



PERMANENT MISSION OF NORWAY

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
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DATE
11.04.2013

Dear Sir/Madam,

Suggestions on topics for the 2013 UN Forum on Business and Human Rights

The Permanent Mission of Norway in Geneva refers to the invitation by the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises to submit inputs and suggestions on the 2013 Forum on Business and Human Rights, and is pleased to suggest the following topics:

1. Protection of human rights defenders working on issues of corporate accountability.

Norway would like to suggest that the Forum convene a panel on the protection of human rights defenders working on issues of corporate accountability.

Around the world, there are increasing cases of human rights defenders who work on issues of corporate accountability – whether in relation to labour rights, land rights, indigenous peoples rights or other issues – themselves being subject to attacks, threats, intimidation and harassment. There are also increasing number of cases of human rights defenders being subject to restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and protest, despite the Guiding Principles calling on all actors to ensure that ‘that the legitimate and peaceful activities of human rights defenders are not obstructed’.

The Human Rights Council’s recent adoption of the resolution ‘Protecting Human Rights Defenders’ also forms part of the context for such a panel. The resolution is an important response by the Human Rights Council at a very difficult time for human rights defenders in all regions of the world. The unanimous adoption of this resolution sends an important signal of support to people fighting against human rights violations.

A panel discussion could consider and further elucidate the issue of the role and protection of human rights defenders, including as an aspect of each of three pillars. It could also have a particular focus on the situation of indigenous leaders working on issues related to business activities on their territories, an issue to be discussed in the thematic report on this issue by the Working Group to the UNGA this autumn.

2. Investments/the financial sector and Human Rights

Norway would like to suggest that the Forum convene a panel on issues related to investments/the financial sector and human rights.

Investment regulation, policies, institution and organization that facilitate and support investment are extremely relevant to the implementation of the UNGPs. However, investments and human rights is one of the areas where we lack knowledge and capacity to push implementation forward. International and national investment banks, funds and export credit agencies are some of the relevant stakeholders in this field.

There are several studies /work being undertaken to address these issues, including the OECD Investment Committees preparation for a report on «Due Diligence in the Financial Sector». The report seeks to give guidance as to how provisions on environmental and social issues, including human rights, can be observed in practice by financial institutions in relation to the financial products and services they provide.

In terms of potential speakers / institutions on this topic, we would suggest Ms. Andrea Shemberg, London School of Economics, and representative from IFC, OECD and national credit agencies (for example the Norwegian export credit institute, GIEK)

3. Measures for state implementation of the UNGPs

Norway would find it very useful if the Forum convene a panel on measures targeted for national implementation, such as national strategies and/or action plans.

Several countries are currently in the process of developing national strategies or action plans for operationalization of the UNGPs. It would be very timely if some of these countries could share their experiences regarding the process and the content of the final documents at the Forum. It would also be interesting to look into concrete measures applied by states to implement the UNGP in different business sectors or related to particularly vulnerable groups. We suppose that UK, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Denmark and Norway are amongst the countries from Europe that can participate at such a panel.

We look forward to participating in the Forum on Business and Human Rights in December, and the continued dialogue with the OHCHR and the Working Group on the program.

Regards,



Harriet E. Berg

Minister Counsellor
Permanent Mission of Norway