



PILLARS 2 & 3
SUSTAINABLE
OPERATIONS &
VALUE CHAINS

13

CHILD LABOR

STANDARD

13

CHILD LABOR

Commitment

Prevent and eliminate child labor in the company's operations, value chain, and broader ecosystems.

Children's hands.
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Aligning a company's practices with the SDGs requires preventing and eliminating child labor in its operations, value chain, and the broader ecosystems in which it operates. Child labor is defined by the ILO as a situation in which a child, anyone under the age of eighteen years^a, is too young to work or is engaged in work that is hazardous or otherwise unacceptable or unpermitted for people under eighteen. This includes work that "is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and/or interferes with their schooling by depriving them of the opportunity to attend school;

obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work."¹ Certain exceptions based on the type of work and the country context apply.^b

- A *child* is defined as anyone under the age of eighteen years. (Source: Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights-OHCHR, "Convention of the Rights of the Child," 1990, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>.)
- Child work* refers to work performed by people under 18 that is permitted in light of the ILO Conventions No.138 on Minimum Age and No.182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. The minimum age for working can differ by country, but ILO Conventions set the minimum age at 15 years of age or the age of completion of compulsory schooling (whichever is higher). States whose economy and educational facilities are insufficiently developed may, after consultation with the organizations of employers and workers concerned, where such exist, initially specify a minimum age of 14 years. Additionally, "national laws or regulations may permit the employment or work of persons 13 to 15 years of age on light work which is (a) not likely to be harmful to their health or development; and (b) not such as to prejudice their attendance at school, their participation in vocational orientation or training programmes approved by the competent authority or their capacity to benefit from the instruction received". (Source: ILO, "Minimum Age Convention (No. 138)," 1973, https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0:NO::P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID,P12100_LANG_CODE:312283,en.)



Approximately 70% of the world's 160 million child laborers work in agriculture, and many of these are younger children, aged 5 to 11.² This means that approximately 112 million children are engaged in one of the most dangerous sectors in terms of work-related fatalities and disease.³ New analysis suggests “a further 8.9 million children will be in child labour by the end of 2022 as a result of rising poverty driven by the pandemic.”⁴ To meet the SDGs, it is imperative to eliminate child labor, particularly its most hazardous forms, because it jeopardizes their education and development.

Companies cannot rely on local laws and enforcement alone to ensure their operations and value chains are free of child labor. Almost all countries have ratified ILO Conventions prohibiting child labor, and many governments have increased their efforts to strengthen the enforcement of child labor laws. National legal frameworks, monitoring, and enforcement, however, are lacking, and implementation measures rarely reach informal workplaces or farms, where most child labor is found. If current child labor trends continue, Target 8.7 of the SDGs, which seeks to end child labor in all its forms by 2025, will not be met.⁵

Addressing child labor involves identifying and addressing specific instances of child labor while also taking a more holistic children's rights approach by tackling its root causes. Chief among these root causes are poverty and lack of access to decent work for adults, which pose challenges for a family's ability to postpone the involvement of children in work and invest in their education. Sudden job losses, debts, droughts, floods, and crop failures are some of the many factors that can have an impact on the ability of households to avoid sending children to work. Companies can, therefore, play a vital role in preventing and eliminating child labor by reducing the economic vulnerability of households and ensuring access to decent work for family members of working age.⁶

Preventing and eliminating child labor in a company's operations and value chain while also addressing root causes reduces the chances that once the company takes action in their value chain, children will not need to seek work in the value chains of other companies with weaker child labor policies. Thus, this standard allows companies to achieve the best outcomes for children, help them to contribute to transformative impacts on broader communities, and mitigate risk in their operations and value chains.⁷

BOX 13: KEY RESOURCES ON PREVENTING AND ELIMINATING CHILD LABOR

- Children's Rights and Business Principles.⁸
- ILO-IOE Child Labour Guidance Tool for Business: How to Do Business with Respect for Children's Right to Be Free from Child Labour.⁹
- FAO Framework on Ending Child Labour in Agriculture.¹⁰
- Ending child labour, forced labour and human trafficking in global supply chains (ILO, IOM, OECD, UNICEF).¹¹



SDG-ALIGNMENT: THIS STANDARD CONTRIBUTES TO ACHIEVING THE FOLLOWING SDGS:



SDG 1 – No poverty

Target 1.1: By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day.



