



**A Users' Guide to
the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises**

Table of Contents

OVERVIEW	3
CHAPTER 1.....	3
INTRODUCING THE OECD GUIDELINES FOR MULTINATIONAL ENTERPRISES.....	3
CHAPTER 2.....	4
THE LATEST REVIEW OF THE GUIDELINES	4
CHAPTER 3.....	6
THE GUIDELINES' IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES	6
<i>National Contact Points</i>	6
<i>The role of the OECD Committee on International Investment and Multinational Enterprises (CIME)</i>	9
CHAPTER 4.....	9
HOW TO PROCEED IF A COMPANY VIOLATES THE GUIDELINES.....	9
CHAPTER 5.....	11
THE GUIDELINES AND OTHER INSTRUMENTS AND MEASURES	11
<i>Framework Agreements and Workers' Capital</i>	12
<i>Unilateral Codes of Conduct</i>	12
<i>Linkages</i>	13

Overview

This Users' Guide is intended to help trade unions worldwide in using the newly revised OECD¹ Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises in order to secure and protect workers' rights. The text of the Guidelines was agreed by all parties involved - governments, trade unions, business and some NGOs - after long and sometimes difficult discussions within the context of the OECD. An optimum outcome for trade union aspirations has not occurred on all issues. But TUAC believes that much progress has been achieved, especially when the new Guidelines are viewed in the light of earlier phases in this debate. Trade unions are therefore urged to make maximum use of this new instrument, in order to show governments and business that the labour movement means business in securing further respect for workers' rights.

The Guidelines can also be used in trade union campaigns involving key global corporations such as human rights, the supply chain, the environment, information disclosure, and combating bribery. They can be useful in efforts to solve specific problems and to create a favourable environment for social dialogue and agreement with corporations. The strengthened implementation procedures adopted by the signatories can be used to influence company compliance with the provisions of the Guidelines, including workers' rights protection. Other major revisions to the instrument include global applicability, the coverage of all core labour standards, and the encouragement to suppliers and sub-contractors to apply the Guidelines.

It must be noted, however, that instruments such as the Guidelines complement, but do not replace a binding regulatory framework to govern corporate activity and global markets more generally at the national and international levels.

This Guide is primarily intended for national centres in OECD and non-OECD countries, International Trade Secretariats (ITSs) and their affiliates. It may also be of use to NGOs wishing to campaign jointly with trade unions in these areas.

Chapter 1.

Introducing the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises

The Guidelines are recommendations for good corporate behaviour primarily addressed to enterprises based in those countries that adhere to them. These include the 30 OECD countries², plus Argentina, Brazil and Chile. But the Guidelines also apply to business operations worldwide. More countries are now in the process of adhering to the Guidelines. To do so governments must meet their responsibilities over, for example, setting up a functioning and effective National Contact Point³, and must work constructively with trade unions. The Trade Union Advisory Committee to

¹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

² Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, Japan, Finland, Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Korea and the Slovak Republic.

³ National Contact Points are explained in Chapter 3 The Guidelines' Implementation Procedures.

the OECD (TUAC) strongly urges trade unions, where appropriate, to ask governments meeting those conditions to adhere to the Guidelines.

The Guidelines chapters cover the following aspects: Preface, Concepts and Principles, General Policies, Disclosure (of information), Employment and Industrial Relations, Environment, Combating Bribery, Consumer Interests, Science and Technology, Competition and Taxation.

Though not binding in a legal sense, they are not optional for corporations. They cannot pick and choose among the provisions of the Guidelines nor subject them to their own interpretations. Their application does not depend on endorsement by companies. They are the only multilaterally endorsed and comprehensive rules that governments have negotiated, in which they commit themselves to help solve problems arising in corporations. They express the shared view of what major governments believe to be good corporate behaviour, and corporations are expected to abide by their contents in their business operations worldwide. Most importantly, the Guidelines are backed by an improved implementation procedure, where the ultimate responsibility for their enforcement lies with governments. This is a fundamental difference between the Guidelines and, for example, unilateral company codes of conduct. It makes the Guidelines more than just a public relations exercise.

The Guidelines are part of a wider OECD Declaration on International Investment and Multinational Enterprises package of investment-related provisions which also covers the National Treatment of foreign-owned corporations, measures to avoid or minimise the imposition of Conflicting Requirements on them, and transparency regarding the provision of official Incentives and Disincentives.

