

Side Session Summary

National Action Plans on Business and Human Rights: Global Perspectives, Lessons Learned, and Next Steps

Tuesday, 17 November 2015, 16:40 to 18:00
Palais des Nations, Room XXIV

Co-organized by the International Corporate Accountability Roundtable (ICAR), the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR), the Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALS) at the University of Witwatersrand, the Centre for Human Rights (CHR) at the University of Pretoria, the Singapore Management University (SMU), the ASEAN CSR Network, the Institute for the Study of Human Rights (ISHR) at Columbia University, the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP), and the European Network on Indigenous Peoples (ENIP)

This side session on the topic of National Action Plans (NAPs) on business and human rights aimed to supplement the official UN session on the same topic, which focused on the perspectives of governments and regional organizations, by presenting the perspectives of civil society, national human rights institutions, business representatives, academia, and indigenous groups. The overall aim of the session was to share NAPs experiences to date and discuss strategies for leveraging the global momentum built around NAPs to facilitate real and sustainable human rights protections at the national level, both in policy and in practice.

The multi-stakeholder discussion was organized around the three key themes of (1) implementation of existing NAPs guidance, (2) integrating Global South and gender perspectives into NAPs, and (3) integrating indigenous peoples' perspectives into NAPs. The session was co-moderated by Sara Blackwell, International Corporate Accountability Roundtable (ICAR) and Bonita Meyersfeld, Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALS), University of Witwatersrand. The lead discussants included Josua Loots, Centre for Human Rights (CHR), University of Pretoria, Claire Methven O'Brien, Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR), Mark Hodge, Global Business Initiative on Human Rights (GBI), Joanne Bauer, Institute for the Study of Human Rights, Columbia University, Nomonde Nyembe, Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALS), University of Witwatersrand, Thomas Thomas ASEAN CSR Network (CAN), and Prabindra Shakya, Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP).

The discussion highlighted participants' positive experiences and context-specific challenges in implementing the existing, practical guidance on NAPs, including methodologies for conducting national baseline assessments and approaches to developing issue- or stakeholder-specific inputs into ongoing NAPs processes. The session then highlighted areas where there remains an urgent need for enhanced prioritization, peer-to-peer learning, and flexible approaches in terms of how specific issues are integrated into NAPs processes, including the issues of emerging economies, gender, conflict, and indigenous peoples' rights. Overall, participants agreed that stakeholders have an incentive to continue engaging with NAPs and holding governments to a standard of concrete, evidence-based, and meaningful commitments, as well as inclusive and transparent processes, in the development of NAPs.