needs, concerns and interests he or she has. In addition to taking in factual information, listen to subjective interests or personal expressions of stakeholders.
- Long-term relationships: long-term relationships based on regular contact with stakeholders contribute to a positive and relaxed atmosphere during a dialogue. This lowers the threshold for talking about complex or sensitive topics and allows stakeholders to feel safe during the dialogue.

In the event that it is difficult to establish contact or contact is disrupted, bring in external assistance. Make use of e.g. a role play to help you to place yourself in the other person's position.

### Preconditions and possible actions

1) Equality as the basis for contact; the parties are aware of the existing power imbalances and do not let them play a role. There is respect for the participation, input and expertise of all parties.<sup>29</sup>

- Speak to each other at a neutral location.
- Welcome parties with whom you have never yet sat down, to prevent negative sentiments.
- Do not reproach stakeholders about actions or behaviour. In case of sensitive topics, let your dialogue partner reflect on the situation themselves instead of having to feel like they have to defend themselves.
- Do not let existing prejudices play a role during the conversation.
- If possible, make sure everyone gets a chance to speak. This can be challenging in a hybrid meeting.

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<sup>29</sup> OECD, *OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement*, p. 52



- Acknowledge the contributions and investments of the stakeholders in the process.<sup>30</sup>

2) There is a safe environment in which there can be an open and respectful conversation about interests, needs and problems. Participants must feel at ease during a dialogue, so that all topics can be included and deviating positions can be shared.<sup>31</sup>

- Make sure that and communicate that the participation and openness of stakeholders will not have any negative consequences for them.
- Consider whether anonymous contact is necessary to guarantee safety.
- Speak with stakeholders and not on behalf of or about stakeholders.
- Try to remove pressure/tension at the start of a process, conversation or meeting by taking the time to break the ice.
- Do not put sensitive topics into words too quickly; speak about broader, underlying problems first, e.g. in the case of child labour, talk about education and development of the community.
- Make sure stakeholders can reflect on topics and ask questions or make remarks.

3) The parties are genuinely interested and want to understand each other's vision and interests.<sup>32</sup>

- Know who you will be talking to and what their position and background is.
- Communicate the intent and urgency of the dialogue on both sides to show goodwill and to achieve a joint goal.
- Make listening to each other top priority. Do not be defensive and do not make any reproaches. If necessary, adjust existing opinions. Try to understand the basis of a problem and allow all dialogue partners to reflect on the matter.
- Take an active position. Ask many (open) questions. Share your interpretation about what has been said to see whether you agree or disagree with each other.
- Approach a dialogue from experiences, and not from opinions, in order to create more space to understand the other. Take time to empathize before you judge.

4) Continuous engagement of the stakeholders. A dialogue is usually not a one-off activity. A continuing approach or consultation structure ensures that issues can be put to the attention at all times.

- In case of early contact, focus first on points with overlapping priority to build up experience and trust.
- Have regular informal contact with stakeholders; this reinforces the personal relationships and your understanding of the (local) situation.<sup>33</sup>
- Maintain contact with stakeholders during the performance of any agreements arising from a dialogue to verify performance.
- Celebrate interim successes to maintain motivation and commitment; thank stakeholders for their engagement.

5) A good understanding of and attention for the culture in which stakeholders live and operate.<sup>34</sup>

- Become familiar with the stakeholders' culture and the way in which they do business by making work visits and organising (informal) introductions to stakeholders in production countries.
- If possible, have the dialogue take place in the country of production in order to have a meeting in person with stakeholders.
- Be aware of the effect of historical relationships on the society, culture and behaviour of stakeholders.

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<sup>30</sup> UN GCG, *What Makes Stakeholder Engagement Meaningful?*, p. 11.

<sup>31</sup> Peters, *Van winst naar waarde*, p. 182.

<sup>32</sup> OECD, *OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement*, p. 16

<sup>33</sup> OECD, *OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement*, p. 52

<sup>34</sup> OECD, *OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement*, p. 52

## Organising dialogue meetings

Interactive stakeholder dialogue takes place during meetings: a gathering where two or more persons meet at a designated time and place with a pre-defined goal. These meetings can be online or physical, and can range in form from round table meetings to one-on-one dialogue.

Dialogue meetings must be organised carefully to avoid that stakeholders are not heard sufficiently or the goals of the dialogue are not achieved. The optimal form of a dialogue greatly depends on the goal of a dialogue and the stakeholders concerned with that dialogue.

Proper moderation is important in order to guarantee equality between stakeholders in a meeting and to create a context in which the parties listen to each other, without bias. In addition, a company must apply the basic principles of the element 'Contact' while holding a dialogue meeting.