SDG 4 – Quality education

Target 4.1: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

Target 4.5: By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

Target 4.6: By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.



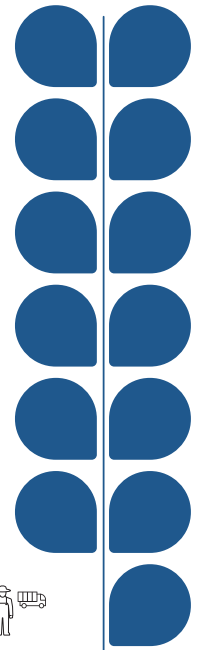
SDG 8 – Decent work and economic growth

Target 8.7: Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labor, end modern slavery and human trafficking, and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labor, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labor in all its forms.



SDG 16 – Peace, justice and strong institutions

Target 16.2: End abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence and torture against children.



PILLARS
2 & 3

SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS
SUSTAINABLE VALUE CHAINS



STEPS TO MEET THE COMMITMENT

1. ADOPT A POLICY AND EMBED IT INTO GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

1.1. ADOPT A POLICY

The Board or the most senior level of SDG-aligned companies adopt a public policy to respect internationally-recognized children's rights in their operations and business relationships, including through the prevention and elimination of child labor. The policy:

- Aligns with and explicitly references the standards listed in Box 15.
- The policy contains descriptions of the minimum age requirements and types of work considered hazardous^c, in line with ILO standards.¹² According to these standards, the minimum age shall not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling, and, in any case, it shall not be less than 15 years.¹³ If the national law of the territory where a company and its business relationships operate conflicts with international law, the company defers to the higher standard.¹⁴

BOX 15: INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS ON CHILD LABOR

- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 10.
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.¹⁵
- ILO Minimum Age Convention.¹⁶
- ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention.¹⁷
- ILO Minimum Age Recommendation No. 146.¹⁸
- ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Recommendation No. 190.¹⁹

1.2. EMBED THE POLICY INTO GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

To embed the policy, SDG-aligned companies:

- Communicate expectations for implementing the policy internally and externally to the workforce, shareholders, subsidiaries' governing bodies, and business relationships, including through contractual terms.
- Integrate the policy into procurement policies, responsible sourcing policies, contract terms with suppliers, recruitment agencies, and other business relationships in the value chain, and partnerships within and beyond the food sector.²⁰ For example, the companies clearly communicate their policies on age verification and the minimum age required to work to suppliers and recruitment agencies and demand that they implement robust age-verification mechanisms in their own recruitment and procurement/supply chain management processes.²¹
- Integrate the policy into by-laws and other governance documents (i.e., Code of Conduct, Code of Ethics) and management procedures.²²
- Ensure that business practices and the incentives they create do not contradict the policy in form or substance.

2. ASSESS ACTUAL & POTENTIAL IMPACTS

SDG-aligned companies identify and assess actual and potential child labor (with a particular emphasis on the worst forms of child labor^d) within their business operations and value chains in accordance with ILO labor standards.²³ In order to systematically assess actual or potential instances of child labor on an ongoing basis within their operations and value chains, SDG-aligned companies:

- c. *Hazardous child labor or hazardous work* is defined by the ILO as "work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children". (Source: ILO, "What Is Child Labour (IPEC).") Some hazardous work activities which should be prohibited for children under the age of 18 are: "work which exposes children to physical, psychological or sexual abuse; work underground, underwater, at dangerous heights, or in confined spaces; work with dangerous machinery, equipment, and tools, or which involves the manual handling or transport of heavy loads; work in an unhealthy environment which may, for example, expose children to hazardous substances, agents or processes, or to temperatures, noise levels, or vibrations damaging to their health; work under particularly difficult conditions such as work for long hours or during the night or work where the child is unreasonably confined to the premises of the employer." (Source: International Labour Organization-ILO, "Worst Forms of Child Labour Recommendation (No. 190).")
- d. The worst forms of child labor comprise "(a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict; (b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances; (c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties; (d) work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children". (Source: ILO, "Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention (No. 182)", Article 3.)



