



The annual Forum on Business and Human Rights is only a few days away!

A quick guide to what is happening

Overview

The seventh annual [UN forum on Business and Human Rights](#) starts on Monday 26 November in Geneva, Switzerland. Over three days (26-28 November), 2,500+ participants from business, civil society, governments and international organizations will discuss trends, challenges and progress in advancing implementation of the [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#) in all regions of the world. This year's [programme](#) includes more than 70 sessions and a [series of "snapshot" presentations](#) on key current business and human rights issues.

The Forum is guided and chaired by the [UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights](#) and organized by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

What is this year's focus?

Under the theme "Business respect for human rights – building on what works", this year's Forum will focus on the second pillar of the Guiding Principles: the corporate responsibility to respect human rights, and in particular the requirement that companies exercise human rights due diligence to prevent adverse impacts on people.

[The Forum programme](#) will be looking at emerging practices in [different sectors](#) and [across value chains](#), and what human rights due diligence implies in relation to specific human rights risks and impacts. This includes sessions focused on [groups at particular risk](#), "hot" topics such as the connection between human rights due diligence and [artificial intelligence](#), [automation](#), [block chain technology](#), [the role of tech companies in society](#), [civic freedoms and human rights defenders](#), [climate justice and transition to a green economy](#), [responsible tax conduct](#), [corporate engagement on the SDGs](#), and [business in conflict areas](#). Sessions will explore good practice elements of [stakeholder engagement](#), [meaningful disclosure on human rights risks](#) and [evaluation of corporate respect for human rights in practice](#).

The programme also includes discussions on how actors such as [investors and others in the investment community \(benchmarks, ranking initiatives and ESG analysts\)](#) as well as [business lawyers](#) can be levers for greater progress in making human rights due diligence part of standard business practice.

The Forum will not only address corporate responsibility to respect human rights, but also [“government action”](#) and how governments are performing in implementing the Guiding Principles. Forum sessions will look at how States can incentivize corporate human rights due diligence, [through law and policy](#), and through [leading by example in their own roles as economic actors](#).

As in all Forums, all three pillars of the Guiding Principles are covered (State duty to protect, corporate responsibility to respect and access to remedy), and the programme includes sessions that will explore [ways to overcome gaps in realizing access to remedy](#) for victims of business-related human rights impacts.

Evening sessions include a [special screening of “The Price of Free” \(Winner of the Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival\)](#) with an introduction by Nobel Peace Laureate, [Kailash Satyarthi](#), [a lively and informal debate on whether tech companies are a threat to human rights](#), [a human rights and business award honouring a grassroots organization defending the dignity and rights of communities affected by business operations](#), and a [debate on businesses’ role in public policy engagement to support human rights](#).

The Forum kicks off in the early morning of 26 November with an opportunity to engage in [an informal exchange with the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights](#) about its mandate to promote the UN Guiding Principles, followed by several parallel sessions that include:

- [an opportunity to hear the stories of human rights defenders from different regions in a special session called “voices from the ground”](#)
- [an introduction to the UN Guiding Principles for newcomers](#)
- [a presentation by the Working on the state of play of corporate human rights due diligence](#)
- [a meeting for academic networks and institutions covering the field of business and human rights](#)

Plenary sessions

[The opening plenary](#) (26 November • 11:00 - 13:00) will provide leadership and high-level perspectives on the main theme of the Forum, featuring remarks by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the chairperson of the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights, and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Kailash Satyarthi. It will also involve panel conversations with prominent human rights advocates and business leaders.

In the [second plenary](#) (27 November • 10:00 - 11:15), the Working Group and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights together with senior leaders from ILO, UN Global Compact, UNDP and OECD discusses the role of international organizations in promoting responsible business conduct in line with the UN Guiding Principles.

The [closing plenary](#) (28 November • 17:00-18:00) will take stock of key messages from the Forum, reiterate the most critical gaps and challenges and highlight the most promising innovations, emerging practices and collective action efforts. It will feature perspectives of leading trade union and business organization representatives as well as indigenous peoples and human rights defenders participating in the Forum.

