

Traders and International Geneva

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Commodity trading and International Geneva, described in Part F, grew up side by side without mixing, and then met. The international organisations established in Geneva, the World Trade Organization, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the International Trade Centre, produce standards, analyses and statistics on commodity trade. Geneva's non-governmental organisations, several of which are devoted to natural resources, human rights and transparency, examine the practices of traders with an attention that proximity makes effective.¹ The traders, long discreet, have learned to engage in dialogue with these interlocutors, to take part in transparency initiatives and to respond publicly to criticism.

This encounter has produced concrete results: the participation of traders in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, described in Part H, guidelines on responsible commodity trading drawn up with the Confederation and non-governmental organisations, and training programmes bringing together the University of Geneva, the traders and the international organisations.² It also has its limits. The non-governmental organisations remain critical and the traders discreet, while the coexistence in a single city of the organisations that set the standards and the companies that sometimes breach them gives Geneva a singular position, at once judge and party in the world commodity trade.

1 Notes

1. UNCTAD, "History" (unctad.org): first United Nations Conference on Trade and Development held in Geneva in 1964, institutionalised with a permanent secretariat, Raúl Prebisch its first Secretary-General; Wikipedia (en), art. "Public Eye (organization)": organisation founded in 1968 under the name Déclaration de Berne (Berne Declaration), renamed Public Eye on 23 May 2016, offices in Lausanne and Zurich;

Traders and International Geneva

Déclaration de Berne, Swiss Trading SA. La Suisse, le négoce et la malédiction des matières premières, Lausanne, Éditions d'en bas, 2011; Public Eye, "Portrait de la ROHMA", 2014 (fictitious supervisory authority proposed for the commodities sector). ↩

2. United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, Human Rights Council resolution 17/4 of 16 June 2011 (ohchr.org). ↩

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