

## ***United Nations Forum for Business and Human Rights 2013 Programme***

Collaborating partners: BG Group, the Danish Institute for Human Rights, the Institute for Human Rights and Business and Oxfam

### **04 December 2013 – Human Rights Impact Assessments: Different Perspectives on a Shared Objective**

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#### ***Theme and Objectives***

The UN Guiding Principles call on businesses to assess their human rights as part of the corporate responsibility to respect. Building on the well-established processes and procedures of environmental impact assessments (EIA) and social impact assessments (SIA), human rights impact assessments (HRIA) are grounded in EIA/SIA methodologies but look at potential impacts through the prism of human rights. Just as with the development of EIA, SIA and the now more common combined environmental and social impact assessments (ESIA), HRIA are going through a process of definition, experimentation, and increasing research and rigour to become an emerging tool that can be useful to business, government and civil society. There is an emerging practice and community of learning around HRIA that seeks to develop this forward-looking tool as an important evidenced-based process to identify and understand potential human rights impacts in order to be able to identify and then prevent or mitigate any potential negative human rights impacts from business activities. The purpose of this panel is to discuss different models and perspectives on HRIA: (i) a sector-wide approach to HRIA; (ii) a company approach to HRIA; and (iii) a community-based HRIA methodology.

As with other impact assessment tools, HRIA seek to build on and build in the perspectives of different stakeholders. They can be carried out by different stakeholders with a view to highlighting and addressing a wide range of human rights issues, within the context of a process that seeks to bring all stakeholders to the table around what may at times be contentious issues. The aim will be to discuss different HRIA methodologies, in the light of other existing impact assessment methodologies, focusing on key challenges such as the design and implementation of HRIAs, the differences and connections between environmental/social and human rights impacts, the roles for different stakeholders in conducting and participating in HRIA, and exploring ways in which important information derived from HRIAs can actually be used by and shared in a responsible way vis-à-vis potentially impacted rights holders. The discussion will also explore how HRIA related information can be used to work with governments to strengthen their state duty to protect), particularly in countries where adverse human rights impacts result from government action or other regulatory issues. As few HRIA have been put into the public domain to date, the panel will also discuss key considerations around disclosure of HRIA.

#### ***Participants***

- **BG Group**, international oil & gas company – Ramanie Kunanayagam, Group Head, Social Performance
- **Institute for Human Rights and Business** - Margaret Wachenfeld, Director of Research and Legal Affairs
- **Danish Institute for Human Rights** – TBC

- **Oxfam**, Sarah Zoen, Regional Advisor, Private Sector Department

#### **Additional background information on participating organisations**

**BG Group** is a world leader in natural gas, with a strategy focused on connecting competitively priced resources to specific, high-value markets. Active in more than 20 countries on five continents, BG Group has a broad portfolio of business interests focused on exploration and production and liquefied natural gas.

**The Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR)** is Denmark's national human rights institution, established by parliamentary decision in 1987. The Human Rights and Business Department is a specialized unit within DIHR focussing on the role of the private sector in respecting human rights. It is one of the largest teams of human rights specialists dedicated exclusively to the area of business and human rights. In addition, it is supported by, and has the institutional backing of a leading National Human Rights Institution with sector, thematic and geographic expertise.

**The Institute for Human Rights and Business (IHRB)** is dedicated to being a global centre of excellence and expertise on the relationship between business and internationally proclaimed human rights standards. The Institute provides a trusted, impartial space for dialogue and independent analysis to deepen understanding of human rights challenges and issues and the appropriate role of business. The Institute works to raise corporate standards and strengthen public policy to ensure that the activities of companies do not contribute to human rights abuses, and in fact lead to positive outcomes.

**Oxfam** is a global organization working to right the wrongs of poverty, hunger, and injustice. Nearly one out of every three of us lives in poverty. But we see a future in which no one does. Together with individuals and local groups in more than 90 countries, Oxfam saves lives, helps people overcome poverty, and fights for social justice. Oxfam is an international confederation of 17 affiliates networked together to create a global movement for change.