- Consider how their business models and common business practices incentivize or facilitate child labor, especially by identifying whether excessive pressure is applied on suppliers by operating on short lead times and/or negotiating unsustainably low prices.
- Integrate robust age-verification mechanisms into its recruitment, procurement, and supply chain management processes²⁴ (i.e., Checking picture IDs, interviewing in person, if necessary).
- Regularly consult with workers, communities, farming families, and relevant civil society organizations.
- Engage qualified and credible local children's rights experts and community-based organizations in on-site assessments in high-risk areas for child labor.²⁵
- Regularly conduct assessments of suppliers' practices, including ensuring workers have access to identity documentation and written contracts before entering into relationships and throughout the business relationship.²⁶
- Apply appropriate assessment methods to effectively communicate with culturally diverse communities and workers of different ages, particularly with children, adolescents, and migrant workers.²⁷

To assess actual and potential child labor cases in value chains, SDG-aligned companies also seek to uncover the root causes of vulnerability of individuals and groups to child labor in the areas in which companies and their business relationships operate. In regions and commodities that have a higher risk of child labor, the companies commission, on their own or in partnership with peer companies, qualified and credible individual experts, and expert organizations to conduct on-site human rights impact assessments. Assessing root causes of child labor may include assessing the:

- Legal and regulatory environment, paying particular attention to the country's alignment of local laws on the minimum age of work with ILO standards, the extent to which such laws are enforced, the strength of labor inspection capacity in the jurisdiction, and the effective protection of other labor rights, including the rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining.
- Availability and accessibility to social protection for adults, in particular family benefits; maternity protection, unemployment support, employment injury benefits, sickness benefits, health protection, old-age benefits, disability benefits, and survivors' benefits.²⁸
- Economic and humanitarian conditions, including poverty, conflict, security, exposure to shocks, drought, flood, and crop failure, lack of access to quality schools, limited decent work opportunities, and low agricultural commodity prices such that farmers cannot sustain a living income.

- Risks related to the specific business activity or commodity, paying particular attention to the risks that children might engage in hazardous tasks including handling fertilizers and pesticides, climbing high trees, using sharp tools, or driving machinery.²⁹
- Social and cultural norms that reflect tolerance and acceptance of some forms of child labor and how they vary depending on gender, race, migrant status, class, ethnicity, or other factors..

3. INTEGRATE BY SETTING TARGETS & TAKING ACTION

SDG-aligned companies integrate the findings of their assessments of child labor risks and impacts outlined in **Step 2** into relevant internal functions and processes by **setting targets** and then **taking action** to align with the standard within set target dates. They take appropriate action to cease, prevent, and mitigate impacts in their operations and use leverage to prevent and mitigate harms in their broader ecosystems.

3.1. SET TARGETS

SDG-aligned companies set specific time-bound intermediate and long-term targets to eliminate and prevent child labor that are ambitious enough to contribute significantly to the SDGs' achievement, in particular SDG 8 (Target 8.7) and SDG 16 (Target 16.2). The intermediate targets are relevant for companies to monitor their and their business relationships' continuous improvement towards meeting the standard. Where possible, indicators measure outcomes rather than outputs or activities. These targets are tailored to a company's business activities and relationships based on its assessment of actual and potential instances of child labor that the company may be linked to, contribute to or cause.

