

October 2023

WORKSHOP CONCEPT NOTE

Empowering National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) in the domestic implementation of the United Nations Guiding Principles (UNGPs) in the technology sector in Africa

A. Background

This workshop is organized by the UN Human Rights Office through its [B-Tech Project](#) more broadly, and [B-Tech Africa](#) Project specifically. The B-Tech Africa Project seeks to implement the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) in the technology sector in national contexts through engagement with key stakeholders. Following the formal launch of the B-Tech Africa Project in March 2023, there have been various engagements with key stakeholders including States, technology companies, civil society, academics, NHRIs on how to mainstream the UNGPs into the conduct of technology companies operating in Africa. As part of this engagement, the project identifies National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) as strategic stakeholders for the effective implementation of the UNGPs in the technology space in Africa.

The UN General Resolution 48/134 adopted in 1993 provides for Principles relating to the Status of National institutions (the Paris Principles). The Principles requires NHRIs to ensure among others:

- a. the promotion and harmonization of national legislation, regulation and practices with international human rights instruments and
- b. cooperation with the UN, its organizations, regional and national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights.

As a result, NHRIs play a pivotal role in the promotion and protection of human rights in domestic contexts. This role has become even more important today as a result of various challenges posed by technology-facilitated harms to human rights, and the corporate responsibility of technology companies to identify, address and mitigate adverse impacts being linked to their business activities. As the most prominent international human rights instrument on business and human rights, the UNGPs is being applied to address the harms posed by the development, deployment and use of digital technologies. In order to ensure that these harms are addressed in domestic contexts, NHRIs play a crucial role in raising human rights issues in connection with technology company conduct, and facilitating state-based non-judicial mechanisms.

B. Objectives

Given this background, this workshop, co-led by NHRIs seeks to kick-start a strategic collaboration between African NHRIs and other strategic stakeholders including tech businesses, civil society organizations, academia, regional initiatives on corporate accountability and various experts on business and human rights on how to mainstream the UNGPs in the tech sector in Africa. Starting with selected NHRIs, this workshop will identify some of the ways African NHRIs can maximize the UNGPs including:

- a. raising awareness about adverse impacts on human rights stemming from or being linked to technology company conduct;
- b. supporting human rights defenders in raising human rights issues in the technology sector and for seeking access to remedy where harms have occurred;
- c. where their legal mandate provides, providing direct delivery of remedy such as accepting complaints, prompt payment of compensation, guarantee of non-repetition etc;
- d. organizing capacity building and peer-learning activities among NHRIs and other strategic stakeholders; and
- e. identify ways how national action plans on business and human rights can account for human rights issues in the technology sector.

C. Anticipated Outcome

This workshop is a pilot engagement with NHRIs on how to implement the UNGPs in the technology space in Africa and it will form the background for a broader and a more comprehensive collaboration between NHRIs and critical stakeholders in the technology sector. The major outcomes to be achieved is to increase awareness about the B-Tech Africa Project, foster collaboration among key stakeholders and identify the role of NHRIs in the effective implementation of the UNGPs in the tech sector in domestic contexts. A briefing note will be published after the workshop to inform subsequent engagements with stakeholders.

D. Workshop details

Date: Tuesday, 31 October 2023

Time: 12:00 - 14:00 (EAT); 11:00 - 13:00 (SAST); 10:00 - 12:00 (WAT)

Venue: Online

E. Background documentation and past events

- [B-Tech Africa Launch Event \(Summary Report\)](#) – Applying the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights to Digital Technologies in Africa, Cape Town, 29-30 March 2023
- [B-Tech Africa Stakeholder Engagement \(Concept note and agenda\)](#) – Developing the framework for responsible tech in Africa, Nairobi, 17th February 2023
- [African Business and Human Rights Forum](#), Accra, 11-13 October 2022
- [UN Human Rights Business and Human Rights in Technology Project](#), Southern Africa Multistakeholder Consultation, 6 September 2019
- [The Practical Application of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights to the activities of tech companies](#) (OHCHR, 2022)
- [Public policy and digital technologies: The role of National Human Rights Institutions in achieving policy coherence](#), (B-Tech project, 2021)
- [Access to remedy in the technology sector: Consultation report](#), (B-Tech project, 2021)
- [Access to remedy and the technology sector ‘a remedy ecosystem approach’](#) (B-Tech, 2021)
- [OHCHR multistakeholder consultation on access to remedy in the tech sector](#), 23-24, 2021
- [Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions, The Paris Principles](#), (OHCHR, 1993)

F. Contact information

If you have questions or comments about this workshop, please reach out to Dr Tomiwa Ilori via oluwatomiwa.ilor@un.org