### Preconditions and possible actions

- 1) The goal of the meeting is clear and the topic aligned with that.
  - Think about what you want to get out of the dialogue and what will happen with the results. Think specifically of the information that you want to receive from individual stakeholders.
  - Involve participants in selecting topics which are central to a dialogue, so that it becomes a reciprocal process. This can be done, for example, by sending out a survey or by consulting stakeholders in advance. Involving participants in advance also contributes to their active participation during the dialogue itself and thereafter.
- 2) Select the correct form of dialogue to achieve the goal.
  - Take the time to study the reasons motivating stakeholders with whom you will engage, so that when preparing a dialogue you have an understanding of ways in which you can bring about change and what strategies might work.
  - Think about the form of the meeting: physical, online or hybrid. This depends on the sensitivity of the topic, the goal of the meeting, the quality of current relationships with stakeholders. Physical, in person meetings are particularly important if relationships are at an early stage or the topic is sensitive, in order to build trust and establish informal contact. Online can help in terms of limited time and budget, but leads to less personal contact and more distraction for participants.
  - Think about the dialogue method and use a mix of methods during the procedure (correspondence, training, round table meeting, experts meeting) to tackle an issue in different ways. Make sure that the method aligns with the size of the group.
- 3) Prepare the meeting carefully logistically and content-wise to achieve the goal and to utilise participants' time as optimally as possible.
  - Think about the location of a dialogue. This can be of influence on whether and how people participate. The availability of the location, the country in which the dialogue takes place, and the meeting location itself are elements to be taken into account. Always ask the question what will make the greatest impact and what fits in with the goal of the dialogue.
  - Organise a(n) (internal) training course on dialogue skills and risks in the chain to properly prepare for the dialogue.
  - Develop and use standardised documents (invitations, manuals, templates, scenario, time schedules, meeting rules).
  - Record how you want to store information from a meeting.
  - If decisions have to be made during the meeting, it should be determined how this will occur and who will be involved in the decision making.

- 4) The dialogue facilitator must be carefully selected.
- Determine whether it is necessary to make use of an external facilitator. This can be necessary if: 1) the topic of the dialogue is sensitive, 2) the organiser does not have sufficient knowledge of the topic or how to moderate meetings, 3) the organiser traditionally has a lot of power.
  - Choose a facilitator carefully so that he or she can play a neutral role in the dialogue and can carefully and skilfully guide the meeting. For a detailed list of questions for choosing a facilitator, see Attachment 2.
  - If necessary, split the role of facilitator and expert on the topic at hand. Prepare yourself and the meeting leaders properly.

## **Internal processes**

Internal processes are all operational, managerial and supporting actions which together determine the business activities. This covers matters such as personnel policy, working agreements, ICT systems, and budgeting.

### Importance

A stakeholder dialogue has a greater chance of succeeding if it is embedded in an ecosystem of specialised personnel, available interventions, capacity and resources, and clear, standard processes. Clear internal agreements and processes should ensure that the responsible employees have the authority to act where and when necessary.

### Processes for stakeholder dialogue

The following internal processes are important for meaningful dialogue:

- Management: who is responsible within the company for stakeholder dialogue and how much capacity needs to be made free for this or needs to be recruited for this? Who has the authority to make decisions on the topics during a dialogue?
- Communication processes: how is the internal and external communication on stakeholder dialogue going? When, how and with whom should there be communications?
- Budget: how many (financial) resources are freed up for stakeholder dialogue, what are these resources spent on and what not?

Effective internal processes are the result of the stated support of a company's top management for meaningful stakeholder dialogue.<sup>35</sup> If the top management shows commitment by explicitly including stakeholder dialogue in the IRBC policy, it can be approached for enabling the implementation of said policy. The internal operating processes must be sufficient to then execute this strategy.

### Preconditions and possible actions

- 1) The organisation is geared to conducting stakeholder dialogues.
- Set up systems that are appropriate to the goal of stakeholder dialogue and can serve as institutional memory. Possible systems are: reporting system, ICT solutions, CRM, communication resources and communication processes.
  - Centralise and standardise systems which receive signals from stakeholders (email, telephone, verbally, internet), so that information is not lost and is followed up.
  - Integrate departments to create the synergy which forms the basis of stakeholder dialogue. Facilitate, for example, integration of an engagement and investment department within a pension fund or the IRBC and purchasing departments of a retailer.

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<sup>35</sup> See the element 'Commitment' for further preconditions and tools.

2) There are sufficient resources. The personnel has the mandate and is qualified to engage in stakeholder dialogues. This personnel also manages to find each other internally.

- Make sure that at least the appropriate employees within the company (management, IRBC employees, purchasing department), have basic knowledge of IRBC and stakeholder consultation. Despite the fact that not all the personnel is actively engaged in stakeholder dialogue, the outcomes can affect their work. Awareness of this is important for support among personnel in adjusting activities.<sup>36</sup>
- Assess whether it is necessary to hire an expert in the area of stakeholder dialogue or to train one internally. This is particularly relevant for larger companies or companies with many (changing) stakeholders.
- Have regular internal communication about the progress of stakeholder dialogues, in particular with the CEO or the management team.
- Engage relevant internal employees – including senior employees or the management – in a dialogue if the topic concerns them, e.g. to consult their expertise on the topic or inform them about issues, outcomes or consequences of the dialogue.
- Train personnel in the area of intercultural communication.<sup>37</sup>
- Engage local representation of a company, if present, in stakeholder dialogues.

## Collaboration

Collaboration – together with other parties, preparing, conducting and/or following up a dialogue – contributes to being able to satisfy the various other elements of the concept design. Collaboration on the basis of mutual trust with, e.g. (local or international) NGOs, trade unions, companies from the sector, the government and industrial associations, offers many advantages during a dialogue process for a company and for the collaborating partners. As most companies are not specialised in conducting stakeholder dialogues, it is useful to seek collaboration to shape stakeholder dialogue effectively and with thorough consideration. An important note with regard to collaboration is that the other parties can never take over the responsibility for due diligence from a company. They can play a very important role in the process, but the company remains responsible for its own supply chain.

