



Signed between Royal Volker Wessels Stevin NV (VolkerWessels) and the Building and Wood Workers International (BWI) to promote and protect worker's rights

VolkerWessels is a close-knit group of companies working in construction and related fields. Its 125 operating companies trade as independent entities with their own profit and market responsibility, and are divided into three different sectors: Building & Property Development, Infrastructure and Other Activities. VolkerWessels focuses its activities mainly on the Netherlands. It also has offices in a limited number of other countries: Belgium, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada. The company's motto, 'Building together on home, work and transportation', is put into practice every day by an average of 16,700 employees.

The BWI is the Global Union Federation grouping free and democratic unions with members in the Building, Building Materials, Wood, Forestry and Allied sectors. The BWI groups together around 350 trade unions representing around 12 million members in 135 countries. The Headquarters is in Geneva, Switzerland. The BWI's mission is to promote the development of trade unions in the building and wood industries throughout the world and to promote and enforce workers' rights in a context of sustainable development.

Royal Volker Wessels Stevin nv and the BWI recognise that sustainable industrial development of the construction industry / wood industry is in the company's and workers interest.

Recognising the need for open and democratic industrial relations and fair collective bargaining procedures with representative trade unions;

Recognising that corruption, bribery and unfair anti-competitive actions distort markets and hamper economic, social and democratic development.

Acknowledging the need to observe the fundamental principles of Human Rights, as defined by the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (1948), the "ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work" (1998), the "ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles Concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy" (2000) and the "OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises" (2000).

Commit themselves to work in this direction to achieve social justice and sustainable development in the activities and undertakings of VolkerWessels and its contractors, subcontractors and suppliers. In this spirit VolkerWessels and the BWI shall work together to verify the effective application by all VolkerWessels activities and undertakings of the following social criteria.

Employment is freely chosen

There shall be no use of forced labour, including bonded labour and involuntary prison labour. (ILO Conventions 29 and 105)

There is no discrimination in employment

All workers shall have equality of opportunity and treatment regardless of their ethnic origin, colour, gender, religion, political opinion, nationality, social origin or other distinguishing characteristics. Workers shall receive equal pay for work of equal value. (ILO Conventions 100 and 111) Migrating and posted employees must be ensured at least the same conditions as the national work force.

Child labour is not used

Child labour shall not be used. Only workers above the age of 15 years, or over the compulsory school-leaving age if higher, shall be employed. (ILO Convention 138) Children under the age of 18 shall not perform 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. (ILO Convention 182)

Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining are respected

All workers shall have the right to form and join trade unions and to bargain collectively (ILO Conventions 87 and 98). VolkerWessels shall adopt a positive view of the activities of trade unions and an open attitude to their organising activities. VolkerWessels therefore undertakes not to oppose efforts to unionise its employees and guarantees that workers representatives shall not be discriminated against and shall have access to all workplaces necessary to enable them to carry out their representation functions. (ILO Convention 135 and Recommendation 143)

Living wages are paid

Workers shall be paid wages and benefits for a standard working week that are at least as favourable as those established by national legislation or agreements, for work of the same character in the trade or industry concerned in the area where the work is carried out. No worker shall be paid less than the legal minimum wage. Deductions from wages, unless permitted under national law, shall not be made in any circumstance without the express permission of the worker concerned. All workers must be provided with clear verbal and written information about wage conditions.

Hours of work are not excessive

Hours of work shall comply with appropriate national legislation, national agreements and industry standards. Overtime shall be voluntary wherever possible, shall not be demanded on a regular basis and shall always be compensated at a premium rate.

Working conditions are decent

A safe and healthy working environment shall be provided (ILO Convention 155 and 167). Best occupational health and safety practice shall be promoted and shall be in compliance with the ILO Guidelines for Occupational Health Management Systems. All workers shall be given training on occupational hazards and their prevention.

Working environment and being a good employer

VolkerWessels strives to create a good working environment and to be a good employer. This is understood to mean that VolkerWessels will create an environment in which employees have confidence in the people for whom they are working, are proud of what they do and take pleasure in working together with their colleagues.

Skills training

All workers shall have the opportunity to participate in education and training programmes including training to improve workers skills to use new technology and equipment.

Welfare of workers

Provide an HIV/AIDS awareness raising and prevention programme in compliance with the ILO HIV/AIDS code of practice. When employees are offered living accommodation, this shall be planned, built and maintained to provide reasonable housing conditions.

The employment relationship is established

Employers' obligations to employees under labour and social security laws and regulations arising from the regular employment relationship must be respected.

Contractors, subcontractors and suppliers

VolkerWessels considers the respect for workers rights to be a crucial element in sustainable development and will therefore engage only those contractors, subcontractors and suppliers which recognise and implement the criteria listed above.

Implementation and evaluation

VolkerWessels will provide information concerning this agreement in both written (in the local language and/or dialect) and verbal form at all work sites.

A monitoring group is set up, composed of representatives of VolkerWessels and BWI. It will meet at least once a year, or when necessary, to evaluate and review the implementation of the agreement.

Before opening construction sites, in accordance with the needs for confidentiality in the commercial phase, VolkerWessels shall discuss issues referring to site activities with the signing organisation.

VolkerWessels will make the necessary resources available for the work of the monitoring group.

The annual review of the present agreement shall be incorporated into VolkerWessels annual reporting with the consent of the signatories.

Signatories agree that any difference arising from the interpretation or implementation of this agreement will be examined jointly, for the purpose of making recommendations to the signatory concerned.

Duration

This agreement shall remain in force unless otherwise agreed by any party giving three calendar month's notice, in writing, to the other.

Date and venue

Signatures

Royal Volker Wessels Stevin nv Building and Wood Workers International (BWI)

Explanatory notes:

- The International Labour Organisation (ILO) was established in 1919, in recognition of the need to protect the fundamental rights of all workers. There are 174 member states of the ILO. All member States of the ILO have an obligation to observe the principle of freedom of association simply by virtue of their membership and formal acceptance of the ILO Constitution. The adoption of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its follow-up 1998, has recently strengthened this obligation.
- In the para on "Child labour shall not be used. Only workers above the age of 15 years". This might be reduced to 14 years in the case of developing countries, see C.138.
- The relevant ILO Conventions on wages are C. 131 Minimum Wage Fixing 1970, C.95 Protection of wages 1949, C. 94 Labour Clauses (Public Contracts) 1949.
- In the context of working hours each State should promote the adoption of the principle of the progressive reduction of normal hours of work as laid down in ILO Conventions Hours of Work (Industry) Convention, 1919, (No.1), Forty Hours Week Convention, 1935 (No. 47) and Reduction of Hours of Work Recommendation, 1962 (No. 116). This means that normal hours of work shall be progressively reduced without any reduction of wages of the workers.
- Overtime compensation could be financial or in the form of time off.
- For the Building, Construction, Wood, Forestry and Allied industries the following ILO standards are especially important: C.155 Safety and Health at Work, C.161 Occupational Health Services, C.162 Asbestos 1986; C.167 Safety and Health in Construction 1988; ILO Code of practice for health and safety in forest work; ILO Code of practice on safety in the use of synthetic vitreous fibre insulation wools (glass wool, rock wool, slag wool).