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Building Coherence: Articulating the Voluntary Principles and the Business and Human Rights Agendas in Mozambique

- The simultaneous emergence of multiple frameworks in the areas of security, business, and human rights in Mozambique poses a central challenge to the coherence of their implementation. Without a deliberate effort, despite sharing common foundations, instruments such as the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights and the Business and Human Rights agenda tend to be implemented in parallel, with differing levels of institutionalization and articulation. This fragmentation limits the clarity of responsibilities, reduces the preventive impact of public policies, and weakens the capacity of the State and businesses to respond consistently to the risks of human rights violations associated with economic activities and security management.

In this context, the coordination between the different frameworks takes on strategic importance. Both frameworks share converging objectives, namely the prevention of abuses, the promotion of accountability, the strengthening of trust between the State, businesses, and communities, and the systematic integration of human rights into business decisions and public policies.

The coherence between these instruments requires an integrated approach that goes beyond the formal fulfillment of norms and commitments. It implies aligning policies, operational practices, and monitoring mechanisms, ensuring clarity of responsibilities among the different actors, and guaranteeing that investment protection does not come at the expense of the fundamental rights of populations. In this sense, the Voluntary Principles should be understood

as a complementary and operational instrument of the Business and Human Rights agenda, capable of translating normative principles into practical guidelines for the responsible management of security.

Effective coordination between these frameworks is equally essential to ensure a people-centered approach guided by the principle of “Leave No One Behind.” Integrating the perspectives of women, youth, and other vulnerable groups into security and development decision-making processes is indispensable for the social legitimacy of public policies, conflict prevention, and the construction of sustainable peace. Thus, coherence between the Voluntary Principles and the Business and Human Rights agendas is a structuring pillar of a responsible, inclusive development model aligned with human rights objectives in Mozambique.

“Coherence between instruments is a strategic priority,” National Human Rights Commission

Albachir Macassar, President of the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH), believes that the alignment between the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights and the national Business and Human Rights agenda is now a strategic priority for Mozambique. In a context marked by complex security challenges, particularly in Cabo Delgado, it is essential to ensure that the protection of strategic investments does not result in violations of the fundamental rights of the population. The Voluntary Principles offer a practical framework that allows for reconciling security needs with respect for human rights and the rule of law.

As the National Human Rights Institution, the Commission reaffirms that the State has the primary responsibility to protect human rights throughout the national territory, including in the context of business activities. This implies ensuring that public security forces act legally, proportionally, and responsibly, even when deployed to protect economic projects. Coherence between public policies, security practices, and international commitments was highlighted as a central element for preventing abuses and strengthening the trust of affected communities.

In this context, the President argues that, instead of proceeding with parallel and fragmented instruments, Mozambique should move towards adopting a single consolidated plan that coherently integrates the Business and Human Rights agenda and the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights. In his view, the ex-



istence of two separate plans could lead to overlapping efforts, implementation gaps, and less institutional clarity, while an integrated plan would allow for greater normative coherence, efficiency in execution, and clarity regarding the responsibilities of the different actors.

According to Macassar, the Voluntary Principles should be understood as a complementary instrument to the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Their effective implementation requires structured dialogue between the State, businesses, and civil society, as well as clear mechanisms for monitoring, accountability, and access to redress for victims of violations.

Coordination requires an integrated approach and strong partnerships, UNDP in Mozambique

Habiba Rodolfo, Head of the UNDP's Governance and Social Cohesion Unit in Mozambique, highlighted that promoting coherence between the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights and business and human rights agendas is central to the UNDP's approach in the country. In fragile and conflict-affected contexts, such as Cabo Delgado, the way security is managed can either strengthen social cohesion or, conversely, deepen tensions and inequalities. The Voluntary Principles provide a practical basis for integrating conflict prevention and human rights protection into corporate security management.

From the UNDP's point of view, inclusive governance, institutional strengthening, and respect for human rights are fundamental elements for sustainable development. The implementation of the Voluntary Principles contributes to improved accountability, strengthened trust among actors, and the promotion of more balanced relationships between the State, the private sector, and affected communities. This coherence is particularly relevant in the context of the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles and the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights.

It was also emphasized that the articulation between different agendas (security, development, human rights, and peacebuilding) requires integrated approaches and strong partnerships. The creation and consolidation of national and provincial dialogue platforms, including working groups on the Voluntary Principles, was identified as an essential step to promote solutions



adapted to the Mozambican context and to strengthen trust among the various actors.

