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For the attention of the
Secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Business and Human Rights

Business and Human Rights Annual Forum 2 - 4 December 2013 Side Event Proposal:

What role can the UN Guiding Principles play in preventing conflict around natural resources?

The Quaker UN Office works under the Friends World Committee for Consultation (Quakers), an international Non-Governmental Organisation in General Consultative Status with the UN Economic and Social Council. QUNO would like to hold a side event at the second Annual Forum on Business and Human Rights. Please consider this as an application.

THEME

The UN Guiding Principles set out ‘due diligence’ obligations for businesses in order to identify, prevent and mitigate any adverse human rights impacts of their business activities. The principles focus on ‘meaningful consultation with potentially affected groups’ (Principle 18) and ongoing feedback from affected stakeholders (Principle 17 and 20) (see box one).

This side event will consider ways to achieve ‘meaningful consultation’ and ‘ongoing feedback’ when business activities affect local communities’ access to, and use of, natural resources. We will explore the links between the UN Guiding Principles and prevention of destructive conflict. We will look particularly at the important role dialogue and participatory approaches play in helping businesses and States create conflict sensitive investment plans and recognise the rights of local communities. Speakers will highlight peacebuilding and conflict transformation methods as a way to build on the Guiding Principles (particularly Principles 18 and 20).

The side event will also launch QUNO’s September 2013 paper ‘Building Peace around water, land and food: Policy and practice for preventing conflict’. This paper draws together the laws and guidelines from human rights and environment frameworks that provide for inclusive participation and decision making around natural resource management. It also presents five initiatives that illustrate how policy, together with legal empowerment and peacebuilding approaches, can support peaceful and equitable management of water, land and food. The paper is available on the QUNO website [here](#).

SPEAKERS AND SPONSORS

Potential speakers include Achim Wennmann (Geneva Peacebuilding Platform (GPP)), Lorenzo Cotula (International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)), Lynn Finnegan (Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO)) and a State representative. The session will be moderated by Diane Hendrick (Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO)).

The Permanent Mission of Norway to the UN in Geneva is sponsoring the event. We have also approached a number of other States, including Costa Rica, UK, Bolivia, Ghana, Argentina, South Africa, Colombia, India and Ecuador.

OBJECTIVE

The objectives of the session are:

- To explore the links between natural resource management and destructive conflict, considering the role businesses play in local communities' access to natural resources.
- To share good practices for preventing destructive conflict around natural resources, focusing on improving dialogue between business actors and local communities.
- To highlight peacebuilding and conflict transformation methods as a way to build on the UN Guiding Principles (particularly Principles 18 and 20).

RELEVANCE TO FORUM MANDATE

The forum aims to discuss trends and challenges in the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and to promote dialogue and cooperation on issues linked to business and human rights. This session will focus on the links between natural resource management, peacebuilding and conflict transformation, considering good policy and practice that recognises these linkages and helps facilitate peaceful and equitable natural resource management. Discussion will include what methods are available - and being implemented - to help meaningfully engage communities in decisions around natural resources, with a particular focus on vulnerable and marginalised groups and building on Guiding Principles 18 and 20.

Yours sincerely,

Quaker UN Office, Geneva

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BOX ONE: relevant Guiding Principles

Guiding Principle 18: 'In order to gauge human rights risks, business enterprises should identify and assess any actual or potential adverse human rights impacts with which they may be involved either through their own activities or as a result of their business relationships. This process should:

- (a) Draw on internal and/or independent external human rights expertise;
- (b) Involve meaningful consultation with potentially affected groups and other relevant stakeholders, as appropriate to the size of the business enterprise and the nature and context of the operation.'

The commentary states that while business activities may create opportunities for improving access to food, healthcare and other basic necessities, 'projects may also lead to the physical or economic displacement of people, risking their further impoverishment, and impeding their access to food, livelihood and healthcare'.

Guiding Principle 20: 'In order to verify whether adverse human rights impacts are being addressed, business enterprises should track the effectiveness of their response. Tracking should:

- (a) Be based on appropriate qualitative and quantitative indicators;
- (b) Draw on feedback from both internal and external sources, including affected stakeholders.

The commentary states that ongoing tracking should focus on vulnerable and marginalised individuals, groups and populations, and should be integrated into internal reporting processes.