### Advantages

1. Necessary information can be retrieved through several, specialised parties or via their network and all kinds of perspectives can be gathered which are otherwise difficult to obtain.
2. Collaboration contributes to increasing support for the relevant dialogue and lowering the threshold for engaging in dialogue.
3. The available capacity is increased to execute tasks and the network is expanded for optimal utilisation.

### Collaborate with whom?

Which parties it is best to collaborate with in a dialogue depends in particular on what is necessary and when this is necessary, e.g. knowledge of a particular country, region, political context, issue; verification of information; access to a network or to relevant stakeholders; logistic organisation and coordination; advice. These elements can receive more or less emphasis dependent on (the stage of) a dialogue. For each of these auxiliary questions, various parties – or individuals within these organisations – can have a preference for collaboration.

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<sup>36</sup> UN GCG, *Stakeholder Engagement in Human Rights Due Diligence*, p. 26.

<sup>37</sup> OECD, *OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement*, p. 52.

It is important to keep in the back of one's mind that in many countries civil society is under pressure and the space for defending human rights is decreasing.<sup>38</sup> This tendency can impede collaboration because civil society organisations are, for safety reasons, reticent when it comes to the exchanging of information or do not have sufficient capacity or options for tackling issues. It is possible that by openly involving civil society in due diligence activities, companies can counteract this tendency.

Where possible, work with local experts. In case of advice and knowledge, collaboration with Western consultants for companies is often an accessible and quick solution for analysing issues in the supply chain. Local experts, on the other hand, possess specific local knowledge and/or have access to relevant stakeholders, which helps to create support.

The preference is always for long-term collaboration. This lowers the barriers for ad hoc collaboration and the parties will quickly be able to find each other if there are opportunities or issues which must be addressed. Attention must be paid to establishing relationships, as well as mutual interests to achieve long-term collaboration.

#### Preconditions and possible actions

1) Collaboration takes place with relevant, willing and trustworthy parties, in formalised collaborative ventures or otherwise.

- Determine with which parties a (formal) collaboration is of added value. Become familiar with what (local) organisations there are, who does what, how they differ from each other, what relevant connections they have and in what sector/region the organisation is active.<sup>39</sup> The number of parties with whom collaboration is necessary for a dialogue, depends on the capacities and experience of the organisations in question and which exact services a company needs.
- Assess to what extent a party is a suitable collaborative partner by asking questions about their expertise, network, capacity and prerequisites for collaboration. For a detailed list of questions, see Attachment 3.
- Explore collaboration with parties based on the wants of stakeholders at the dialogue table.
- Signal at an early stage whether it is necessary to pay attention to building trust and, if necessary, organise meetings to get to know each other better and to make working agreements. This can eliminate reticence with regard to collaboration and increase a feeling of safety.

2) There is willingness to invest time and resources in building trusted relationships based on equality. Building trust between the parties can take a lot of time and energy, particularly if the parties have different interests in a dialogue. Satisfying preconditions within the elements Commitment, Transparency, Inclusion and Contact will lead to more trust between the parties.

- In case of a collaborative relationship it is not desirable to enter into a collaboration with an unknown party if there is a tight deadline. Building a relationship with an external party takes a lot of time, a tight deadline would immediately put the relationship under pressure.

3) The roles, tasks and expectations of parties in the collaboration are clearly agreed upon. The interests of the parties concerned are clear and are regularly verified.

- If necessary, record the parties' roles, tasks and expectations in process agreements. See the element 'Process design' for more information.

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<sup>38</sup> See for more information: OECD, (2022), *The Protection and Promotion of Civic Space: Strengthening Alignment with International Standards and Guidance*.

<sup>39</sup> Review this through reports of NGOs, online research, and advice from organisations with which you are familiar.

- If you participate in a dialogue in a collaborative venture, take the initiative for activities and solutions to prevent the process from stagnating and to actively inspire other companies to make a contribution.
- Assess the collaboration and discuss to what extent and on what conditions you can be of service to each other on a more structural basis. Also discuss where the collaboration perhaps leaves something to be desired and where risky situations might arise.
- Share experiences and lessons learned from collaborations with a broader public, to serve as an example, within a sector or even outside of it.

## Knowledge

Knowledge of the legal, political, technical, cultural and social context is crucial for meaningful dialogue. Without this knowledge there is the risk that relevant issues are not addressed or that unintended negative consequences are caused for stakeholders.<sup>40</sup> In addition, it affects your credibility if you initiate a dialogue with insufficient knowledge of affairs. Knowledge also contributes to the early identification of opportunities, possibilities and challenges so that there is sufficient time to respond. In addition, knowledge can be a reason for companies to engage in dialogue.

### Knowledge during different stages of the dialogue

The preparatory stage of a dialogue requires, among other things, knowledge about the relevant stakeholders, the (legal) context of an issue, the links within the supply chain, the possibilities for a dialogue and what information is necessary to further shape the process. All of this is necessary to select stakeholders for the dialogue, to determine the topic, to demarcate the topics and to determine whether there are legal limitations in relation to a dialogue.

During a dialogue, it is, among other things, necessary to be knowledgeable about the topic of the dialogue, the interests and wants of dialogue participants and possible solutions for an issue and related considerations. This is necessary for the organiser to ensure that the dialogue comes across as credible and competent, as moderator to be able to ask direct or critical follow-up questions based on a good understanding of the situation, to bring depth to the dialogue and to present realistic solutions or follow-up steps. The premise of the element 'Contact' must be observed in order to guarantee equality in the dialogue.

