

Tool 2: Making the Case for Joint Action in Public Policy Advocacy

In each opportunity for engagement on issues of public policy, you can ensure greater impact and sustainability in action by working with industry partners and peer companies, or collectively through a representative business or employers' association.

Like individual companies, these organizations can lobby UN agencies and national governments for ratification of international Conventions, improvements to national laws and regulatory machinery, stronger public enforcement mechanisms and business representation in key public policy forums and networks.

Brands choosing to advocate through business associations may wish to do so at the national level, across their industry, or internationally. Each level of engagement has its benefits and challenges.

- Operating nationally means taking action through your representative employers' organization, or a chamber of commerce or industry group, or other multi-brand or multi-stakeholder initiative. Your membership in a representative employer's organization means you have the right to engage its officers and secretariat to raise specific questions of concern to your company. Your employers' organization should be involved in all domestic negotiations relating to the ratification of ILO and UN Conventions and the development or reform of relevant national legislation. It is your direct link to government on labor and public policy matters.
- Taking action within your own industry means cooperating with peer companies through an industry association or multi-brand initiative. A common strategy, program or platform can be developed. Industry associations tend to be well-established at the national level in many countries around the world. At the international level, they have begun to develop in recent years, for example in the garments sector, electronic, toy manufacturing and other industries in order to tackle the policy issues raised by global supply chains, including forced labor and human trafficking. In both cases, a key element of their engagement is policy dialogue.
- Finally, it is not uncommon for companies – in particular global brands – to focus their attention on international engagement. This can be done through employers' representation at the International Labor Organization (ILO), for example, or it can be done through coordinated efforts by multi-brand initiatives at forums such as the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD). Membership in the UN Global Compact offers a similar opportunity. In each case, brands have a direct channel of communication to positively influence global policy dialogue through employer representation. They can effectively tackle the policy challenges they face in labor, migration and human rights through the established mechanisms of global governance.

In Focus

At the international level, there are a number of organizations that address the intersecting issues of forced labor, human trafficking, migration for employment and private employment agencies. Each of these could be considered as a potential target of policy engagement:

- *Global Forum on Migration & Development*
- *International Labor Organization*
- *International Organization for Migration*
- *UN Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking*
- *UN Global Compact*
- *UN High Commission for Human Rights*

PRACTICAL STEPS TO JOINT ACTION

The following tips can assist you in taking effective action at the national, industry or international level within an employer or industry association.

- Consider raising awareness in your organization and consulting with other members to address forced labor, human trafficking and the risks they pose to business and migrant workers in the global economy. Organize a meeting or workshop on the issue to discuss how it can best be addressed by the organization, in particular through its engagement of policy actors.
- Convene an internal task force or working group on forced labor to discuss strategy, identify objectives and address technical and operational matters to ensure the working group's success.
- Support or lead the development of a national or industry-based plan of action as a key institutional mechanism to engage policy actors.
- Communicate internally on relevant issues, and support networking and capacity building for effective policy advocacy across the organization. Participate in external communications and public information campaigns.
- Support the adoption of a national, industry-wide or international policy or code of conduct to reinforce a public commitment to fighting forced labor and exploitation of migrant workers.
- Take a leadership role in engaging public policy actors directly at both national and international levels.
- Identify and foster partnerships or coalitions of like-minded business and stakeholder organizations to enhance the potential impact of public policy engagement.

See [Tool 3](#) in this section for good practice examples of employer engagement in policy dialogue.

