

# Transcript of the Opening Speech of João Pedro Guimarães, Secretary-General of the Portuguese Chamber of Commerce and Industry

December 10, 2021

This post is based on the opening speech of João Pedro Guimarães in the first “Annual Conference on Business, Human Rights and Sustainability” organised by the Nova Centre on Business, Human Rights and the Environment with the support of PLMJ, the Portuguese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, CEDIS, as well as NOVA 4 The Globe on the 24th of November 2021.

**About the author:** João Pedro Guimarães has been the Secretary-General of the Portuguese Chamber of Commerce and Industry since 2017.

Good afternoon everyone,

It is a great pleasure for us at the Portuguese Chamber for Commerce and Industry (CCIP) to support and be a part of this initiative and this conference. Our aim today is to share knowledge to promote and to reflect on the importance, above all of respect for human rights and business, and within this context on the various challenges that companies face over this particular subject.

These themes are absolutely in line with the purpose of the CCIP, for those of you who don't know, we are private business association that supports portuguese companies since 1834 and that seeks to promote the development of our members both at national and international level, so we have a wide network of members throughout the country and also abroad from different economic sectors of activity and we work daily daily to enhance their growth.

We are key partners as well as promoters of our members internationalization promoting synergies between SMEs and large companies and throughout these more than 187 years of history our chambers of commerce has always been guided by the principles of respect and safeguarding of human rights. We do it daily in our activities with our companies but also at an institutional level through the relationship that we maintain with public authorities, among them, the portuguese government.

One of our main worries, that has been expressed often through the work and words of our president, has been the employee wages and the CCIP has been paramount in defending what has been called the “fair and dignified salary”, a concept that connects the wages with productivity and which should surpass the concept of a minimum wage.

We also defend measures that prevent what we've been called "social dumping" or any kind of measure that aims at increasing profits at the expense of human rights, opting for production, for instance, in countries where human rights are not respected, without forgetting the distortions this practice promotes at the economic and competition levels. So, we believe that economic development and human rights are intertwined and cannot be dissociated and we are sure that initiatives like this one are fundamental for guaranteeing this purpose shedding light over issues that cannot be forgotten.

This is the main reason why we have partnered with the NOVA Centre for Business, Human Rights and the Environment, we believe in the importance of their work and we believe in the importance of our own so we can be stronger together. In addition to supporting this conference we will also be partners as well in other activities in the future and in other areas, helping as well to share information, concretely, in what regards now four relevant papers on the subject, two that we hope will be released later on this year, one of them hopefully very soon that can be accessible in our website.

We work at the CCIP to be helpful and useful to companies and the economy, to our country, but above all, we work to help people, in the end there's always people. So, we believe that they're the main objective of our activity and if we can help to enhance their rights we will be fulfilling our reason to exist.

Just before the start of the conference we were talking among ourselves, and we said that business without human rights has no future, and this is the reason why the CCIP will work together with the NOVA Centre for Business, Human Rights and the Environment. We believe this is the way to go.

Thank you very much and I hope you enjoy the conference.

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