- By 2023, substantially increase the proportion of sourcing from alternative business models that avoid the transfer of resource rights from smallholder farmers and local community members.
- By 2023, the company has established effective management systems to ensure that new investments respect legitimate resource and tenure rights.
- By 2030, the company returns land to rights holders who were arbitrarily or unlawfully deprived.
- By 2025, all business relationships allow producers to save, use, exchange, and sell their farm-saved seed or propagated material.



3.2. TAKE ACTION

Where an SDG-aligned company identifies a risk of child labor in local contexts where it has operations and business relationships, it uses and increases its leverage to prevent, mitigate, and remediate these risks, including, where relevant, their root causes. This is undertaken in line with respect for human rights and the development priorities of the local context.

Depending on the specific causes of child labor identified, SDG-aligned companies take measures to address actual or potential child labor impacts. Such measures include:

- **Adjusting business models**, including its revenue models, where they are in tension with the ability to respect children's rights in company operations and value chains. Any mitigation measures, compensation, or benefit-sharing mechanisms are established through participatory processes and respect the human rights of all affected individuals and groups.
 - **Revenue model:** The revenue model facilitates the payment of living wages and earning of living incomes. It does not place pressure on procurement and legal functions, which would require them to prioritize low prices and short-term relationships at the expense of respecting children's rights.
- **Establishing business practices that align with the standard**, including:
 - **Paying and using leverage with business relationships, so they pay hourly wages** to workers in lieu of piece rates.³⁰
 - **Establishing responsible price setting and purchasing practices that facilitate living incomes and wages**, including by planning, forecasting, paying suppliers promptly, and accounting for the cost of wages, benefits, and investments in decent work in its pricing.³¹ SDG-aligned companies set procurement incentives for suppliers (e.g., price premiums) that meet the highest labor standards.³²
- **Addressing identified cases of children involved in child labor** by developing or using leverage to develop transition programs from employment to education as a way to reorient them towards a safe, educational pathway.³³
 - Where business relationships are found to violate a company's policies and contractual obligations related to the prevention and elimination of child labor, the company creates corrective action plans with means to verify remediation and implementation of corrective actions and potential consequences if corrective actions are not taken.³⁴
 - If a child or young worker (someone under the age of 18 but above the minimum working age) is identified as engaging in hazardous work in a company's operations or value chain, the company removes or uses leverage to remove them immediately from such work tasks.
- **Establishing and using leverage to ensure the establishment of adequate child care facilities** at worksites to alleviate the burden on older children to stay home from school to care for younger siblings.³⁵
- **Improving access to decent work for family members of working age.** This includes transitioning workers from informal to formal employment and using leverage to ensure employment formalization in value chains.³⁶ SDG-aligned companies also source from producer associations and democratic cooperatives; promote and do not impede self-organizing efforts of workers for the informal economy; and encourage membership in producers' associations and cooperatives.³⁷
- **Establishing global framework agreements with global trade union federations to ensure fundamental labor rights**, including freedom of association and freedom from discrimination, are respected.
- **Paying living wages to workers and using leverage to ensure all workers and producers in the value chain receive living wages and living incomes** as a way to reduce the need for child labor within families.³⁸ To reduce family dependence on child labor, SDG-aligned companies improve rural livelihoods and incomes by paying fair prices for agricultural products, setting reasonable expectations for product quality and delivery, and supporting producers through extension services.³⁹ They also use collective leverage along with industry peers, including in industry-wide multi-stakeholder initiatives, to raise standards for policies, processes, and monitoring of the achievement of living incomes in regions.
- **Building capacity in partnership with local civil society organizations, value chain business relationships, and communities** to identify, eliminate, and prevent child labor. SDG-aligned companies provide ongoing support for these skill development efforts.⁴⁰
- **Using leverage to support and not impede State action to address child labor** through collective action with peer and cross-industry companies and in coordination with communities and civil society organizations. State action companies advocate for may include: (1) adequate legal frameworks and institutional capacity to monitor and enforce child labor laws, (2) improving birth and identification registration systems to ensure that all children possess birth certificates and identification documents that assist their registration in school and may prove they are under the legal age to work, (3) addressing poverty in farming communities and strengthen social protection services, (4) reducing barriers to formalization, and (5) aligning minimum wages with living wages and extending those to the informal sectors.⁴¹ SDG-aligned companies also ensure that their own child labor mitigation efforts do not undermine national systems by taking away valuable resources (such as employees or funding).