Chapter 2.

The Latest Review of the Guidelines

The Guidelines were first adopted in 1976 following public concern that multinational enterprises were becoming too powerful. Of particular concern was the behaviour of some OECD-based multinationals in developing countries, for example the involvement of US-based corporations in the Chilean coup d'état. In response, governments initiated negotiations at the UN over what was expected to be a binding Code of Conduct on Transnational Corporations. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) meanwhile began to negotiate the labour element of that code. The changing political landscape resulted in the binding UN code being effectively shelved in the 1980s. However, the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles on Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy, which covered employment issues, training, working conditions and industrial relations, and which had been agreed in 1977, survived as a non-binding instrument.

Simultaneously, the OECD negotiated and agreed in 1976 its Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. The OECD and ILO instruments are parallel, consistent with each other and complementary. The Tripartite Declaration has more detailed

recommendations on labour issues, while the Guidelines cover a broader range of corporate activities.

In terms of the relevance and usefulness of the Guidelines for trade unions, there have been three distinct phases. The initial phase, which could be termed the “active” phase, ran from their inception through to the mid 1980s. During that period trade unions, often with the active support of governments, raised a number of important Guidelines’ cases concerning unacceptable corporate behaviour. Several governments took unilateral action. Many of these cases led to outcomes which were useful to trade unions. Notable examples include the Electrolux case regarding union busting by one of its US-subidiaries, which was resolved in the Swedish National Contact Point. Many cases brought forward have shown that multinational enterprises and their subsidiaries must adopt a positive attitude towards trade unions.

The second phase, from the mid-1980s through most of the 1990s, could be called the “dormant” phase. Other than the introduction of a fairly weak chapter on the environment coming from the review process, the Guidelines fell into disuse. A handful of trade union organisations and active governments alone kept them alive. Governments increasingly preferred to focus on measures to attract and compete for investment rather than questions of improving corporate conduct. Awareness of the Guidelines by individual companies was never very high and parts of the business community were happy to leave it that way.

In the 1990’s, there was greater public awareness of the use of child labour and other abuses associated with extensive shifts of production and the development of supply chains. Specific companies gained notoriety because of negative labour, human rights or environmental practices. Corporate conduct was, once again, on the agenda even though it had never gone away for trade unions. In the context of the OECD, the “re-awakening” of the Guidelines, the third phase, was largely a response to the attacks on the OECD and the associated loss of credibility of the governments that had been negotiating the failed Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI). Needing to regain some of that lost credibility, the OECD in 1998 launched a review of the Guidelines. In June 2000, the 30 OECD member governments, plus Argentina, Brazil and Chile adopted the new set of Guidelines together with enhanced implementation procedures. These three periods reflect a common feature. The degree to which the Guidelines are implemented and enforced is determined by the political will of governments. Few enterprises will take the Guidelines seriously unless governments take them seriously. In return, these attitudes have affected the level of interest of trade unions in using this instrument.

As a reflection of trade union experience with the Guidelines, particularly during the “dormant” phase, some TUAC affiliates were sceptical as to whether the latest review would make a difference. However, the overall results of the review were important and can potentially make the Guidelines more relevant and useful. The new language makes it clear that the Guidelines are intended to apply to corporations regardless of where they do business, including in countries whose governments do not adhere to them. For the first time, there is an opening to use the Guidelines in relation to abuses in the supply chain. Human rights are covered and the remaining core labour standards were added beyond trade union rights (all core labour standards are now covered; freedom of association and collective bargaining, abolition of child and

forced labour, and affirmation of non-discrimination in employment). The revised chapters on disclosure, bribery and the environment also improve the instrument.

The strengthening of the implementation system is the most important development. The new Procedural Guidance for the National Contact Points (NCPs) puts the onus firmly on governments at the national level to make sure that companies observe the Guidelines. The role of the OECD in monitoring the performance of NCPs has also been enhanced. There are signs that many governments are taking their responsibilities to implement the revised Guidelines seriously. Many NCPs that were previously dormant or non-existent have been reactivated. Increased efforts are being seen in some countries to resolve the initial cases being brought forward, while efforts to promote the Guidelines among trade unions, business and NGOs have been undertaken by many NCPs.

