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New Guiding Principles on Business and human rights endorsed by the UN Human Rights Council

GENEVA – In an unprecedented step, the United Nations Human Rights Council has endorsed a new set of Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights* designed to provide -for the first time- a global standard for preventing and addressing the risk of adverse impacts on human rights linked to business activity.

“The Council’s endorsement establishes the Guiding Principles as the authoritative global reference point for business and human rights,” said John Ruggie, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Business and Human Rights. “They will also provide civil society, investors and others the tools to measure real progress in the daily lives of people.”

The Guiding Principles are the product of six years of research led by Professor Ruggie from Harvard University, involving governments, companies, business associations, civil society, affected individuals and groups, investors and others around the world. They are based on 47 consultations and site visits in more than 20 countries; an online consultation that attracted thousands of visitors from 120 countries; and voluminous research and submissions from experts from all over the world.

The new standards outline how States and businesses should implement the UN “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework in order to better manage business and human rights challenges.

Under the ‘State Duty to Protect,’ the Guiding Principles recommend how governments should provide greater clarity of expectations and consistency of rule for business in relation to human rights. The ‘Corporate Responsibility to Respect’ principles provide a blueprint for companies on how to know and show that they are respecting human rights. The ‘Access to Remedy’ principles focus on ensuring that where people are harmed by business activities, there is both adequate accountability and effective redress, judicial and non-judicial.

In giving its endorsement, the Human Rights Council commended Professor Ruggie for developing the UN “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework, and recognized the role of the Guiding Principles in providing comprehensive recommendations for its implementation.

(*) Check the Guiding Principles:

<http://www.ohchr.org/documents/issues/business/A.HRC.17.31.pdf>

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The Special Representative's mandate was created in 2005 by the then UN Commission on Human Rights (now Human Rights Council) in order to move beyond what had been a long-standing and deeply divisive debate over the human rights responsibilities of companies. Professor Ruggie, of Harvard University, was appointed to the position by Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General at the time, and was extended in his role by current Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. His aim was to build meaningful consensus among all stakeholders about the roles and responsibilities of both States and companies with regard to business's impacts on human rights. To achieve that consensus, he conducted extensive research and convened consultations around the world.

Learn more about the mandate and work of the Special Representative, visit:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/TransnationalCorporations/Pages/SRSGTransCorpIndex.aspx>

and

<http://www.business-humanrights.org/SpecialRepPortal/Home>

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