

Scaling Up Initiatives to Protect Human Rights Defenders

Multistakeholder consultation

10:00-13:00

November 30, 2017

Palais des Nations, Room XXII

Geneva, Switzerland

Background: The closing of civic space and increasing attacks on human rights defenders (HRDs) have brought into sharp focus the need for increased protection and promotion of HRDs. The work of defenders in the field of business and human rights is critical; HRDs help to identify potential human rights impacts arising from business activity and are crucial actors in the mitigation and remediation of such abuses.

In recognition of the strong linkage between HRDs and responsible business conduct, the UN Working Group (UNWG) on Business and Human Rights has launched a project to [develop guidance for business on respecting and supporting HRDs](#) in line with the [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#) (UNGPs), informed by a series of multi-stakeholder consultations. A [first consultation in the UNWG's current project was held in May 2017](#).

At present a number of business organizations, individual companies and multi-stakeholder initiatives are working at different levels to promote and protect the work of human rights defenders. Some of these initiatives include:

- Individual companies or business organizations joining informal business networks in collaboration with civil society organizations to explore actions businesses can take to protect civic freedoms and human rights defenders.
- Trade association responses to specific cases of reported attacks against HRDs.
- Company-level policies to respect and protect HRDs.
- Multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs), e.g. “quick response group for apparel industry emergencies”.

Aims of consultation: At the multi-stakeholder consultation on 30 November, the UNWG will facilitate a dialogue among business associations, company representatives, civil society, and MSIs leading the charge on different HRD initiatives to discuss:

- how these models are working and what their main challenges are;
- how these initiatives could work together or build off one another to scale up in size and scope.

The UNWG also plans to use the November consultation as an opportunity to seek further inputs for its guidance on HRDs, civic freedoms and the role of business, which the UNWG aims to launch in 2018.

The consultation will build on multi-stakeholder discussions on related topics during the [2017 UN Forum on Business and Human Rights](#) (Geneva, 27-29 November). In particular, it will be linked to a [session co-organized by a number of NGOs in collaboration with the UNWG](#) on 28 November.

UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights

Agenda:

10:00-10:15	Welcome and introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anita Ramasastry, UNWG• Brief scene-setting: HRD
10:15-11:00	How models and initiatives for addressing “pillar I & III implementation gaps” are working, their challenges and considerations for UNWG guidance <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kick-off remarks: Michel Forst, UN Special Rapporteur on HRDs• Moderator: Sarah Brooks, International Service for Human Rights
11:00-11:45	How models and initiatives for addressing “pillar II implementation gaps” are working, their challenges and considerations for UNWG guidance <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kick-off remarks: Bennett Freeman, Senior Advisor, Corporate Human Rights Benchmark and Know the Chain• Moderator: Mauricio Lazala, Business & Human Rights Resource Centre
12:15-12:55	Scaling up protection of HRDs: lessons from business engagement and MSI mechanisms that have been successful in creating joint action responses <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kick-off remarks: Annabel Lee Hogg, B Team• Moderator: Amol Mehra, International Corporate Accountability Roundtable
12:55-13:00	Wrap-up and next steps <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anita Ramasastry, UNWG

Contact: Please contact wg-business@ohchr.org, cc forumbhr@ohchr.org, if you have any queries. All registered participants will receive an email with logistics information. Participants must be registered for the Forum and check that their badge is valid for 30 November.

More background information: see the Working Group's background note on its project, “[Human rights defenders and civic space – the business and human rights dimension](#)”.

Coffee/tea and a snack served outside the room from 09:45 to 10:00 with thanks to DLA Piper and the International Corporate Accountability Roundtable (ICAR).