While the role of governments will be central in putting pressure on corporations to respect the Guidelines, other avenues will also be useful. The role of the media will be important. Global companies are vulnerable to adverse publicity that brings their brand name into disrepute, for example, over allegations of sweat shop labour conditions for their workers, especially by suppliers, or charges of corruption, or environmental pollution. Such campaigns may be effective in encouraging companies to comply with the Guidelines. Conversely, it is also true that good practice can improve company image.

Chapter 3.

The Guidelines' Implementation Procedures

The OECD negotiated a special Procedural Guidance, which stipulates the obligations of the countries adhering to the Guidelines. It also maps out a course of action for governments to follow where a case involving a breach of the Guidelines occurs. For instance, if workers' rights are being violated or if there is any other breach of the Guidelines, trade unions can raise this as a case through the system of National Contact Points (NCPs). Their role, among others, is to help the parties, for example, labour and business, to solve a specific problem.

National Contact Points

Governments adhering to the Guidelines must set up National Contact Points (NCPs) within their administration. These are responsible for undertaking promotional activities, handling inquiries and contributing to the solution of problems that may arise. They may be organised in different ways. Some involve a single government agency, while others are multi-agency (involving several ministries). Some are tripartite (government, labour and business), but governments are ultimately responsible. Whatever the form, representatives of labour, business and other interested parties (NGOs) must be informed of the availability of the NCP. It is also expected to develop and maintain relations with these groups. In a few countries, NGOs are formally involved in the NCP structure, while in others involvement is

more informal. In some cases, NGOs are invited, depending on the questions to be discussed. For example, environmental NGOs are invited when environmental issues arise.

The Procedural Guidance states that NCPs should operate according to the “core criteria of: visibility, accessibility, transparency, and accountability.” That requires that the NCP, among other things, take an active role in:

- promoting the Guidelines, including translating them into different languages,
- making the Guidelines known and available, through holding seminars and meetings, as well as responding to enquiries from all sources, including trade unions, and
- informing both inward and outward investors and potential investors about the instrument.

To increase the accountability of NCPs, it is suggested that national parliaments be involved. In addition, the NCPs must prepare a report on their activities for the OECD Committee on International Investment and Multinational Enterprises (CIME) and meet annually to share their experiences with their counterparts. The first such meeting was held in June 2001.

Problem Solving

When a company is believed to be in violation of the Guidelines, a trade union or other party can raise the case with the NCP (the OECD refers to a Guidelines case as a “specific instance”). The onus is then on the NCP to try to resolve the issue. A range of options is available, including offering a forum for discussion for the affected parties, conciliation or mediation. In deciding what course of action to take, the NCP is required to:

1. Make an initial assessment as to whether the case merits “further examination”. It must then respond to the party that raised the case. If the NCP decides that the issue does not merit further consideration, it must give reasons for its decision.

The OECD commentaries provide some guidance on how to interpret the wording “merits further examination”. Accordingly, the NCP should determine whether the issue is “bona fide” and relevant to the implementation of the Guidelines. In this context, it will, among other things, take into account the identity of the party concerned and its interest in the matter, whether the issue is material and substantiated and how similar issues have been, or are being, treated in other domestic or international fora. There is nothing to prevent a trade union from raising a case that is being handled elsewhere⁴. However, in the event of difficulties, the trade union should discuss the matter with the TUAC Secretariat.

2. When going ahead with a case, the NCP should help the parties resolve the problem. In doing so, it can:

⁴ The French trade union centres CFDT, CGT-FO and UNSA raised the closure of Marks and Spencer’s French stores as a case with their NCP in spring 2001, which was also being dealt with in French courts.

- (a) Seek advice from relevant authorities, trade unions, business, NGOs and experts;
 - (b) Consult the NCP in the other country or countries concerned;
 - (c) Seek the guidance of the CIME where there is doubt about the interpretation of the Guidelines;
 - (d) Offer conciliation or mediation to assist in dealing with the issues.
3. Having followed one or all of these avenues, and if the parties are still unable to agree on how to solve a problem, the NCP is normally required to issue a public statement on the case. If appropriate, it should make recommendations to the parties on how the Guidelines apply to the case. NCPs may, therefore, inform a company that its activities breach the Guidelines. Whilst the Guidelines are not legally binding, the mere fact that the conclusions of NCPs should be in the public domain can have an impact and affect company behaviour.
 4. A framework was negotiated to guide these activities. The Procedural Guidance recognises that each NCP should strive for maximum transparency over its operations, but there will be times where confidentiality will be important. The NCP should protect sensitive business information, and other information, such as the identity of those individuals involved. This may be useful for trade unions in those cases, particularly in non-OECD countries, where workers and trade unions are often in physical danger. Also, while the “proceedings” are under way, the facts and arguments of the case raised in the NCP will remain confidential. However, parties will be able to comment publicly on how the case is progressing. Afterwards, and if the parties involved do not agree on a resolution of the problem raised, they are free to comment publicly on the case, though they cannot disclose the information and views provided by another party during proceedings, unless that other party agrees to their disclosure.

