

Protecting Human Rights in the Technology Sector: UN Human Rights B-Tech Project

Peer Learning Platform: Session #1 – 8 February 2023



Welcome to the First B-Tech Peer Learning Platform Session

Peer Learning Platform (PLP) Objectives:

- We aim to engage with a **broad group of companies from the tech sector**, or with a particular interest in tech.
- Our focus is on expanding knowledge and learning about how to apply the **UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs)** to prevent and mitigate human rights risks.

Welcome to the B-Tech Project

The Team

- Lene Wendland, Chief, UN Human Rights Business & Human Rights Unit
- Nathalie Stadelmann, Human Rights Officer - *Gender, Member States and Intergovernmental Support, Human Rights Council Liaison*
- Dr Isabel Ebert, Advisor (Zurich, Switzerland) - *UNGPs Compass, “Smart Mix” of Regulation & Policy*
- Stephanie Seale, Advisor (San Francisco, US) - *CoP and PLP, Partnerships*
- Abdul Abdulrahim, Advisor (Lagos, Nigeria) - *B-Tech Africa, SMEs, Tech Investment*
- Ben Pitler, Advisor (Oslo, Norway) - *Investor Track*

Welcome to the First B-Tech Peer Learning Platform Session

Peer Learning Platform (PLP) Ground Rules:

- The sessions are conducted under the **Chatham House rule**, meaning that what is discussed can be conveyed outside the meeting, but **without attribution**.
- The PLP sessions will not be recorded, though B-Tech will **extract learning and aggregate statistics** on participants, but without attribution. Participation in the PLP sessions will not be made public.
- The focus of COP and PLP sessions is the **advancement of implementation of respect for human rights** by companies that are part of the community. Various **issues relevant to this overall theme are in scope** and permitted for conversation. Additionally, **issues out of scope for discussion** are those that are purely related to commercial interests and motivation.
- Participation in the PLP is open to companies self-identifying as with interests in the digital tech space, and B-Tech does not vet participants in each session. **Participation and/or presentation of any information in the PLP by a company does not constitute an endorsement** of the company or its activities by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the B-Tech Project or any related programmes. The materials and information provided through the PLP is for general information purposes only and should not be treated as a consultation or used for compliance purposes.

Part One: Introduction to the UNGPs as a Framework to Address Human Rights Risk in Tech

- The origin of B-Tech
- The UNGPs, and how they came to be the authoritative global framework for business and human rights
- How the UNGPs have shaped B-Tech, and engagement with companies & other stakeholders
- The history of the CoP
- CoP Participant - brief experience
- Q&A

The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

- Result of six-year consultative process mandated by the UN Human Rights Council, led by Special Rapporteur Prof John Ruggie (Harvard)
- 2011: The Council unanimously endorsed the Guiding Principles for operationalizing the Protect, Respect and Remedy framework in Resolution 17/4
- Endorsed by global business, civil society and trade unions
- A global normative framework with a strong political foundation
- ‘Principled Pragmatism’
- Significant uptake in business practice and regulatory frameworks



BHR lens to address challenges for human rights in tech

- B-Tech Project – applying the lens of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights to digital technologies
- Focused on preventing, identifying, mitigating and addressing risk to people from digital technologies
- Working in a multi-stakeholder manner to deliver better policy responses and practical outputs



Tech Company

COMMUNITY of PRACTICE (CoP)

Since 2021, the Community of Practice has engaged participants from **13 multinational tech companies** through regular convening to discuss challenges and opportunities in the implementation of the UNGPs:

- Apple, Cisco, Cloudflare, Ericsson, Google, Hewlett Packard Enterprise, Meta, Microsoft, Salesforce, Telefónica, Twitter, Verizon, Vodafone
- Shared expertise from UNGPs authors and other BHR experts on the process of **human rights due diligence**, **saliency analysis** and **operationalizing severity**, among other topics
- **Produced a Human Rights Council-mandated report** on “The practical application of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights to the activities of technology companies” **to the General Assembly**
- Held a special session with the (previous) **UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet** in conversation with company senior executives on their responsibility to respect human rights
- Released public outputs reflecting on the **status of business respect for human rights**, opportunities for **stakeholder engagement, HRDD and risks to people as components of ERM process**, and other topics

Part One: Introduction to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

Part Two: Overview of UN Human Rights B-Tech

- B-Tech focus areas
- Investor track
- Geographic outreach (including B-Tech Africa and B-Tech India)

The Corporate Responsibility to Respect

Business enterprises have an independent responsibility to respect human rights!

