

Suggestions to the UN working group on business and human rights on behalf of International Alert

Possible areas of research and action:

A more narrow focus on security and human rights would be beneficial, with an increased focus on the Voluntary Principles. As the VPs are a means of promoting respect for human rights by companies, it would be interesting to explore the role and possible support of the Working Group to the VPs.

In general, there is a wide range of voluntary frameworks and obligatory mechanisms that arose in the last decade, attempting to regulate company conduct vis-à-vis human rights. Where does the WG see itself fit in with all the other initiatives?

An outstanding issue and question from previous and current discussions is 'defining the sphere of influence' and it would be very useful if the WG could elaborate on that.

NGOs are looking a lot at remedy, but is it retroactive? A big question for NGOs and communities

On ensuring that the Guiding Principles are effectively implemented by both governments and business, and that they result in improved outcomes for individuals and groups around the world whose rights have been affected by business activity:

If the guiding principles are meant to bring a meaningful change into the lives of individuals and groups, they need to be operationalized. This will involve raising awareness with all 3 key target audiences- government (both host and home), companies (and investors and shareholders) and civil society (as representatives of local communities. In addition, the capacity of these actors to implement and oversee (civ society) the guiding principles is crucial. Without building the capacity of these actors, the guiding principles will remain unachievable.

Some civil society actors primarily see their role in supporting remedial action on behalf of local communities. However, there is a certain degree of confusion in trying to understand whether this will be retroactive or not. Can you please shed light on this?

There will be a wide geographic interest and establishing clear prioritisation criteria is essential. Perhaps the WG can have pilot projects on issues that came up during this consultation process, in particular in order to deliver on the task of improving outcomes for individuals- a task impossible if not engaging on a project/in-country level.

We would welcome the WG to initiate a dialogue with both multinationals and state-owned companies from the BRICS (S for South Korea) for adopting standards on human rights and endorsing the current 'Protect, Respect and Remedy' framework.

And finally on implementation: does the WG envisage a mechanism to monitor the implementation?

We welcome the idea of the **UN annual forum on business and human rights**. These are some initial possible topics to explore:

- FPIC

- Due diligence on human rights
- Conflict: operating in violent conflict/high risk areas (as this is perhaps the least developed area of the framework, yet most pertinent)