

Third annual UN Forum on Business and Human Rights

Concept note: 'Putting the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights into practice: Perspectives from companies, NGOs and trade unions'

Date: Monday 2 December 2014

Venue: Geneva

Event duration: 10:00am to 11:30am

SESSION DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE:

The Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI), together with our members, plan to hold a forum on the challenges and opportunities of putting the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) into practice. The session will draw on the expertise and experience of ETI's diverse membership base of companies, trade unions and NGOs, providing an interactive forum for debate and discussion. Participants will hear three practical case studies, presented by ETI members, which each relate to one pillar of the UNGPs.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE:

To publicly explore how companies, trade unions and NGOs can work together to support the three pillars of the UNGPs (Protect, Respect and Remedy), drawing on practical examples in order to better understand the challenges and opportunities.

AUDIENCE:

- Members of the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises
- Representatives of Member States of the United Nations, particularly those supporting the Working Group
- Enterprises representatives
- NGOs supporting business accountability on human rights issues
- Policy makers

STRUCTURE:

This side panel discussion will be chaired by ETI Executive Director Peter McAllister, with case studies presented by ETI member companies, NGO and trade unions. The session will start with opening remarks followed by case study presentations:

- **Pillar 1 – Protecting garment workers in Cambodia**

Speaker: Philip Chamberlain, C&A

This case study will highlight the joint efforts of more than 30 brands/retailers and trade unions as they engaged with the Cambodian government over its duty to protect workers from human rights abuses. It will focus on the high-level discussions that took place in February and May 2014, prompted by concern about a deteriorating workers' rights situation in Cambodia.

- **Pillar 2 – Respecting sandstone workers in Rajasthan**

Speaker: Meena Varma, Dalit Solidarity Network

This case study will highlight the efforts of ETI and its members, as it works to promote the business and human rights agenda in the sandstone sector of Rajasthan, India. Workers in this sector face a number of issues, not least health and safety concerns which can lead to long-term health conditions such as silicosis. ETI is implementing a Foreign and Commonwealth Office-funded project that focuses on building sector-wide capacity to address these issues through supplier engagement, guidance and training materials.

- **Pillar 3 – Providing remedy for Bangladeshi garment workers**

Speaker: Monika Kemperle, IndustriALL

This case study will look at the process for establishing an internationally robust mechanism for providing compensation for victims and families of the Rana Plaza disaster. ETI has supported this process, calling on its company members to contribute payments through the ILO-backed Rana Plaza Donors Trust Fund. We will look at the complex dialogue and discussions between unions and companies, as the compensation scheme was established.

The case studies will be followed by a facilitated discussion, providing delegates with an opportunity to ask questions and discuss key trends, issues and challenges.

ORGANISATION

The UK-based multi-stakeholder initiative ETI will be the principal organiser for this side panel event. ETI is a leading alliance of companies, trade unions and NGOs that promotes respect for workers' rights around the globe. Our vision is a world where all workers are free from exploitation and discrimination, and enjoy conditions of freedom, security and equity. Visit us at: www.ethicaltrade.org