

## **Workshop on Business and Human Rights in Africa: Advancing responsible business within an international context**

### **CONCEPT NOTE & AGENDA**

10 September 2024 (9am-5pm), UN House, Brussels, Belgium

#### **Context and rationale**

A decade after the adoption of the [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#) (UNGPs), the United Nations Working Group on Business and Human Rights (UN WGBHR) coordinated a series of efforts to take stock of the progress made, and produced a roadmap for the next decade, outlining the need to raise the ambition, increase the pace of implementation, improve coherence and create greater impact. The UNGPs are becoming better known and understood in Africa. Yet, awareness among all stakeholder groups and understanding of the expectations regarding States and businesses respective duties and responsibilities to protect and respect human rights require further strengthening. By undertaking the development of a regional policy on business and human rights (BHR) in 2018, the African Union sent a clear signal about its expectation from States, businesses and other actors that they work on the development of policies and frameworks conducive to responsible business practices and corporate accountability in the context of business activities on the continent. Some African governments have engaged in reforms to promote responsible business practices including developing National Action Plans on Business and Human Rights, improving the investment climate, strengthening corporate accountability and advancing sustainable development. An increasing number of stakeholders in the region have undertaken initiatives triggering an emerging movement in Africa. The establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) offers a major vehicle for transforming the economies of African countries and where mainstreaming human rights will play a critical role in promoting inclusive and sustainable development.

Over recent years, countries across the world including the European Union (EU) have strengthened initiatives and regulations to promote responsible business conduct among business enterprises and their value chains. International standards on business and human rights, including the UNGPs, have played a predominant role in guiding the development of these recent policy and regulatory developments.

Recently adopted legislations include the EU Directive on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence (CS3D), the German Act on Corporate Due Diligence Obligations in Supply Chains, France Corporate Duty of Vigilance, Norway Transparency Act and UK Modern Slavery Act amongst others that will affect economies beyond their countries, including businesses in Africa that have business relationships in these jurisdictions. In this context, achieving the interlinked global goals related to the climate emergency, the ongoing energy transition, inclusive economies and

sustainable development depends in large part on ensuring human rights are respected throughout business activities and supply chains - and the UNGPs is a foundational tool for that undertaking.

In this context, this workshop offers a timely opportunity to bring actors engaged in advancing business and human rights in Africa and in the EU into a constructive exchange to chart a constructive path forward. This event will be hosted by the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in collaboration with the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ). Examples from the BHR Africa project, implemented by the OHCHR with financial support from the GIZ on behalf of the BMZ, in four countries (Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Mozambique and Zambia) and four sub-regions of the continent, will inform the discussions.

### **Objectives**

The workshop will aim to building strategic business and human rights engagement by:

- Facilitating exchange on recent regulatory and policy developments and exploring their potential implications as well as the challenges and opportunities that they present for advancing responsible business conduct;
- Informing the developments of strategic and effective engagements and collaborations, including education, capacity building, policy and regulatory initiatives;
- Strengthening collaboration, coherence and alignment of business and human rights engagement in the region;
- Foster engagement with the relevant UN human rights mechanisms and in particular the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights.

### **Methodology and format**

Participants will be invited to share their reflections and perspectives on the developments and actions needed to further promote responsible business conduct for sustainable development in Africa. This in-person workshop, designed to facilitate interactive discussions, will follow a plenary format throughout the day. It will be moderated by the hosts and selected participants.

## AGENDA

**9.00am-9.15am:**      **Arrival of participants**

**9.15am-9.45am:**      **Opening remarks and speeches**

- *Prof. Damilola Olawuyi, UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights*
- *Reinhard Junker, Deputy Head of Division, Sustainable Transformation of Global Supply Chains, BMZ*
- *Chiara Adamo, Head of Unit Gender Human Rights and Democratic Governance, European Commission*

**9.45am-10.45am:**      **Session 1: The current state of play and a forward-looking vision**

Analysis on the current business and human rights landscape in the region, considering the recent and ongoing adoption of due diligence laws, outlining progress to date as well as gaps, challenges and opportunities to advance a forward-looking vision for further progress.

**Scene setting and moderation:** Prof. Damilola Olawuyi, UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights

**Speakers:**

- *Amina Bouyach, President, National Council for Human Rights of the Kingdom of Morocco (CNDH)*
- *Valentina Bolognesi, Senior Social Policy Advisor, Amfori*
- *Amanuel Desalegne, Programme Manager – Business and Human Rights, AU Cooperation office of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung*

*10.45pm-11.00pm:*      *Coffee break*

**11am-12.30pm:**      **Session 2: Perspectives from Africa and opportunities to build on achievements for meaningful change**

Individual interventions and critical perspectives from actors working in African about positive impacts, challenges, opportunities as well as measures and initiatives needed to achieve further progress.