Sessions convened by the UN Working Group

Beyond the plenary sessions, the Working Group is leading discussions on a number of Forum topics, such as:

- [Are States making progress on implementing the Guiding Principles and promoting business respect for human rights?](#)
- [What is the impact of national action plans on business and human rights to date?](#)
- Are States leading by example and promoting human rights due diligence through the [practice of State-owned enterprises](#) and [through their economic diplomacy and development finance?](#)
- [Is it possible to design human rights compatible international investment agreements?](#)
- [Trends, challenges and emerging practice in promoting business respect for human rights in different regions of the world](#)
- [Building coherence on essential elements of due diligence \(in collaboration with OECD\)](#)
- [New efforts to safeguard human rights defenders and ways to address growing legal harassment of defenders \(in collaboration with civil society organizations\)](#)
- [The role of national human rights institutions in facilitating access to remedy for business-related human rights impacts](#)
- [Connecting human rights defenders and the role of business lawyers \(in collaboration with the International Bar Association\)](#)
- [Developing a gender lens to business and human rights](#)
- [Implementing the UN Guiding Principles in conflict and post-conflict contexts](#)

Sessions convened by OHCHR

Sessions convened by OHCHR in the context of its work on accountability and access to remedy for business-related human rights impact include:

- [A discussion to explore the inter-connectedness between different types of grievance mechanisms \(both State-based and non-State-based\)](#)
- [A discussion to Unpack the relationship between human rights due diligence and determinations of corporate legal liability for business-related human rights offenses](#)

Who's speaking?

[200+ speakers](#), including:

- Kailash Satyarthi, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (2014) and child rights activist
- Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Guy Ryder, Director-General, International Labour Organization (ILO)
- Gary J. Goldberg, Newmont Mining Corporation, CEO
- Patrick Pouyanné, TOTAL, Chairman of the Board of Directors and CEO
- Sharan Burrow, General Secretary, International Trade Union Confederation
- Phyllis Omido, grassroots environmental activist from Kenya, Goldman Prize Laureate
- Leonardo Sakamoto, journalist and anti-slavery activist from Brazil
- Lise Kingo, UN Global Compact, CEO & Executive Director
- Tania Cosentino, Schneider Electric South America, President

And a unique mix of experts, practitioners and directly affected people, including:

- Human rights defenders from around the world
- Indigenous peoples' representatives
- Trade union representatives
- Company practitioners from several sectors
- Business and industry organizations from Brazil, China, Colombia, Denmark, France, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Korea, Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Spain, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, and others.
- Senior government representatives coming from capital, including from Colombia, Chile, France, India, Indonesia, Liberia, Sweden, Thailand, Vietnam, and others.
- Experts from academia, business organizations, civil society organizations, international organizations, law firms, national human rights institutions, and the investment community.

Which companies are coming?

ABB, adidas, Aditya Birla, Aguas Andinas, Anglo American, Apple, Asahi Group Holdings, A.P. Moller-Maersk, Barrick Gold Corporation, Bayer, BMW Group, BNP Paribas, BP, BT Group, Cargill, Carlsberg Group, Cemex, Chanel, Chevron, Coca-Cola, Daimler, Ecopetrol, ENEL, ENI, Equinor, Exxon Mobil Corporation, Fujitsu, Glencore, Google, Guangxi Panshibao Co., H&M, Hilton, Hitachi, HP Inc., HSBC, IKEA, Intel Corporation, InterContinental Hotels Group, Mars Inc., Mark and Spencer, McDonald's, Meridian Group, Microsoft, Mitsubishi, Nestlé, Newmont Mining Corporation, Nordea, Novartis, Novo Nordisk, NXP, Orange, PepsiCo, Pfizer, Princes Limited, Procter & Gamble, Repsol, Rio Tinto, Sakhalin, Samsung, SAP, Schindler, Shell, Siemens, Sumitomo Chemical, Syngenta, Takeda Pharmaceuticals, Teijin Ltd., Thales, The Walt Disney Company, Total S.A., Tokmanni, Trafigura Group, TUI Group, Unilever, Vale, Vestas Wind Systems, VINCI, Volvo Group, Walmart, and more.

Background document

The key background reference for the 2018 Forum is a [report prepared by the UN Working Group on the state of play of corporate human rights due diligence in practice](#) (executive summary available [here](#)). This report – first presented to the UN General Assembly in October 2018 – highlights key features of human rights due diligence and why it matters; gaps and challenges in current business and Government practice; emerging good practices; and how key stakeholders — States and the investment community, in particular — can contribute to the scaling-up of effective human rights due diligence.

The report is accompanied by two companion papers that elaborate on [aspects of human rights due diligence](#) and [lessons from practice](#) on how to get started and good practice elements. The latter paper identifies good practice elements in relation to a number of aspects of human rights due diligence, including stakeholder engagement, transparency and meaningful reporting on human rights, integrating human rights in supply chain management beyond tier one, exercising leverage, addressing systemic issues and corporate engagement on the Sustainable Development Goals.

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Hashtag: #UNForumBHR / #bizhumanrights

Web streaming: Most sessions will be web streamed. Links will be available on the Forum web page during the event.

Web page: www.ohchr.org/2018ForumBHR

Contact: forumbhr@ohchr.org (general queries)/registrationforumbhr@ohchr.org (logistics and registration)