

To: *The UN Working Group on the Issue of Human Rights, Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises*

Re: *Request for Input on Topics, Panels and Modalities for the Second Annual Forum to be Held in Geneva on 3-4 December 2013*

The safeguarding of human rights in conflict-affected and high-risk zones poses distinct challenges. The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights have recognised the need for innovative and practical solutions in this regard. In 2012, the first annual Forum of the Working Group initiated discussions on how states, private sector actors, international organisations, civil society and other relevant stakeholders could promote the uptake and ensure the effective implementation of the Guiding Principles in conflict contexts. International Alert would like to encourage the Working Group to build on the momentum, which those discussions generated, and continue to explore obstacles and opportunities for the promotion and realisation of the Guiding Principles in countries affected by violent conflict or weak governance.

To this end, we suggest that the Working Group consider including the following topics and panels in the forthcoming second annual Forum:

- A panel on the role of BRICS companies in conflict zones and how ‘home’ and ‘host’ states as well as other stakeholders can promote the Guiding Principles, support the uptake of good practice and ensure respect for human rights in this regard.
- A panel seeking to engage in particular institutional investors and financial regulators, with a view to discussing options for stimulating the uptake of the Guiding Principles by project promoters and finance institutions in conflict contexts.
- Panels bringing together companies from different sectors, operating in conflict-affected or high-risk areas in the same geographic region, to share experiences and lessons learnt in ensuring respect for human rights and to promote cross-industry efforts.
- A panel focusing on challenges to the effective implementation of supply chain due diligence in conflict contexts, exploring creative solutions and seeking to put forward modalities of cooperation that have the potential to strengthen private sector capacity to conduct due diligence along supply chains.
- A panel discussing the need to adapt company grievance mechanisms to the particular circumstances of conflict-affected and conflict-prone zones, taking into account the higher risks of human rights abuse and local communities’ distrust of actual or perceived links between business and repressive regimes in such contexts.
- A panel on the potential role that private sector actors can play in peacebuilding by fulfilling their responsibility to respect human rights.

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346 Clapham Road, London SW9 9AP, UK
Tel +44 (0)20 7627 6800 Fax +44 (0)20 7627 6900
Website www.international-alert.org