2017 United Nations Forum on
Business and Human Rights
Geneva · 27 – 29 November

Parallel sessions led by external organizations – Guidance for session organizers and moderators

Parallel sessions led by external organizations accredited to the annual Forum on Business and Human Rights have become a regular feature of the event, in line with its open and inclusive nature. The 2017 Forum includes a number of parallel sessions organized by a range of stakeholders and covering a diverse array of themes and topics linked to the mandate of the Forum and the overall theme for the event.

All organizers of parallel sessions at the annual Forum are requested to show consideration for the mandate of the Forum to promote dialogue and cooperation on issues linked to business and human rights and the implementation of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Parallel session organizers have an important role to play in **stimulating respectful dialogue and a participatory approach** in the sessions they are leading. This does not mean avoiding contentious topics, reducing divergent views or censoring inputs, but rather taking extra care to create a space for meaningful multi-stakeholder engagement. With this in mind, the Working Group on Business and Human Rights that guides the Forum and the Forum Secretariat have developed this guidance for session organizers and moderators.

A. Guidance for session organizers

1. Basic expectations
Parallel session organizers are requested to take the following into account:

- Panels should be moderated in an **interactive fashion and avoid lengthy presentations**;
- Ensure **gender balance**;
- The organizers should plan for **sufficient time for interaction** between panel speakers and the audience; this includes limiting the time for introductory remarks;
- Panels should as a general rule allow for **multi-stakeholder participation** to the greatest extent possible, while in some sessions it may make sense to hear more from one particular group of stakeholders. In sessions where panels do not have a multi-stakeholder composition, the interaction with the audience should aim to achieve multi-stakeholder dialogue and engagement;

- **If panel presentations are expected to address specific cases** involving named States and/or enterprises and/or non-governmental organizations, session organizers should seek to involve the relevant parties in the session in a constructive manner. It is advisable in these circumstances that the relevant stakeholders be notified in good time of the cases to be addressed during the session in order to facilitate constructive dialogue.
- Moderators and panel organizers should communicate the content of the present note to panellists participating in their session in due course before the session of the Forum, and ensure that the content is acknowledged and has been understood.

2. Support preparation of Forum key messages

The Working Group will prepare a report on the key messages from the 2017 Forum that will be presented to the UN Human Rights Council in June 2018. In order to support the reporting on key messages and outcomes of specific Forum discussions, organizers and moderators are asked to:

- Email three key messages and forward-looking "action points" emerging from their respective sessions to the Forum Secretariat (forumbhr@ohchr.org) by 10 December. (Tentative key points (from Day 1 and 2) sent by the morning of 29 November will help inform the Forum's closing plenary.)
- Share with the Forum Secretariat any summaries and reports that they may prepare from their respective sessions.

3. Support awareness-raising and pre-Forum discussion

Session organizers and moderators are encouraged to **share information about their participation in the Forum and their respective sessions via social media** and use the Forum hashtags: #UNForumBHR / #bizhumanrights. To receive updates about the Forum, please follow @WGBizHRs.

Session organizers and moderators are also encouraged to contribute to the Forum blog series.

4. Timeline and administrative information

Organizers should keep the Forum Secretariat posted on any changes and updates relating to the content of and speakers for their sessions. Session concept notes that are hyperlinked in the Forum programme should be finalised by 13 November.

The United Nations is not able to cover travel and participation costs of speakers and other persons involved in the session, or to arrange interpretation services for the event. Session organizers are welcome to make arrangements for interpretation and for providing refreshments to participants at their respective events.

Video recording / live-streaming is normally only provided for a limited number of sessions organized by the UN held in Room XX.

Session organizers that independently arrange interpretation at their respective sessions must inform the Forum Secretariat, in order to secure necessary technical setup.
- Please provide the name of the interpreters by email to registrationforumbhr@ohchr.org.
- Please note that if there is no information about languages in the programme (to be updated shortly), then the session is in English only.

All participants in parallel sessions, including organizers and speakers, must register online.

B. Guidance for moderators

The aim of the Forum is not only frank and respectful dialogue, but also dynamic and substantively focused discussion. Session moderators have an important role in helping to achieve this.

Session moderators are expected to assist with the following:

- **Facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogue**: Moderators may want to emphasize the unique multi-stakeholder character of the Forum and that all participants in the audience participate on an equal footing. The spirit of the Forum is to hear a range of perspectives and explore forward-looking lessons learned and practice-oriented solutions to business-related human rights challenges, through respectful and constructive dialogue.
- **Acting as stewards:** Moderators are encouraged to embrace the neutral role of being the steward or guide for the conversation based on (a) what panellists and participants express as important and (b) the overall intent of the Forum.
- **Constructive dialogue**: In sessions that involve specific case studies (to provide practical insights into real-life experiences and challenges faced), or other situations where speakers refer to allegations against specific entities (for example, Governments, individual companies or non-governmental organizations), moderators should ensure that the latter, if present and requesting the floor, are given an opportunity to share their perspective during the session. In such instances, moderators should remind all participants about the overall principles guiding the Forum, namely, that of constructive, forward-looking solution-oriented dialogue and respect for diverse views.
- **Balanced and pertinent discussions**: Moderators may use their discretion in the management of the interventions from the floor in order to achieve participatory and balanced discussions that are pertinent to the topic of the session. This includes interrupting, if required, any derogatory or irrelevant interventions, and actively encouraging interventions from different stakeholder groups.
- **Dynamic exchanges**: Moderators should remind participants in the audience to avoid reading from prepared written statements, documents or published texts. Written statements may be sent to the Forum secretariat for posting on the Forum webpage. Participants in the audience should also be encouraged to make short, relevant interventions or to ask questions relevant to the topic of the session.
- **Timekeeping**: Given that time for every item on the Forum programme is limited, moderators are asked to assist in managing the scheduled time for the session and the allotted speaking time. The goal of the Forum is to enable multi-stakeholder participation in the discussions, which can be facilitated if panellists and participants taking the floor stay within their allotted time. To that end, moderators might be required to remind speakers during the interaction that they should limit their speaking time.