After the dialogue has ended, knowledge on following up the results of the dialogue is necessary in order to monitor the impact of the dialogue and whether the parties are complying with the agreements that have been made.

The goal is to enter into a meaningful dialogue on the basis of facts and a common understanding of the truth. At the same time, in addition to factual knowledge, there must be room for emotion and differences of perspective. Attention for and listening to emotions and perspectives prevent the parties from becoming bogged down in discussions on supposed facts which are not the core of a problem. Precise figures or knowledge of all facts are not in all cases the most important thing for a stakeholder. Instead, they want to have the feeling that someone is listening to them and their interests are being considered. A meaningful dialogue prescribes that stakeholders are listened to with genuine interest by the other party. This goes further than listening to factual information.

Another form of knowledge is gaining experience in conducting dialogue and learning lessons from it. Insights in the optimal approach to dialogue, techniques for contacting stakeholders

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<sup>40</sup> UN GCG, *What makes stakeholder engagement meaningful?*, p. 12

in a meaningful manner or methods for a successful stakeholder meeting often build up after years of trial-and-error. In order to internalise this knowledge, it is necessary to record dialogue processes and regularly assess them. The more a company can learn from its experience and can improve its approach, the more effective it will be in conducting a dialogue. Learning from or joining forces with other companies that already have years of experience, can form part of this process.

#### Preconditions and possible actions

1) Knowledge of the legal, political, technical, cultural and social context comes from different sources and can be gained in a variety of ways. Stakeholders with whom a dialogue is conducted, are often the most important sources of knowledge. They experience the topics at the table first-hand, thereby possessing valuable knowledge which must be taken seriously during all stages of the dialogue.

- See Attachment 4 for a list of possible knowledge sources.
- Gather knowledge in collaboration with your stakeholders for greater support and a joint understanding of an issue. <sup>41</sup>
- Work together with trusted stakeholders to rapidly gather knowledge, but be careful that you do not exclude other knowledge sources.
- Look for cases of comparable situations which can serve as an example and provide access to relevant knowledge.
- Regularly have an open conversation with various stakeholders with relevant expertise regarding what you must look out for as a company, even though there is no direct cause or issue to enter into a dialogue. By becoming acquainted in this manner, you will also know who you can involve in case specific risks or issues occur.

2) Knowledge is verified as to reliability and accuracy and is regularly updated.

- Verify information as much as possible. Ask several people, independently of each other, questions about information that has been obtained or ask parties with whom you work together to verify information.
- If you are dependent on third-party information, take account of the party's local reputation, its objectivity, capacity, relevance, expertise and history. <sup>42</sup>
- During a dialogue, make a note of the information that you want to verify later, so that you do not forget it.
- Take sufficient time to gather and verify information. This is particularly important if knowledge has to be obtained from (many) local stakeholders or in remote areas, which can also affect the quality of the information.

3) The company is transparent toward the stakeholders regarding the origin and the use of information and proactively shares knowledge with stakeholders where possible. Active knowledge sharing is part of raising awareness relating to IRBC topics.

- Share insights and experience that have been gained and any success stories with the outside world, as issues are often not limited to one company, one sector or even one topic, and it can motivate and assist others in starting the conversation and engaging stakeholders.
- For more information and tools, see the element 'Transparency'.

4) The company has the capacity and structures to process information in a careful and standardised manner. These structures are flexible and can be adjusted to new information sources.

- See the element 'Internal processes' for more information.

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<sup>41</sup> OECD, *OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement*, p. 18.

<sup>42</sup> OECD, *OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement*, p. 37.

### 3. Foundations of meaningful dialogue

This SER project, powered by the Goldschmeding Foundation, supports companies with the introduction and implementation of meaningful stakeholder dialogue in international supply chains. The OECD Guidelines form the starting point. The scope of this project are indicated by the SER process skills and the concept of humanizing business. The SER approach regarding process skills offers a process approach to engage in dialogue with various stakeholders through a process of joint exploration and development. In this regard, special attention must be paid to sustainable collaborative relationships. The framework of humanizing business provides added value by providing an understanding of business activities whereby a focus on the other – in this case, the stakeholder – is the focal point and offers tools to apply this in practice. The project has been set up as an action research. This means that there is continuous collaboration with relevant stakeholders in the design, implementation, and development during the study.

These four foundations are applied to better understand the concept of meaningful dialogue and to further elaborate it. All together this has led to the concept of meaningful dialogue.

#### OECD Guidelines for due diligence

Engaging in meaningful dialogue is described as a standard in the OECD Guidelines and the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs). The OECD Guidelines and UNGPs provide guidance for companies when carrying out due diligence in relation to international responsible business conduct (IRBC). For both sets of guidelines, meaningful stakeholder dialogue is a way to identify, prevent or mitigate negative consequences which can be connected with business activities, supply chains and business relationships.<sup>43</sup> This normative description of due diligence forms a framework for companies to engage in stakeholder dialogue.