To meet their responsibility, companies should have in place appropriate policies and processes:



Focus Areas of B-Tech

ONE

BUSINESS MODELS

Identify avenues to address human rights risks related to tech company business models.



MAIN OUTPUTS
TO DATE:

Foundational paper
on addressing
human rights risks in
business models

TWO

PRODUCT/SERVICE HRDD

Promote robust product and service human rights due diligence, while deepening stakeholder insight as to progress and challenges in implementing the harder aspects of the UNGPs.



MAIN OUTPUTS
TO DATE:

4 Foundational
papers on HRDD and
end-use

THREE

REMEDY

Identify the challenges of ensuring access to remedy for harms related to the use of technologies, and spot pathways for action to address these.



MAIN OUTPUTS
TO DATE:

4 Foundational
papers on access to
remedy

FOUR

THE "SMART-MIX"

Host multi-stakeholder dialogue to inform State action about: a) What a smart-mix legal and policy measures means in practice (at times focusing-in on specific technologies, applications); and b) how HRDD and remedy fits into that.



MAIN OUTPUTS
TO DATE:

Foundational paper
on the State duty to
protect

B-Tech Project Modalities

- Dynamic and interactive process
- Conducting research and consulting with stakeholders to explore new ideas and guidance
- Participation of all interested parties (States, companies, investors, civil society, academics, ...)
- Foundational papers, guidance notes, good practice case studies, comments on practical dilemmas published continuously
- Outreach across diverse geographic regions



B-Tech Project Workstreams

- Community of Practice (CoP)
- Peer Learning Platform (PLP)
- B-Tech Africa
- UNGPs Compass
- Investor Track
- CSO Working Group
- B-Tech India



Part One: Introduction to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

Part Two: Overview of UN Human Rights B-Tech

Mentimeter poll:

Why did you join today, and what are you seeking to get out of the PLP?

Why have you joined today's B-Tech PLP session? What are you hoping to learn?

To build my network, to get resources and best practices and to learn from others experiences and expertise

How to incorporate human rights principles into tech policies and workflow streams.

I am interested in learning practical approaches to conduct human rights due diligence downstream for a tech companies, as well as learn emerging trends and potential risks in the future for tech companies.

Hear from peers on how they are dealing with human rights challenges.

To learn about B-Tech's priorities for the year

Discussion of what remedy means in digital tech space. Remediation is often prospective (learning from mistakes, identified harms) vs. classic reparation...

Learn how to align open source in the social sector research and current projects we have with UN agencies.

Be informed and help shape corporate policy for AI systems development.

Hope to network and learn from peers and SMEs

Where do we start when trying to devise corporate human rights policy? How do we ensure these commitments are implemented in the product development cycle? (would love to hear from previous best and worst cases, learn from where the gaps are, etc.)

Part One: Introduction to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

Part Two: Overview of UN Human Rights B-Tech

Part Three: Plans for the New Peer Learning Platform

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PEER LEARNING PLATFORM (PLP)

Starting in 2023, the B-Tech Project is expanding the framework of the CoP.

🔗 Objectives

- The PLP will offer introductions and insights into the UNGPs to companies at various stages of engagement with the Principles. Many may not yet have developed formal human rights policies, or may benefit from the opportunity to engage with peer tech companies facing similar challenges in operationalizing the Guiding Principles.
- The PLP will broaden the accessibility of these resources beyond tech companies in North America and Europe, to include companies focusing on users in Africa, Asia, and Latin America as well.

🔗 Ground Rules

- B-Tech will post brief summary notes of the issues covered in each sessions, with no attribution as per Chatham House Rule.
- Anti-trust rules require that scope of conversation is limited to issues related to the UNGPs and unrelated to sales or competitive activity.
- Participants may join in any or all of the sessions of the PLP, which do not constitute a linear course.

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PEER LEARNING PLATFORM (PLP)

➤ Upcoming Sessions (subject to change and to participant input and demand):

- March 15: HRDD & End Use, Regulation (DSA, etc)
- May 10: Human Rights Risks in Business Models/Responsible investment work
- July 12: Regulation and the Smart-Mix concept (UNGPs Compass)
- September 13: Access to Remedy
- November 8: Stakeholder Engagement Vulnerable Groups, Governance Gaps

➤ Registration:

- Visit <https://www.ohchr.org/en/business-and-human-rights/b-tech-project> for updated signup info

Thank you

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WEBSITE:

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Business/Pages/B-TechProject.aspx>



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B-Tech



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