Finally, UNDP reaffirmed its commitment to continue supporting the Government of Mozambique, civil society, and the private sector in promoting responsible practices, building the capacity of key actors, and strengthening social cohesion. The coherence between the Voluntary Principles and the business and human rights agendas was presented as a strategic investment in peace, stability, and sustainable human development.

“Lack of coherence can fuel perceptions of injustice, marginalization, and exclusion”, Search for Common Ground in Mozambique.

Serina Howard, Project Manager at Search for Common Ground in Mozambique, emphasized that the organization’s experience demonstrates that the way security is managed in extractive investment contexts has direct impacts on conflict dynamics at the local level. When security is perceived as repressive, exclusionary, or disconnected from community concerns, the risks of escalating tensions and violence increase significantly. In this sense, the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights offer a preventive approach that allows mitigating these risks through dialogue, in-depth context analysis, and respect for human rights.

The representative highlighted that coherence between the Voluntary Principles and the Business and Human Rights agendas is essential for building trust between businesses, communities, and public authorities. The absence of this coherence can fuel perceptions of injustice, marginalization, and exclusion, factors that often underlie protracted conflicts and the weakening of social cohesion. On the other hand, the consistent application of the Voluntary Principles can contribute to transforming security into a stabilizing and peace-promoting factor, rather than an element that exacerbates existing tensions.

At the heart of her speech, Serina Howard emphasized the principle of “Leave No One Behind,” stressing that any security and development strategy that ignores the voices and needs of the most vulnerable groups is destined to fail. The implementation of the Voluntary Principles must therefore ensure that women, youth, internally displaced persons, and other historically



marginalized communities are actively included in consultation, planning, and decision-making processes related to security and extractive investments.

Finally, the Search for Common Ground reinforced the importance of integrating conflict-sensitive and community-centered approaches into the operationalization of the Voluntary Principles in Mozambique. This implies actively listening to local concerns, understanding the specific social and political dynamics of each territory, and ensuring that security is conceived not only as the protection of assets, but as an instrument for promoting human dignity, inclusion, and sustainable peace, fully aligned with the commitment to leave no one behind.

“...fundamental for transforming normative commitments into concrete changes on the ground,” Fund for Peace

Paul Turner, President and CEO of the Fund for Peace, highlighted that the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights represent one of the most consolidated examples of multi-stakeholder cooperation in the field of business and human rights. As a member organization of the Voluntary Principles Initiative, the Fund for Peace recognizes that coherence between the VPSHR, the UN Guiding Principles, and national agendas is fundamental to transforming normative commitments into concrete changes on the ground.

Paul Turner emphasized that the Initiative’s global experience demonstrates that the effective implementation of the Voluntary Principles depends on three essential factors: political leadership, responsible business engagement, and active participation of civil society. The absence of any one of these elements compromises the system’s coherence and limits the impact of abuse prevention and human rights promotion initiatives.

It was also emphasized that fragile and conflict-affected contexts, such as Cabo Delgado, require particularly careful and evidence-based approaches. Using the Voluntary Principles as a tool for risk analysis, dialogue, and accountability can help anticipate problems, reduce tensions, and prevent business security from becoming a source of instability.

Finally, the Fund for Peace reaffirmed its commitment to supporting Mozambique through the sharing of international best practices, capacity building, and the promotion of dialogue across the three pillars of the Initiative. Building coherence between the Voluntary Principles and the business and human rights agendas was presented as a crucial step towards promoting



responsible investment, protecting populations, and contributing to sustainable peace.

These reflections took place within the framework of the high-level conference on the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights, held on December 8, 2025, in Maputo, organized by the Center for Democracy and Human Rights (CDD), in partnership with the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional and Religious Affairs (MJACR) and the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF), with the main objective of reaffirming the commitment of the Government of Mozambique to the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights and promoting the articulation between these and the national Business and Human Rights agenda.



MISSÃO:
Inspirar e impulsionar ações para proteger os direitos humanos, fortalecer a democracia e promover a justiça.

MISSION:
Inspiring and driving actions to protect human rights, strengthen democracy, and promote justice.



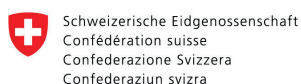
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