



United Nations Forum on Business & Human Rights  
2-4 December 2013, Geneva

## Request for a Side Event

### “Respecting and Supporting Human Rights in Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas: What is good corporate practice?”

#### Background

On 20 September 2013, H.E. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced at the Global Compact Leaders’ Summit in New York a new architecture for business engagement toward the post-2015 agenda. Under this umbrella, the *Business for Peace* platform was launched with a view to expand and deepen private sector engagement in support of peace in the workplace, marketplace and local communities. At this occasion, the UN Global Compact has released a new resource “*Responsible Business Advancing Peace*” featuring a series of good practice examples illustrating how companies, investors and Global Compact Local Networks have taken action to ensure respect for human rights and advance peace, while securing long-term business performance in challenging operating environments. In this context, the UN Global Compact is facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogue to identify good corporate practices and promote corporate respect and support for human rights.

The implementation of responsible business in conflict-affected and high-risk areas is core to our collective efforts in the United Nations to advance human rights and peace. The United Nations Forum on Business and Human Rights offers a key opportunity to explore how companies can better respect and support human rights in such environments and to engage all relevant stakeholders in a practical dialogue.

#### Theme & Objectives:

The primary responsibility for peace, security and development rests with governments, but the private sector can make a meaningful contribution to human rights, peace and stability in countries emerging from conflict. The implementation of business practices that respect and support human rights is a key building block of strong, just and stable societies. In countries that have experienced or are plagued by political instability and conflict, a number of risks are posed by and to corporate operations requiring enhanced attention to manage conflict-specific risks. Responsible businesses need to take measures to understand conflict dynamics and design policies that integrate conflict-sensitivity in conflict-affected and high-risk areas. In such contexts, developing context-specific due diligence and grievance mechanisms are critical steps to manage social risks and ensure that companies’ activities have a positive impact where they operate.

Today, a variety of tools and instruments are available to support companies in their efforts to advance human rights, peace and stability. The Guiding Principles on Business & Human

Rights and the “Protect, Respect and Remedy” paradigm offer a framework for companies to adjust their strategies and behaviors to uphold the highest human rights standards. Other tools, such as the UN Global Compact “Guidance on Responsible Business in High-Risk Areas”, complement this framework and offer guidance to businesses taking up the challenge of advancing human rights, anti-corruption and higher labor standards in high-risk areas. The past few years have been marked by significant progress. However, there remains a need for a more practical understanding of how companies can uphold the highest human rights standards and implement good practices in conflict-affected and high-risk areas.

The suggested side event is aimed at exploring how companies can better respect and support human rights in areas that have experienced or are plagued by conflict by facilitating a multi-stakeholder dialogue. It will be designed to highlight and discuss examples of corporate practices that can contribute to peace through enhanced respect for human rights in the workplace, marketplace and local communities. The dialogue will seek to address the following aspects:

- How can companies ensure that their operations and investment decisions respect and support human rights even in conflict-affected or high-risk areas? What do existing good practice look like in this area?
- How can they align their strategies and operations with existing good practices?
- How can companies develop and conduct due diligence and grievance mechanisms in such environments? What are the key challenges and how can they be overcome?
- How can companies better share and communicate learning in this regard?

**Suggested format:**

- 1 expert to frame to the scope and expected outcomes of the dialogue;
- 2-3 speakers from companies operating in high-risk areas, sharing experience to kick off the discussion;
- Open dialogue with the audience.

**Focal point:**

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