Companies have an interest in conducting due diligence, particularly in relation to their aim to make a positive contribution to society and to not cause negative impact. Due diligence is also increasingly embedded in national or European legislation. Legislation announced at European and Dutch level in the area of IRBC will, for example, take the due diligence approach as their starting point, and the upcoming European directive on sustainability reporting (Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive – CSRD) mandates that thousands of companies undertake sustainability reporting on the basis of a due diligence approach.<sup>44</sup>

#### Meaningful stakeholder engagement as key feature of due diligence

One of the key features of due diligence is that it is based on the engagement of stakeholders in every stage of the due diligence cycle.<sup>45</sup> Stakeholders are people or groups of people with interests that can be harmed by the activities of a company. Engaging stakeholders is important because they are the group for whom risks must be limited or for whom issues must be dealt with. Stakeholders can provide companies with information regarding risks and negative impacts which must be taken into consideration in relation to a company's planning

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<sup>43</sup> OECD, *OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct*, pp. 18-19; United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (2011), *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*, (2011), p. 19.

<sup>44</sup> Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, "Proposal for a Directive on corporate sustainability due diligence", 23 February 2022; Council of the EU, "Council gives final green light to corporate sustainability reporting directive", 28 November 2022, via <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/11/28/council-gives-final-green-light-to-corporate-sustainability-reporting-directive/>.

<sup>45</sup> OECD, *OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct*, p. 50.



and decision-making process. Engaging stakeholders is worthwhile for stakeholders, while at the same time contributing to positive operating results. These points are explained in further detail in the element 'Business case'.

According to the OECD, stakeholder engagement should take place in a meaningful manner to prevent engagement becoming a "tick the box" activity, where insufficient attention is paid to stakeholder interests.

#### Criteria for meaningful engagement

In the OECD Guidelines, OECD describes what meaningful engagement of stakeholders means: <sup>46</sup>

- There must be mutual engagement, with two-way communication.
- Relevant information must be shared in time and in an accessible and comprehensible way with stakeholders to enable informed participation and decision making.
- The engagement is continued during the entire term of an operation or activity and is not a one-off endeavour.
- Ideally there will be contact prior to important decisions being made by a company which could have an effect on the stakeholders.
- All parties involved must, moreover, act in good faith and be willing to adjust their own behaviour in connection with the engagement.

On the basis of the definition of stakeholder engagement in the UNGPs, similar elements can be identified, i.e.: <sup>47</sup>

- Stakeholder engagement must be based on interactive dialogue and exchange of information;
- Stakeholder engagement is a continuous process that focuses on building a mutually beneficial relationship;
- Stakeholder engagement focuses on possibly impacted stakeholders who, moreover, do not form a homogeneous group;
- The dialogue focuses on the interests and concerns of stakeholders.

According to the UN Global Compact Network Germany (UN GCG), an organisation that helps companies and organisations to implement the UNGPs, stakeholder engagement is meaningful when it is a transformational process instead of a transactional process. In 2022, UN GCG published a document which mentions five factors for successful dialogue: <sup>48</sup>

1. The dialogue is based on trust. Characteristics are: transparency, investment of time, reliable and predictable behaviour, commitment.
2. The dialogue fits the goal. This means that there is a clear goal and that the process is set up to achieve this goal. This process is flexible and is not fixed.
3. The dialogue makes human rights a key factor by taking the following principles as guidelines: participation, responsibility, equality, empowerment and legitimacy.
4. The dialogue is based on co-ownership of the process and the outcomes. Characteristic in this respect: attention for the process, open dialogue or challenges, acknowledgement of contributions of all parties, co-creation of process and outcomes.
5. The dialogue is context-sensitive. Characteristics are: the right people are at the table, political, legal, social, economic and cultural context is known, the heterogeneity of stakeholders is acknowledged.

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<sup>46</sup> OECD, *OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>47</sup> UN Global Compact Network Nederland, Oxfam Novib, Shift, "Stakeholder Engagement 'Making it Meaningful'", in: *doing business with respect for human rights; a guidance tool for companies* (2016), pp. 96-97.

<sup>48</sup> UN GCG, *What makes stakeholder engagement meaningful?*.

### Shortcoming of criteria for meaningful stakeholder engagement

Based on the OECD Guidelines and UNGPs, it can in general be determined what is meant by meaningful engagement of stakeholders and what criteria are leading in this respect. In essence, the key is that companies continuously and in an interactive, reciprocal and transparent manner engage in contact and maintain contact with stakeholders in their supply chain in order to develop and promote a sustainable relationship. It is particularly relevant in this respect to engage the stakeholders whose rights or interests can be harmed by business activities and as a company to be open to steering the business activities on the basis of the information shared by stakeholders.

The criteria that are cited in existing guidelines regarding meaningful stakeholder engagement offer a framework for approaching this topic. They demonstrate a lot of overlap, but are still relatively conceptual and only go into ways to operationalise these criteria to a limited degree.

### **SER dialogue skills**

When the SER speaks of process skills, it means the entirety of skills that are needed to connect people/parties and ideas/content to each other.

In engaging in meaningful dialogue, a number of process skills are relevant, such as communication, conflict handling, and process design. The SER is an expert on dialogue in a broad sense, but also in organising dialogue meetings. For both, relevant process skills are needed.

#### SER view of dialogue

Dialogue is understood to mean: Jointly reviewing a question by listening attentively, sharing experiences and reflecting on insights.<sup>49</sup>

A dialogue is geared to the exchange of experiences and needs, while a discussion or debate is based on premises and opinions. Dialogue is therefore a powerful instrument for approaching issues from various perspectives, thereby investigating where mutual involvement, interests and ambitions can be found and where these differ.

