Human Rights

“At Cisco, we believe in the Internet’s ability to help improve the quality of life and human rights for all people around the world. Our approach to human rights is very similar to our approach to business. We take the long-term view planning multiple steps into the future rather than one step at a time. And that is why we are committed to creating a human rights roadmap with a long-term view.”

– John Chambers, Chairman and CEO

Cisco’s Human Rights policy formalizes our long-standing commitment to uphold and respect human rights for all people. Cisco’s leadership team believes that the formalization of this policy reflects developments in the standards for business conduct and human rights, and provides a cornerstone for Cisco to identify and manage its human rights impacts, mitigate risks and maximize opportunities for human rights to flourish, and foster collaborative and transparent engagement with the global community of stakeholders and investors.

Cisco is committed to respecting and upholding the human rights of all people. Human rights are the fundamental rights, freedoms, and standards of treatment adhered to by governments, businesses, and individuals around the world. Cisco upholds and respects human rights as contained in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the eight Core Labor Conventions developed by the International Labor Organization (ILO), the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), and the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. The Guiding Principles, in particular, clarify the role of governments’ responsibility to protect human rights against third party abuses, the corporate responsibility to respect human rights, and a joint responsibility of business and government to remedy human rights abuses if they occur.

Following substantial research, benchmarking of industry best practices, and consultation with leading organizations on the topic of human rights, Cisco believes that it is critical for all values-based companies to develop a formal approach to human rights. Human rights have long been integrated into how Cisco works with supply chain partners, develops employee ethics codes and policies, and creates a safe, friendly, and diverse workplace.

Advocacy organizations and investor communities have inquired about Cisco’s approach to human rights, seeking to know how Cisco evaluates human rights, measures and mitigates its risk throughout its global operations and supply chain, and how Cisco mitigates any negative impacts with regard to the use of Cisco’s products. Creating, implementing, and communicating a formal human rights policy, as part of a broader framework and roadmap for protecting human rights, will help to establish Cisco as a leader in the IT industry, reduce the potential for negative reputational risks, and present opportunities for engagement and collaboration with human rights stakeholders.

Cisco’s approach to human rights is informed by the documents identified above, and anchored to the approach set forth in the Guiding Principles. In June 2011, the UN Human Rights Council unanimously endorsed the Guiding Principles proposed by UN Special Representative John Ruggie. The Guiding Principles seek to provide for the first time an authoritative global standard and framework for preventing and addressing the risk of adverse human rights impacts linked to business activity. Many leading companies, including Cisco, with global operations have committed to adhering to the Guiding Principles which include the development of a human rights policy, a framework to assess and mitigate known risks, and mechanisms to report and remedy grievances where they occur. Cisco is fully committed to this approach over the long-term.
The UN Guiding Principles state that:

"[I]n order [for companies] to meet their responsibility to respect human rights, business enterprises should have in place policies and processes appropriate to their size and circumstances, including:
(a) A policy commitment to meet their responsibility to respect human rights;
(b) A human rights due-diligence process to identify, prevent, mitigate and account for how they address their impacts on human rights;
(c) Processes to enable the remediation of any adverse human rights impacts they cause or to which they contribute.
Business enterprises need to know and show that they respect human rights. They cannot do so unless they have certain policies and processes in place."

The Guiding Principles additionally call for companies to integrate human rights assessment processes into regular business practices, and to measure and report on impacts. The Guiding Principles also require proactive stakeholder engagement as a tool for companies help to identify and mitigate potential risks and develop positive opportunities for impacted communities.

Guiding Principles “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework

Policy Statement

1.1. Human rights

Cisco and all employees must continue to respect, support and promote the human rights outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Employees, partners, suppliers and contractors must:

1.1.1 Commit to responsible business practices that do not infringe on human rights including appropriate evaluation of the human rights impacts of activities undertaken by and under the control of Cisco and a governance structure which will provide appropriate processes and mechanisms to address questions regarding the impact of Cisco’s activities on human rights.
1.1.2 Avoid human rights abuses by complying with all applicable laws and regularly assessing human rights risks.
1.1.3 Protect privacy and data security for our customers.
1.1.4 Promote the benefits of increased connection and communication through the use of technologies that support freedom of expression.
1.1.5 Contribute to global communities by supporting diversity and employee engagement.
1.1.6 Support impactful social programs including those focused on critical human needs (food, water, shelter and disaster relief), healthcare, education, and economic empowerment.
1.1.7 Report transparently on Cisco’s support of and performance on human rights.
1.1.8 Engage openly with stakeholders on issues that impact human rights.
1.1.9 Contribute to the development of international standards relevant to the IT sector and consistent with respect for human rights.
1.1.10 Work with Cisco’s suppliers and partners to uphold these same values and implement similar policies and practices.

This corporate human rights policy is governed by a process which demands full compliance. Non-compliance will be managed by Cisco’s Chief Compliance Officer or his or her designee. Concerns from employees, suppliers, partners or any other stakeholder can be communicated through the same channels as any other ethical issue.
Related Policies and Processes

Human rights is a matter which encompasses multiple issues and therefore this corporate human rights policy is supported by other Cisco policies including but not limited to policies on privacy, bribery and corruption, health and safety, diversity, harassment and other labor related policies.

Cisco Privacy Policies
Code of Business Conduct
Corporate Social Responsibility Report
Electronics Industry Citizenship Coalition (EICC) Supplier Code of Conduct
Ethics at Cisco
Focus Areas for Corporate Social Responsibility
Global Anti-Corruption Policy for Suppliers
Global Supplier Diversity Business Development Program
Inclusion and Diversity