- **Using leverage to ensure governments meet their obligations** to guarantee access to education in underserved areas and to publish and review national lists of hazardous work prohibited to children under 18 years of age.⁴²
- **Supporting communities and community-led civil society efforts.** In addition to financing the SDGs through responsible tax practices, companies may, in coordination with communities and civil society organizations: (1) provide economic support through grants for families in economically vulnerable communities where children are at risk of child labor; (2) make in-kind donations of food for vulnerable families, so long as such support is not subtracted from wages or incomes; (3) provide monetary and in-kind support for civil society initiatives to prevent and eliminate child labor, including through addressing the root causes of child labor.⁴³

4. ESTABLISH AND PARTICIPATE IN EFFECTIVE GRIEVANCE MECHANISMS & PROVIDE OR ENABLE REMEDY

4.1. ESTABLISH GRIEVANCE MECHANISMS

To ensure victims of child labor have access to remedy, SDG-aligned companies have and use their leverage to ensure their business relationships have effective grievance mechanisms in place.⁴⁴ These mechanisms are accessible to company workers, value chain workers, and any person from the community to report instances of child labor (e.g., Child Labor Monitoring and Remediation Systems, operational-level grievance mechanisms, hotlines with effective grievance handling procedures).⁴⁵ The companies provide training or develop actions to communicate the existence and operation of such grievance mechanisms to all potentially affected stakeholders and communities.⁴⁶

4.2. COOPERATE IN STATE-BASED GRIEVANCE MECHANISMS

SDG-aligned companies refrain from using legal waivers that preclude access to judicial recourse for victims of child labor and other human rights impacts. The companies cooperate with and support legitimate judicial and non-judicial State-based mechanisms to report and adjudicate crimes of child labor.⁴⁷ The companies facilitate and do not interfere with civil, criminal, and human rights examinations. Where State-based mechanisms order sanctions or remedy in relation to child labor or other human rights impacts, the companies comply and use leverage to ensure their business relationships comply. Procedures are in place to report the worst forms of child labor to relevant authorities.⁴⁸

4.3. PROVIDE OR ENABLE REMEDY

When a company identifies that it has caused or contributed to an instance of child labor in its operations or value chain, it acknowledges its part in the harm done and provides remedy through legitimate processes. Where the company did not cause or contribute to the harm directly, it enables remedy through legitimate processes. Some remedy actions include:⁴⁹

- Immediate removal of a child from work and facilitate their transition to formal full-time schooling. This process includes dialogue with the child's caregivers and considering measures to enroll the child in school without affecting the child's and their family's welfare. In this vein, the company either acts to or uses leverage to ensure: the child's school fees are paid; a child's family member is hired or finds formal employment, and is paid a living wage to meet the family needs, or the child's family is enrolled in a program that addresses the root causes of child labor.
- Upon immediate removal of a young worker from hazardous work, the company acts to or uses leverage to ensure that the young worker is provided alternative work that is not hazardous and age-appropriate, considering that no workers under the age of 18 should perform hazardous work.⁵⁰
- Continue to monitor that the former child laborer is adequately protected and has not returned to work or been placed in a more precarious situation.⁵¹
- Consult with external experts (e.g., healthcare professionals) to identify and remedy any physical and psychological harm that the child labor may have caused.⁵²
- Work with civil society and government to ensure access to rehabilitation and support centers, medical care, and legal support for rural working children and youth.⁵³
- In any jurisdiction in which the company faces legal sanctions for its involvement with child labor, the company complies with remediation measures determined by the court or relevant authorities.