Only then, and after consulting the parties involved, the NCP should make public the outcome of the case. Recognising that there can be times where it is better not to go public, the NCP can keep the outcome confidential.
 5. Where problems arise in non-adhering countries, the NCP should follow the above procedure to the greatest extent possible. As a further acknowledgement that there may be practical problems in solving cases in non-adhering countries, the Procedural Guidance allows for these matters to be discussed by the annual NCP meetings. Because of their links with affiliates in non-adhering countries, familiarity with many of the issues on the ground, and links with the rest of the international trade union movement, the International Trade Secretariats have a particularly important role to play in bringing and developing cases.
 6. The NCPs hold annual meetings to discuss matters related to the Guidelines. Prior to these meetings, they must produce annual reports on their activities, including on cases raised. As a reality check TUAC surveys the views of trade unions on their experiences with the Guidelines and communicates them to the annual meetings.

The role of the OECD Committee on International Investment and Multinational Enterprises (CIME)

Consisting of government representatives, the CIME is the OECD body that is responsible for the Guidelines. It meets regularly in Paris and holds regular consultations with TUAC, BIAC (Business and Industry Advisory Committee to the OECD) and interested NGOs on Guidelines questions, and other international investment issues. In addition, the CIME has a Working Party on the OECD Declaration that manages more directly Guidelines issues.

The Procedural Guidance covers the CIME as well as the NCPs. Trade unions should see it as a backstop when things go wrong at the national level or as a forum to discuss issues that warrant a government reaction beyond individual NCP's. One example of such concerns is the TUAC request (June 2001) for the CIME to issue guidance on the implications of the Guidelines for those multinationals operating in Burma, where forced labour is widespread, sanctioned and practised by the regime.

The CIME will consider requests for assistance from NCPs about how to carry out their activities, including handling specific cases. This includes how to interpret the Guidelines when a problem arises. TUAC, along with BIAC, or a government that has adhered to the Guidelines, also has the right to take a case to the CIME where it believes that an NCP has not fulfilled its "procedural" responsibilities over a specific case.

The CIME will also be able to clarify the meaning of the Guidelines where TUAC, BIAC or an adhering country believes that an NCP has misinterpreted them over a specific case. When issuing a clarification, CIME does not name companies (although in practice, the company identity is known). However, where those findings differ from those of an NCP, they will be of use in pressing the government to take remedial action or re-open the case and in putting pressure on the company to observe the Guidelines.

The CIME will also be able to call on experts to "address and report on broader issues or individual issues, or to improve the effectiveness of procedures". In addition to in-house experts, CIME may call on outside experts, including, specifically, trade unions, the ILO and other relevant international bodies, NGO's and others.

Chapter 4.

How to proceed if a company violates the Guidelines

The new Implementation Procedures to help enforce the Guidelines set out clearer guidance for users. However, specific application of the Guidelines procedures is still being developed at national level. To help trade unions better prepare cases to be taken to the NCPs, and where necessary to the CIME, measures to be taken when a company is violating the Guidelines are outlined below. These steps deal solely with problem solving, but it should be remembered that the Guidelines can be used in a positive way to help establish relations with multinationals and for other purposes. In

the event of a problem arising relevant to the Guidelines, the following approach should be followed:

1. If a Guidelines-related problem cannot be resolved directly with the company, the trade union should contact its national centre and International Trade Secretariat (ITS) to discuss whatever action under the Guidelines procedures might be necessary and useful. Co-ordinated action will get better results and irrelevant or poorly prepared requests to the NCP or the OECD are likely to be counterproductive. All relevant trade union organisations should be involved. TUAC is ready to provide informal advice on the use of the Guidelines and to take part in any discussion on how to best use them.
2. The national centre or ITS should always inform the TUAC of a case. In addition, it will be desirable to inform the ICFTU Secretariat, particularly in cases arising in a non-OECD country. Such contact is most useful if it takes place prior to the submission of a case. A case can be submitted by a trade union directly, an ITS or by a national centre. In certain circumstances, for example when the case comes from a non-adhering country, the ITS may be the most appropriate body to handle it. Circumstances will vary according to the trade union situation and the approach of the NCP in countries where the latter exists. Contact between unions and national centres in the country where the problem has arisen and their counterparts in the enterprise's home country should also take place. The appropriate ITS and the TUAC and ICFTU Secretariats will assist in ensuring such contact.
3. The trade union organisation should then formally approach the NCP in the country where the violation is taking place. If it is in a non-adhering country, it would be the NCP in the country where the company is headquartered. So, for example, if a US based company operating in Malaysia breaches the Guidelines, the Malaysian trade union should contact its ITS and national centre. The ITS and the MTUC should make sure that the TUAC and the ICFTU are informed as well as the national centre in the home country, the AFL-CIO. The AFL-CIO should be asked to raise the issue with the US NCP. NCPs are obliged to follow the same procedures as with adhering countries "where relevant and applicable".

The case must be thoroughly prepared. It requires accurate background information on the exact nature of the Guidelines violation, the name of the parent company, its subsidiary or supplier, and where it is located. Supportive evidence substantiating the allegations should be presented. In that way, the risk that the NCP will conclude that the case should not proceed is reduced. The trade union organisation should also request that the NCP, where one exists, in the country where the violation has taken place, discuss the case with the NCP in the country where the corporation is headquartered. Trade union organisations in the home country may also wish to discuss the case with their NCP. Such actions can lead to a speedier resolution of the problem.

4. Upon receipt of the trade union organisation's request for action, the NCP must examine the case. It should follow the procedure outlined on page 7. If the NCP decides that the issue does not merit further consideration, it should respond to the organisation raising the case and give reasons for its decision. Should the

trade union organisation involved disagree with this outcome, it should contact the TUAC secretariat to determine whether the issue should be raised at the CIME. If, on the other hand, the NCP decides that the case is well founded, it is to follow the procedures outlined on page 7.

Where no resolution can be reached, the NCP should make a statement identifying the company. It should also give recommendations on how to implement the Guidelines in that case. They can then be used to encourage compliance with the Guidelines.

5. If the NCP has mishandled the case or has made a questionable interpretation of the Guidelines, TUAC can make a submission to CIME, and if founded the Committee can clarify how the Guidelines should be interpreted and implemented, and make that publicly known. CIME can also make recommendations to improve the functioning of NCPs.
6. If the procedures have been followed and the company still refuses to change its behaviour then the involved trade union organisation(s) should return to the NCP and request intervention. TUAC may also request that the CIME discuss such a development as well. The refusal to comply with the Guidelines can be an effective argument as part of a larger campaign. Again, a strong co-ordinated trade union approach would be necessary.

Chapter 5.

The Guidelines and other Instruments and Measures

There are a variety of instruments and measures related to the conduct of multinational enterprises⁵. The Guidelines and the ILO Tripartite Declaration, which are based on universal standards, were designed with the participation of trade unions and employer organisations firmly included, and have a role for governments. The ILO Tripartite Declaration has been less frequently used by trade unions than the OECD Guidelines, in part because the follow-up procedures do not tend to contribute to problem-solving and because of restrictive receivability requirements for consideration of cases.

The UN Global Compact is a vehicle to promote global dialogue built around nine principles that include the core labour standards as well as fundamental standards for human rights and the environment. The dialogue involves global employers and global unions. It also encourages individual enterprises to endorse the Compact. Although its role is quite different from both the ILO Tripartite Declaration and the OECD Guidelines, it is consistent with both instruments. It can facilitate discussions between ITs and companies and can help create a climate conducive to the negotiation of framework agreements. Although Guidelines implementation is based on national procedures, they can also contribute to social dialogue, particularly if such

⁵ For a more detailed review of codes of conduct by trade union authors see “The international trade union movement and the new codes of conduct” by Dwight Justice, ICFTU, or “The New Codes of Conduct – Some questions and answers for trade unionists” by Neil Kearney, ITGLWF, and Dwight Justice.

dialogue is encouraged by NCPs. This also has the potential to encourage global social dialogue and agreement.

