



TÉLÉCOPIE • FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

DATE: 25 January 2022

A/TO: All Permanent Missions  
to the United Nations Office at Geneva

DE/FROM: Karim Ghezraoui, OiC  
Special Procedures Branch

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'KG', written over a light blue grid background.

FAX: +41 22 917 90 08

E-MAIL: [ohchr-wg-business@un.org](mailto:ohchr-wg-business@un.org)

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OBJET/SUBJECT: **Call for input - Working Group on Business and Human Rights – Questionnaire:  
“COVID-19 pandemic: lessons learnt and moving forward”**



PALAIS DES NATIONS • 1211 GENEVA 10, SWITZERLAND  
www.ohchr.org • TEL: +41 22 917 9000 • FAX: +41 22 917 9008 • E-MAIL: registry@ohchr.org

**Mandate of the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises**

24 January 2022

Excellency,

I have the honour to address you in my capacity as Chairperson of the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises (the Working Group on Business and Human Rights), pursuant to resolutions 17/4, 35/7 and 44/15 of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

I am writing to invite your Excellency's Government to provide inputs for the preparation of the Working Group's upcoming thematic report focusing on '[COVID-19 pandemic: lessons learnt and moving forward](#)', to be presented at the Human Rights Council in June 2022. The report will be centred on the lessons learnt from the pandemic and the identification of opportunities and challenges related to protection, prevention, response, and redress for business-related human rights abuses based on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs). The report will seek to consider how the business and human rights agenda can contribute to efforts to build back better following the pandemic, and to address emerging new global crises on the horizon.

I would be grateful if this letter and the attached questionnaire could be transmitted to relevant authorities, inviting all submissions to be sent **no later than 24 February 2022**. Please indicate "**WG BHR / COVID-19 / States Survey**" in the email subject line; limit your contributions to a maximum of 2,500 words and if necessary, provide links to relevant documents or attach annexes. Responses to the questionnaire can be sent to [ohchr-wg-business@un.org](mailto:ohchr-wg-business@un.org) (preferred) or addressed to:

Working Group on business and human rights  
Special Procedures  
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)  
Palais des Nations  
CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

All submissions will be posted on the webpage of the Working Group.

Should you have any questions in the meantime, please contact Ms. Kinga Dery, supporting my mandate at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva ([consultant.dery@un.org](mailto:consultant.dery@un.org), cc: [ohchr-wg-business@un.org](mailto:ohchr-wg-business@un.org) ).

All Permanent Missions  
to the United Nations Office at Geneva

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Karska', written in a cursive style.

Elzbieta Karska  
Chairperson

Working Group on the issue of human rights and  
transnational corporations and other business enterprises

## Call for inputs from Member States

### Working Group on Business and Human Rights Report to the 50<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council on *“COVID-19 pandemic: lessons learnt and moving forward”*

#### Introduction

The pandemic and the related severe socioeconomic consequences have been a test of leadership and service delivery for governments and businesses alike. It has highlighted existing inequalities, exacerbated them, and showed that protection of human rights is especially critical in times of crisis. This period has served as a reminder that, in times of crisis, human rights protection can be compromised leaving millions of people and communities vulnerable, in situations of fear and abuse, exposed to danger and the real risk of death.

The pandemic has demonstrated that to effectively protect human rights under such crisis conditions, standards and protection measures must not only be maintained but significantly strengthened. It is critical for States, businesses, and all stakeholders to learn the lessons of the pandemic and take all appropriate practical measures to limit the human cost of future crises and achieve solutions that save lives and protect human rights, even when crisis cannot be averted. The pandemic has been a human rights crisis of immense proportions, but it should also be a wake-up-call and trigger for States, the international community and business to take the necessary action that is commensurate to the challenge.

The United Nations’ Working Group on Business and Human Rights (the Working Group) repeatedly emphasised what is required from all relevant stakeholders to ensure responsible business conduct during the pandemic and in the recovery period<sup>1</sup>.

Against this background, the Working Group decided to focus its forthcoming report to the 50<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council in June 2022 on the lessons learnt from

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<sup>1</sup> Including in the recommendations of the Working Group’s Information Note “A Roadmap for Responsible Recovery in Times of Crisis” (<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Business/WG/Responsible-recovery-information-note.pdf>), the statement of the Working Group “Ensuring that business respects human rights during the Covid-19 crisis and beyond: The relevance of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights” (<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25837&LangID=E>), as well as in other relevant work by human rights mechanisms and bodies, such as Special Procedures, Treaty Bodies as well as the OHCHR (<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Business/BusinessAndHR-COVID19.pdf>).

the pandemic and the identification of opportunities and challenges related to protection, prevention, response, and redress for business-related human rights abuses based on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs). It seeks to consider how the business and human rights agenda can contribute to efforts to build back better following the pandemic, and to address emerging new global crises on the horizon.

### **Call for Government Inputs**

The Working Group kindly requests that your Government provides its input **by responding to the below attached questions to [ohchr-wg-business@un.org](mailto:ohchr-wg-business@un.org) by Friday 24 February 2022 with the subject heading “WG BHR / COVID-19 / States Survey”**. The responses received will be posted on the Working Group’s webpage in the language in which they are received.

The Working Group issued separate calls with similar questionnaires to businesses and business associations, unions, national human rights institutions, UN entities, and civil society organizations.

### **Questions:**

- 1) What were the most significant challenges and obstacles for your Government during the pandemic and the recovery period related to ensuring responsible business conduct? What kind of support or/and guidance would your Government welcome to prepare better for business-related human rights abuses linked to other, future crises?
- 2) What were the most important lessons learnt from the crisis and how can these lessons help in addressing business-related human rights abuses linked to other, future crises?
- 3) Please outline any positive initiatives (highlighting those that were the most effective), including policies, legislation, and plans through which your Government contributed to:
  - a. creating and strengthening an enabling environment for businesses to respect human rights in their operations during challenging times and when emerging from the crisis;
  - b. mitigating the negative human rights impacts evident during the pandemic and likely to be present during future crises;
  - c. ensuring effective access to remedy for business-related human rights abuses caused during times of crisis.
- 4) What are those opportunities that would allow your Government to build back better by ensuring stronger and more decisive action to protect human rights in the context of business activities?
- 5) What efforts were made by your Government to engage in constructive and meaningful dialogue with various stakeholders, including civil society actors, to address business-related human rights abuses during the pandemic, including to

protect workers and to build a resilient society and economy based on inclusive recovery able to prevent human rights abuses in future crisis situations?

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