e. As defined by the UNGPs' Effectiveness Criteria for Non-Judicial Grievance Mechanisms ("In order to ensure their effectiveness, non-judicial grievance mechanisms, both State-based and non-State-based, should be: (a) Legitimate... (b) Accessible... (c) Predictable... (d) Equitable... (e) Transparent... (f) Rights-compatible... (g) A source of continuous learning... Operational-level mechanisms should also be: (h) Based on engagement and dialogue..." (see UNGP 31 for further information). (Source: United Nations, "Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations 'Protect, Respect and Remedy' Framework.")



5. TRACK PERFORMANCE

SDG-aligned companies track, on an ongoing basis and through qualitative and/or quantitative outcome-based performance indicators, the implementation of actions they take to align with the standard. In particular, the companies monitor whether actions are implemented within their own target dates. The following are some examples of performance indicators to track progress over time:

- Percentage of the company's value chain effectively traced, including monitoring of labor practices of business relationships.⁵⁴
- Child employment (measured as percentage of economically active children ages 7-14, by gender) in agriculture in the country/region where the company and its business relationships operate.⁵⁵
- Number of workers in the company's value chain operating in areas of significant child labor risk, disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, race and other identity criteria, employee category (level and function), location, and the food and agriculture subsector in which the worker works.
- Number of young workers (under 18 but above legal working age) employed in the company's value chain, disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, race and other identity criteria, employee category (level and function), location, and the food and agriculture subsector in which the worker works.
- Number of grievances raised and addressed related to child labor in the company's operations and value chain.
- Percentage of the company's and its value chain's employment contracts that specify minimum hiring ages and special protective measures for young workers.

The companies partner with trade unions, suppliers, government institutions, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to design and implement effective tracking and monitoring mechanisms. Methods to track progress include:⁵⁶

- Third-party human rights impact assessments and thorough labor rights-oriented audits.
- Collaborative root cause analysis.⁵⁷
- Surveys, interviews, other feedback mechanisms to collect perspectives from potentially affected stakeholders, including trade unions and civil society organizations, with a focus on those most vulnerable to impacts.
- Complaints and grievances raised through grievance mechanisms.

6. DISCLOSE PERFORMANCE

To enable transparency and accountability, SDG-aligned companies communicate publicly on their performance against their child labor prevention and elimination commitment and targets, particularly when concerns are raised by or on behalf of affected stakeholders. Where relevant, SDG-aligned companies also share aggregate data and high-level findings directly with affected stakeholders and organizations, including human rights organizations and researchers.

Regular public disclosure is accurate, clear, accessible, and third-party verified information about the actual and potential impacts on child labor in their operations and value chain, their efforts to address these to implement their policy commitment, and performance against targets. Disclosure includes sufficient information to evaluate the adequacy of the company's approach and activities. Formal disclosure includes information on the following:⁵⁸

- Internal business and value chain operations considered to have significant risk for incidents of child labor, specifying the geographic locations of these operations.
- Methods used to assess operations and business relationships to identify and measure risk for incidents of child labor.⁵⁹
- Measures taken during the reporting period to prevent child labor from taking place in business operations, value chains, and ecosystems.
- Any measures taken with peer companies, companies across industries, civil society, and/or governments to address child labor and its root causes in the company ecosystem.
- Any incidents of child labor identified in operations and value chains during the reporting period, specifying the number of children affected, the type of work performed by the children, the business relationship involved (i.e., first-tier supplier, below-first tier agricultural supplier, point of sale), and the geographic location where the incident occurred.
- The way in which each incident of child labor is identified and addressed, including remediation plans, actions, and results.
- Analysis of trends demonstrating progress or explaining lessons learned from stagnation or decline towards meeting the standard and achieving intermediate and long-term targets on preventing risks for and eliminating impacts of incidents of child labor in their business operations, value chains, and ecosystems.⁶⁰



ENDNOTES

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