There are other, non-governmental, but multilateral, activities in the area of corporate conduct. The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), a private effort with support from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), is working to establish common international standards to be followed by corporations in reporting on social and environmental sustainability. Efforts are being made to ensure that the common standards are consistent with international labour standards and the OECD Guidelines. If it develops adequate standards and procedures, GRI could become a benchmark for investors. Social Accountability (SA) 8000 has been one of the pioneers in multilateral, private initiatives, and trade unions have been involved in the development of its code, which is based on international labour standards. It also has mechanisms for verification and certification. The Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI), although based in one country, the UK, deals with the conduct of UK-based enterprises overseas. It is governed by a board composed of three representatives each of companies, unions, and NGOs. ETI runs pilot programmes related to the implementation of company codes of conduct that are consistent with the ETI code.

Framework Agreements

ITSS are negotiating ‘framework agreements’ with multinationals. The number of such agreements has grown rapidly in recent years. These agreements include trade union and other workers’ rights. In some cases, they cover other issues as well, including those concerned with suppliers. They establish a relationship with a company that makes it possible to resolve problems, often before conflicts become serious.

Unilateral Codes of Conduct

A plethora of unilateral codes of conduct have been adopted by companies in recent years in some cases as a response to adverse publicity at their activities, or that of their suppliers, predominantly in developing countries. Such codes are of varying quality and usefulness. They are not established in relation with trade unions or interlocutors nor are they “enforceable” through the use of any government-based process, and key international standards are, more often than not, missing, such as freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining.

With this growth of activity in the area of corporate conduct, it is important to appreciate the differences in the nature of the various instruments and measures that are being taken. Many unilateral codes of conduct are little more than public relations exercises. However, some multilateral approaches, while purely private, offer opportunities for exchanges of information and the development of experience and expertise, such as for example, the Ethical Trading Initiative. Framework agreements are binding in the sense that they are negotiated between legitimate partners and workers are represented at the table. The Global Compact, in itself, produces little. Its impact must be measured through its effect on global social dialogue, including

framework agreements and the encouragement of companies to engage other parties based on international standards. The ILO Tripartite Declaration and the OECD Guidelines are anchored in international bodies and to a greater or lesser degree implicate national governments in their implementation. The ILO standards and supervisory machinery underpin all of the instruments and other measures that are based on international labour standards.

These instruments or measures are not, however, legally binding at the international level, unlike many protections of property that are emerging at the international level. However, there are opportunities to make the Guidelines more binding and, therefore, more relevant to the decision-making processes of enterprises.

Linkages

TUAC affiliates are increasingly discussing with their governments ways in which to link the Guidelines to publicly-backed overseas investment and trade supporting measures such as export credits. The public has a right to expect that taxpayer money is not used to support corporate behaviour that abuses workers' rights, fuels bribery and corruption, or pollutes the environment. Some governments are coming to share that view. Those companies that see themselves as leading the field in corporate social accountability should fear nothing from this. Indeed, it should help them maintain standards without being undercut by unscrupulous competitors. Other enterprises may object. They should be reminded that no enterprise is forced to apply for government subsidies or guarantees. They are benefits, not entitlements.

The Guidelines therefore have a complementary role in this new area of corporate social responsibility and accountability, in that they can help shape the environment as to what constitutes acceptable and non-acceptable corporate behaviour at home and abroad. So for example, they could be used to condition the behaviour of companies receiving public funds, as elements or standards to be incorporated in ITS-MNE framework agreements (some of which already include OECD jurisprudence), and as a benchmark for other instruments or measures. For example, they could form the basis for the social element of the GRI and be used as part of regional activities, as well as being related to regional or global intergovernmental agreements.

Ultimately, it is up to employees and their trade unions, whether national centres, ITSS, or their affiliates to decide upon which approach or set of approaches can be most effective in their relations with a multinational. What can be dealt with at the local/national level and what must be done at the international level? In some cases the Guidelines might be effective, while in other cases other instruments might be better. Such strategies need to be further developed and will depend on the circumstances of specific cases. The Guidelines have often been used in conjunction with other measures. In some cases, it makes sense to use only one instrument and in others it makes sense to use a multiple approach. The important element is to have a strategy and to understand the relationships between the different tools that are available. In developing effective strategies for the use of the Guidelines and other international instruments, the best results have come following early consultation by trade unions and national centres with their respective international organisations.