By means of dialogue the SER engages, in addition to colleagues, the social partners and the Crown members, other relevant stakeholders and a wider public in advising the government and discussing socio-economic issues with a wide range of stakeholders. Conducting dialogue can have a number of goals: exploration of a topic, looking for a solution, inventory of perspectives, connecting and reinforcing networks and/or increasing visibility.

Conducting dialogue in which vision and practical implementation are connected, makes a valuable contribution to the reputation, culture and products of the organisation.

#### Basic principles of dialogue<sup>50</sup>

The SER approaches multi-stakeholder dialogue as a round table rather than an ad hoc intervention, because the matter concerns a joint effort to review an issue, by listening attentively, sharing experience and reflecting on the insights. Trust<sup>51</sup> is a key point in a dialogue. Trust is created through ability, integrity, involvement and reliability. The following basic principles apply to conducting a dialogue:

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<sup>49</sup> Definition of Dialogue Learning Pathway - <http://leerwegdialoog.nl>.

<sup>50</sup> Renate van der Veen & Olga Plokhooij, *Basis Principes Dialoog*, SER, 29 January 2018.

<sup>51</sup> Kenneth Blanchard, Cynthia Olmstead, Martha Lawrence (2014), *Het ABC van vertrouwen – Bouw duurzame relaties en laat ze voor je werken*.

- Equality: equality of stakeholders does not mean equal power or equal perspective, but equal input in the process.
- Safety: creating safety by agreeing, drawing up and monitoring joint rules (by facilitator) like letting everyone have their say, making sure that everyone gets to speak with the same amount of speaking time, not finishing each other's sentences.
- Research: research based on experience instead of opinions/premises, so that you are better able to put yourself in someone else's shoes. Standing next to each other instead of across from each other in order to gather a range of perspectives and a more complete and multi-faceted picture of what you are researching.
- Listen attentively: make listening a greater focal point than speaking, try to understand the other person.
- State your view: dare to express yourself, not in response to the other person but by describing your own perspective.
- Being with what is: the aspect of attitude in a dialogue, whereby you take yourself completely seriously, do not make yourself more or less than you are, be open and receiving and accept what happens in a dialogue and what the outcome will be; this will yield more than a forced conversation.
- Postpone giving an opinion: do not refrain from giving an opinion, opinions are useful and necessary, but take a moment between observing and responding.
- Slow down: conducting a good conversation/dialogue takes time, but delay can ultimately lead to acceleration because people get to know each other properly (talents, motivation, interests) and this can be of use when doing business or working together.

## Humanizing business

Meaningful dialogue is necessary to be able to better meet the needs of a company's stakeholders. The theory of humanizing business offers a constructive perspective from which meaningful dialogue can be given shape because it is based on a fundamental respect for the others. Humanizing business is characterised by a commitment to the flourishing and welfare of others and is geared to promoting empathy in and through the policy, practice and actions of companies. Engaging in meaningful dialogue is a way in which companies can put humanizing business into practice. As such, this theory offers insight into the way in which companies can shape meaningful dialogue with their stakeholders.

Actively looking for meaningful dialogue, participation and interaction based on the view of increasing the well-being of "the other persons" in the chain falls within the concept of humanizing business. This chapter will pay further attention to the insights which can be offered from the perspective of humanizing business to realising meaningful dialogue. This starts with an exploration of what humanizing business means and why companies should apply related principles in their daily practice.

### What is humanizing business?

Companies have continuous contact with various stakeholders, from customers to (social) media and from suppliers to funders and local communities. Humanizing business elaborates the question how companies should deal with these stakeholders and what their relationship should be. Humanizing business presumes a commitment to the well-being and the flourishing of others.<sup>52</sup> This is expressed in the following key terms:

1. **Connect** with and pay attention to others. The characteristics and nature of each individual relationship is acknowledged.
2. **Listen** and above all hear what others have to say.

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<sup>52</sup> A. van der Put, H. Hummels & T. Martens (2021), *Agape: de mens als motor van de onderneming*, pp. 14-16.

3. **Act** on the basis of the information obtained. Companies incorporate this information in their decision making, actions and behaviour.
4. **Evaluate** the actions.
5. **Guide** the process on the basis of the evaluation.

Humanizing business distinguishes itself from common concepts such as sustainability, shared value creation and responsible business conduct (RBC) because it is based on a fundamental respect for others. This means that 'others' are treated as people instead of as instruments to achieve the company's own interests. This has a lot of similarities with the basic premise of dialogue. Contrary to IRBC, humanizing business is not based on risk management and is not result oriented. Humanizing business particularly focuses on setting up a process based on human dignity, paying attention to the 'we' instead of the 'why'.

