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Joint statement on the government response to the Joint Committee on Human Rights report on Forced Labour in UK Supply Chains

The Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI), British Retail Consortium (BRC), Corporate Justice Coalition (CJC), and Trades Union Congress (TUC) welcome the [UK Government's statement](#) that it is committed to protecting responsible businesses and championing international standards and frameworks on human rights, the environment and anti-corruption measures to support a level playing field for businesses.

Earlier this year, the Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR) recommended that the government introduce mandatory Human Rights and Environmental Due Diligence (mHREDD) legislation, a recommendation that we strongly supported. While we are disappointed that the government has not yet committed to introducing this legislation in its response to the JCHR report, we are actively engaging in the UK's Department for Business and Trade Responsible Business Conduct Review and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's National Baseline Assessment, and look forward to their findings due early next year.

Mandatory Human Rights and Environmental Due Diligence legislation is essential to ensuring that all businesses meet their responsibility to respect all human and labour rights, and the environment. Enshrining mHREDD in law will drive consistent and meaningful action across the private and public sectors, protect workers and communities, and ensure a level playing field so that responsible companies are not undercut by those turning a blind eye to exploitation.

As other countries move ahead with regulating global supply chains, it is vital that the UK keeps pace. Strong mHREDD legislation with legal accountability mechanisms will strengthen supply chain resilience, enhance sustainable and inclusive growth, and help ensure that respect for people and the planet becomes a baseline for doing business, not an exception.

We urge the government to take this opportunity to show leadership on business and human rights by introducing robust mHREDD legislation that protects both people and the environment.

Giles Bolton, Executive Director of the Ethical Trading Initiative, said *"We welcome the government's commitment to protecting responsible businesses and championing international standards on human rights. We are clear that mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence is key to responsible business. It strengthens supply chain resilience and supports sustainable growth that works for people and planet. We look forward to continued engagement with government on this vital topic."*

Andrew Opie, Director of Food and Sustainability of the British Retail Consortium, said *“We welcome the Government’s response to the Joint Committee’s recommendations and their responsible business conduct review. We will continue to engage with Government, pushing for considered legislation that will strengthen standards for British businesses and their supply chains and keep the UK in step with global requirements.”*

Dominique Muller, Executive Director of the Corporate Justice Coalition, said *“There is growing urgency to address corporate accountability and growing calls for mandatory due diligence legislation. The JCHR has laid out how the UK’s existing piecemeal and ad hoc domestic law framework for addressing forced labour is “inadequate”. The government response cites a patchwork of often ineffective sticking plaster regulations highlighting the urgent need for a holistic approach to addressing human rights abuses and environmental harms in supply chains. While we recognise the government is undertaking a review of responsible business conduct there is little transparency on the process. We hope the government can take bold steps towards a new law that will hold companies to account.”*

Kate Bell, Assistant General Secretary, of the Trades Union Congress, said *“We welcome the government’s commitment to champion international standards and frameworks on human rights and the environment to support a level playing field for business. Robust mandatory human and labour rights and environmental due diligence legislation with legal accountability is needed to prevent harms in global supply chains. This new law would support the government’s ambition to build resilient supply chains and help ensure public funds are used to support decent work in the UK and around the globe. We will continue to engage with the government on this important issue.”*