**Moderator:** Stella Wangechi, Human Rights Officer, OHCHR

**Speakers:**

- *Christian Mukosa, Representative, Liberia country office, OHCHR*
- *Sara Clancy, Executive Director, Partner Africa*
- *Marcel Akpovo, Regional Representative for Eastern Africa, OHCHR*
- *Prof. Hajer Gueldich, Legal Counsel, African Union*

12.30pm-13.30pm: *Lunch break*

**13.30pm-15.00pm: Session 3: The importance of coherence, collaboration and alignment on Business and Human Rights**

Perspectives on the importance of coherently building on strengthened legislative and policy frameworks to advance responsible business conduct to contribute to sustainable development across the region. Speakers will present the collective actions, engagements and supporting measures envisioned and/or to complement regulatory approaches that they see as essential to foster local collaboration, coherence and alignment.

**Moderator:** Prof. Damilola Olawuyi, UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights

**Speakers:**

- *Michaela Dodini, Policy Officer, Human Rights Division, European External Action Service, EU*
- *Dr. Pedi Obani, Associate Professor of Environmental Law and BHR, University of Bradford*
- *Gabrielle Holly, Chief Adviser - Human Rights and Business, Danish Institute for Human Rights*
- *Vacus Kun, Director of Training & Research, United Union Workers of Liberia*

15.00pm-15.30pm: *Coffee break*

**15.30pm-16.30pm: Session 4: Paving the way for effective progress**

Open and forward-looking discussion among participants on measures, engagements, initiatives, actions and collaborations considered essential to build on recent policy and legislative developments in Africa and in Europe. Further to brief interventions from the speakers, participants will be invited to share their views and make recommendations on the best way forward for progress.

**Moderator:** Prof. Damilola Olawuyi, UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights

**Speakers:**

- *Dirk Steinwand, Head of Programme Corporate and Public Responsibility for Sustainable Supply Chains, GIZ*
- *Adrienne Gardaz Cuendet, Business and Human Rights Adviser, OHCHR*
- *Livio Sarandrea, Global Policy Advisor BHR, UNDP*
- *Ncomile Ndovu, Regional Coordinator, Africa Hub Global Operations, UN Global Compact*

**16.30pm-17.00pm: Closing remarks**

- *Prof. Damilola Olawuyi, UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights*

**Suggested background materials**

- Report of the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights on “**UNGPs at 10: Stocktaking of the First Decade**”, available here: [Stocktaking-reader-friendly.pdf \(ohchr.org\)](#)
- Report of the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights on “**Raising the Ambition – Increasing the Pace. UNGPs 10+: A Roadmap for the Next Decade of Business and Human Rights**”, available here: [UNGPs 10+ Roadmap FINAL \(ohchr.org\)](#)
- Report of the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights on “**Extractive sector, just transition and human rights**” (A/78/155), available here: [A/78/155: Extractive sector, just transition and human rights | OHCHR](#)
- Publication of the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights on “**Guidance on National Action Plans of Business and Human Rights**”, available here: [UNWG NAPGuidance.pdf \(ohchr.org\)](#)
- Interpretive guide of the Office the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, “**Access to Remedy in cases of business-related human rights abuses. An Interpretive Guide**”, available here: [Access to Remedy in Cases of Business-related Human Rights Abuse: An Interpretive Guide \(ohchr.org\)](#)
- Publication of the Danish Institute for Human Rights, “**The EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive: Maximizing impact through transposition and implementation**”, available here: [The EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive: Maximising impact through transposition and implementation | The Danish Institute for Human Rights](#)
- Publication of the Danish Institute for Human Rights, “**How do the pieces fit in the puzzle? Making sense of EU regulatory initiatives related to business and human rights**”, available here: [EU-RegulatoryMeasuresExplainer\\_EN\\_april2024.pdf \(humanrights.dk\)](#)
- Publication of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on “**An Introduction to the UN Guiding Principles in the Age of Technology**”, available here: [introduction-ungp-age-technology.pdf \(ohchr.org\)](#).
- Further materials developed under the OHCHR B-Tech project, incl. on human rights risks in business models, human rights due diligence and end use, generative AI and more are available here: [B-Tech Project | OHCHR](#)