The five core terms of humanizing business are realised in practice through three principles: value, organise and speak. These principles provide tools with regard to the question what an organisation can do to engage in business from a humane perspective. The principles make it clear that engaging in meaningful dialogue is a key element of humanizing business.<sup>53</sup>

1. **Value.** The organisation:

- a. Clarifies its identity and its values that are geared to others
- b. Draws a perspective of people and nature in relation to the organisation
- c. Respects and treats the other person as an equal (fellow) human being
- d. Focuses on the interests and needs of a broad group of stakeholders

2. **Organise.** The organisation:

- a. Invites relevant stakeholders to actively participate in policy and decision making and implementation
- b. Creates a structure and culture in which participation can come into its own
- c. Encourages the other person to present proposals
- d. Carefully considers these proposals in relation to decisions and activities aimed at common goals
- e. Monitors the processes and results from a humane perspective

3. **Speak.** The organisation:

- a. Is transparent about its efforts and results and their meaning for people and nature
- b. Speaks with/listens to relevant stakeholders regarding progress and results
- c. Provides guidance and steering where necessary or desirable

#### Humanizing business and meaningful dialogue

Meaningful dialogue takes place in the context of sincere attention for the needs, rights and interests of others. This context is characterised by a commitment to the flourishing and well-being of others, i.e. humanizing business. There are many companies for which the 'others' manifest themselves in their international supply chain. By 'seeing' these others and listening to their needs and acting on that basis, companies take account of the interests of others and they do business in a humane manner. Within the theory of humanizing business, dialogue is seen as meaningful if it leads to the flourishing and the well-being of stakeholders, as seen by the stakeholders involved.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Harry Hummels & Erik Hilgers (2022), *Anders groeien, Een medemenselijke aanpak van duurzaam en maatschappelijk ondernemen*, p. 19.

<sup>54</sup> Hummels en Hilgers, *Anders groeien*, p. 213.

## Meaningful dialogue action research

This research project is executed as action research. Action research is a participative form of knowledge development, in which the issue is studied while action is taken on the basis of cycles which keep recurring. In a cycle it is first jointly determined what the issue is and interventions are then designed, executed and recorded. Lastly, these interventions are evaluated and serve as input for adjusting the issue and shaping new interventions. This approach asks for collaboration from a multi-faceted perspective, so that the emphasis is on engaging voices that are often not heard.<sup>55</sup>

By executing the project in this manner, there is a lot of emphasis on information obtained from practice. This is reflected in the three stages of action during the project:

1. **Conceptual analysis and the concept of meaningful dialogue**

In the conceptual stage of the project, knowledge relating to the concept of meaningful dialogue is obtained from existing literature and practical examples.<sup>56</sup> In total, 11 case studies of multi-stakeholder dialogues and intervention meetings in various sectors and countries have been analysed and incorporated in the concept. The practical examples have been studied on the basis of interviews with 34 stakeholders and additional desk research. See Attachment 5 for a list of the practical examples. Lessons taken from these case studies have been analysed in various ways and have been presented to external stakeholders of the project (see Attachments 6, 7 and 8 for a list of stakeholders). On the basis of these lessons and the literature, a list of 10 elements was drawn up which became the central point of the concept.

2. **Experimenting with the concept of meaningful dialogue concept in practice**

In this stage the concept of meaningful dialogue will be applied in practice and further developed. At least four different dialogues will either be tested, or given shape, on the basis of the concept design. These dialogues will then be evaluated to search, in cycles of action and reflection, for 'what works' in the concept of meaningful dialogue and to further develop it.

3. **Sharing knowledge and experience of the practice of meaningful dialogue**

In this stage, various knowledge transfer tools will be developed, organised, offered and implemented, such as practical training courses and tools for companies based on the information gathered under steps 1 and 2, to be able to concretely deal with meaningful dialogue and to scale it up. The emphasis is on transferring practical knowledge which is relevant for third parties, primarily companies, and is developed in collaboration with stakeholders within the project.

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<sup>55</sup> David Coghlan (2011), "Action Research: Exploring Perspectives on a Philosophy of Practical Knowing", *The Academy of Management Annals*, 5:1, 53-87, pp. 61-61.

<sup>56</sup> Stakeholders in the project are, among others, the interviewees in the case studies, the advisory group, a focus group of companies and experts in the area of stakeholder dialogue and IRBC (see Attachments 5, 6, 7 and 8).

## **Attachments**

### **Attachment 1 – Policy elements of meaningful dialogue according to the OECD**

According to the OECD, the following elements should be included in a stakeholder engagement policy:<sup>57</sup>

- Recognition of a long-term view of stakeholder engagement focused on relationship building and avoiding adverse impacts to stakeholders.
- Meaningful stakeholder engagement as a requirement in project or activity planning and execution.
- Alignment with the OECD Guidelines and other international benchmarks for stakeholder engagement recognising that due diligence goes beyond commercial risk management processes to identify, mitigate and respond to real and potential adverse impacts on local communities and other stakeholders.
- The prioritisation of most severely impacted and vulnerable groups in stakeholder engagement activities (e.g. woman, children, indigenous peoples).
- Strong policies against the use of force, manipulation, interference, coercion, intimidation or illegal conduct (e.g. bribery, misrepresentation) in the course of stakeholder engagement activities and established corrective procedures for such conduct.
- Transparency related to stakeholder engagement, including in public reporting on stakeholder engagement activities, in addition to sharing information and reporting to stakeholders throughout the engagement process.
- Provision of appropriate remedies when the enterprise has caused or contributed to adverse impacts. These could be accessed via grievance mechanisms, mediation or other dispute resolution procedures.

### **Attachment 2 – Questions for finding a suitable facilitator**

- Is the facilitator able to keep participants energized during the dialogue?
- Is the facilitator able to ensure a positive environment?
- Is the facilitator capable of obtaining relevant information from participants during the dialogue and ask sensitive or difficult questions if needed?
- Is the facilitator able to ensure that participants contribute constructively?
- Does the facilitator have the required knowledge or topical expertise to moderate the discussion?
- Is the facilitator aware of the interests and concerns of participants?
- Is the facilitator influenced by unconscious bias about for instance gender or cultural stereotypes?

### **Attachment 3 – Questions to assess a potential collaborating party**

- What is the added value of collaborating with the party for your company? Examples could be: advisory about potential solutions to supply chain risks; providing specific knowledge (e.g. knowledge about a specific sourcing country or region, knowledge about sensitive topics such as freedom of association and forced labour); connections with local networks or stakeholders; support in facilitating or organising a dialogue;

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<sup>57</sup> OECD, *OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement*, p. 29.

verifying results; agenda-setting about systemic issues; judicial representation of stakeholders;

- When collaborating with a Dutch party, verify if the organisation has local representation or a local network that can be utilized during the dialogue trajectory;
- What are the conditions for the party to collaborate with your company?
- Does the party have sufficient time, capacity and resources available to engage in a long-term collaboration (if needed)?
- Are stakeholders in a dialogue open to collaborating with the selected party?
- What are experiences of others in collaborating with this party? What needs to be checked or taken into account according to the party's former and current partners?

#### **Attachment 4 – Sources of information for engaging in meaningful dialogue**

- Collaborative initiatives, such as multi-stakeholder initiatives, sectoral agreements or collaborative project. See the element 'Collaboration' for more information;
- Trade unions for information about labour relations, the role of trade unions in certain contexts and for risks on certain issues in the supply chain;
- NGOs, for instance read NGO reports about risks in the supply chain and official complaints by stakeholders; collaborate with NGOs to learn more about their core expertise;
- Stakeholders you engage in dialogue with;
- Reports about issues that your company is associated with or responsible for, or issues that may be a future risk to your company;
- Audit reports, anonymous surveys and interviews with local workers;
- Guidance and information by organisations your company is member of, such as trade associations, industry organizations, audit initiatives or certifying associations;
- Field visits or fact-finding-missions in a production country;
- Posts on (social) media and newsletters;
- Local experts, for instance through the [Local Expert Network](#);
- Company representation locally or an intermediary if available.

#### **Attachment 5 – List of case studies**

The project team held interviews with the following organisations to explore and analyse case studies of meaningful dialogue.

<b>Topic of dialogue</b>	<b>Interviewed parties</b>
<b>General risks</b>	
Labor rights and land rights in the mining sector in Peru	Anonymous
Biodiversity in meat and dairy production and processing in the Amazon and Cerrado	Achmea Investment Management; World Animal Protection
Annual stakeholder consultation based on OECD guidelines instead of a materiality analysis	SER; Solidaridad; SOMO; Zeeman
Palm oil	FNV, MN, Bedrijfstakpensioenfonds voor het Levensmiddelenbedrijf (BpFL)
Risk assessment of raw materials in the food sector	Federatie Nederlandse Levensmiddelen Industrie (FNLI); IDH Trade; SER
<b>Specific risks/issues in the supply chain</b>	
Dialogue about working conditions of a new supplier in India	Arisa; Cividep; Garment Labour Union; Kings of Indigo

Formal complaints handling, in particular about freedom of association	SOMO
Natural stone sector in India	Arisa; Arivali; Natural stone company; TruStone Initiative
Incorrect factory registration in India	Prénatal
Initiate social dialogue in the fruitsector in Peru	Dutch Employers' Cooperation Programme (DECP); Mondiaal FNV
Legal minimum wage increase in Pakistan	Arisa; Goosecraft; Hub Leather (PVT) Ltd.; Just Brands; Kuyichi; NOW Communities; Clean Clothes Campaign
<b>Companies interviewed for general lessons learned on meaningful dialogue</b>	Heineken Tony's chocolonely

## Attachment 6 – List of Advisory Group members

The following organisations – which are members of the project Advisory Group - were consulted to provide input on the topic of meaningful dialogue:

- &Wider
- Arisa
- Cividep
- CNV Internationaal
- Fair Wear Foundation
- Federation of the Dutch Food Industry (FNLI)
- Global March – Against Child Labour
- Modint
- Mondiaal FNV
- MVO Nederland
- National Alliance of Agriculture allied workers Union (NAAWU)
- National Contact Point for the OECD Guidelines (NCP) Netherlands
- Salvation Army Mali
- SER Expertise Centre
- Woord en Daad

## Attachment 7 – List of companies in focus group

The following companies were consulted once to provide input on the topic of meaningful dialogue:

- Arte Group (natural stone)
- Josh V (apparel)
- MN (financial)
- Nature's Pride (agrifood)
- Tata Steel (metal)
- WE Fashion (apparel)

## Attachment 8 – List of experts

Name	Position	Role in Project
Harry Hummels	Professor of Ethics, Organisations, and Society at Maastricht University	Advisory on Humanizing business



Danielle Zandee	Professor of Sustainable Organizational Development at Nyenrode Business University	Advisory about action research approach
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In addition to the experts named above, this concept is also informed by the expertise of employees of various companies, trade unions, employers' organisations, government officials and NGOs – both Dutch and international.

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## Colophon

This working document is written by the SER Secretariat.

The SER-project 'Meaningful Dialogue in International Supply Chains' is created with the support of the *Goldschmeding Foundation*.

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