UN Interagency Network for
Human Rights, LNOB and Sustainable Development
Terms of Reference

Background

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development sets out a vision for sustainable development grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights norms and standards, placing equality and nondiscrimination at the center. Recognizing that human rights, including labour rights, are essential to achieving sustainable development that leaves no one behind (LNOB), the 2030 Agenda has a transformative ambition seeking "**to realize the human rights of all**".

In response to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the UN Development System (UNDS) embarked on a reform centred around a new generation of UN Country Teams (UNCTs) and a strategic **UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework,** with a human rights-based approach (HRBA), LNOB, gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) hardwired as guiding principles throughout the programming process to support country implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The 2020 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) further calls upon the UNDS to assist States in their efforts to respect and fulfil their human rights obligations and commitments under international law, as an operational activity for development and a critical tool to operationalize the LNOB pledge.

Multiple and deepening crises – including the continued devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the triple planetary crises, as well as food, energy and financial crises triggered by the war in Ukraine – have increased the urgency of taking action. Weak democratic institutions, a shrinking civic space, increasing inequalities and persistent structural discrimination, underinvestment in basic public services and economic systems that favour profit over people and planet, have exposed deep vulnerabilities in economies and societies.

The UN Secretary-General's **Call to Action (C2A) for Human Rights** launched in 2020 calls for the UN system as a whole to step up efforts and place human rights "front and centre" in its action and priorities. In response to growing pushbacks on human rights jeopardizing the 2030 Agenda and recognizing that when we take an HRBA to development programming, outcomes are more sustainable, impactful and effective, one of the seven workstreams of the **C2A is rights at the core of sustainable development**. This is also echoed in the Secretary-General's **Our Common Agenda**, designed to challenge the world to change gears and urgently deliver on the 2030 Agenda in order to secure a better, more sustainable future for people and the planet, based on a renewed social contract anchored in human rights, and to reinforce the potential of human rights as a 'problem solving' tool for contemporary development challenges.

At the UNSDG core group meeting in April 2021, based on strong demand for ongoing functions in the areas of human rights and LNOB, it was proposed to establish a **successor mechanism for the UNSDG Task Team on LNOB and Human Right**s. The members of the former UNSDG Task Team therefore decided to continue to work together at the global level so as to maintain inter-agency efforts and dialogue and further enhance the UN system's coherence on human rights and sustainable development. The Network has since then led the **implementation of the C2A workstream on rights at the core of sustainable development**. The initial results were presented to the UN Deputies Committee in July 2022 among the deliverables of the C2A Strategic Intervention on Sustainable Development.

Objectives:

The overall objective of the Network is to strengthen human rights mainstreaming in development programming, including towards equality and non-discrimination, and strategic human rights results across

the 2030 Agenda. The Network will continue to advocate for a stronger human rights agenda within the UN system and be a platform for regular information-sharing and development of common positions and actions for policy coherence among UN entities. The Network is in charge of implementing the strategic intervention on sustainable development under the C2A ("Placing human rights at the center of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Covid-19 response and recovery") and works in synergy with other UN networks, task teams and interagency structures.

Key areas of intervention include:

1. **Strengthen the focus on human rights in the UN Development System and promote UN policy coherence:** jointly promote a strong focus on human rights in the work of the UN Development System, including in and through the UNSDG; provide a forum through which UN entities exchange information on positions and strategies, and elaborate joint positions and actions regarding human rights and LNOB as they link to sustainable development.

2. **Influence high-level UN processes on sustainable development to strengthen the integration of human rights, and promote policy coherence in UN system key events, processes, and coalitions**: provide a platform to coordinate positions and key messages for human rights engagement at high-level events on sustainable development, such as the *High-Level Political Forum, UN Summits and the ECOSOC operational segment*. Engage in the preparations for *QCPR* resolutions and contribute to the yearly monitoring and reporting on human rights indicators.

3. **Strengthen integration of human rights, LNOB in sustainable development policy advice, strategic planning and programming at the country-level**. This can include providing guidance and joint support for coordination and collaboration between UN entities; supporting the joint operationalization of system-wide policies or normative guidance relating to human rights and labour rights; contributing to monitoring implementation of key aspects of UN development system reform pertaining to human rights; promoting interagency partnerships and coalitions, such as the Global Coalition for Social Justice to be launched in 2023; supporting the integration of human rights in sustainable development processes such as Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs); and supporting the integration of human rights in the operations of Resident Coordinators Offices (RCOs), UNCTs and regional structures for human rights, including on inequality and non-discrimination.

4. **Capacity development**: ensure a strong focus on capacity-strengthening and learning in particular at the country-level, through the maintenance and dissemination of key guidance and products for mainstreaming human rights in the work of UNCTs and RCOs. Support efforts to promote country dialogues on human rights and wider participation of civic society in the work of the United Nations at the country-level.

5. **Knowledge management:** increase knowledge management and information sharing by promoting the use of existing guidance and documenting and disseminating good practices/examples of comprehensive country-level human rights-based approaches and achievements. Maintain web-based sharing of tools, good practices and guidance materials, using existing UNSDG/DCO mechanisms (the UNSDG Knowledge Portal). Ensure that lessons learned from the country and regional levels influence global policies relating to human rights and sustainable development.

6. **Information sharing:** ensure UN entities keep each other abreast of key work relating to human rights and sustainable development.

7. **Promote integrated and intersectional approaches:** ensure an intersectional approach to LNOB in all Network activities and promote an intersectional approach in the work of the UNDS. To this end, the Network will seek to influence, leverage and collaborate with key UN system-wide coordination bodies engaged in related areas, such as the UN Network on Racial Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities, the UN Environment Management Group, the UN Gender Equality Network, the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Issues and the Inter-Agency Support Group for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Working arrangements

The Network will meet online every 2 months and exchange information in between meetings via email or through other means. The Network also uses a dedicated group under Microsoft Teams. In addition, the Network may meet on an ad-hoc basis as necessary.

Network working groups: As a way of sustaining work on different thematic topics, the Network can establish working groups that follow up on specific areas or activities under the Network's Work Plan. For example, a working group may be created to lead on VNRs, the UN Common Learning Package, rolling out and provide training on the CCA and CF Checklists, messaging at summits (among others), etc. Each working group would be led by one or several UN entities. Working groups are expected to inform the rest of the Network via the bi-monthly meetings and through email communication and other means, as deemed relevant.

The Network should establish and maintain relationships with relevant UN networks, task teams and interagency structures that focus on areas linked to human rights, LNOB, policy coherence, equality and sustainability, to ensure efforts are complementary and mutually reinforcing and to avoid a duplication of work.

Accountability

As per established practice, the Network will continue to regularly report on its work to the C2A Inter-Agency Working Group (C2A IAWG) through regular updates at the meetings of the C2A IAWG. The work of the Network will also be reported to the Executive Committee/Deputy Committee during the annual update and decisions on the C2A.

As a successor of the UNSDG Task Team on LNOB and Human Rights and as the Network performs its work in support of the UNSDG's objective to maximize the impact of the UN development system's operational work on sustainable development, including by strengthening policy coherence on human rights and sustainable development and operationalizing system-wide policies or normative guidance and monitoring implementation of key aspects of UN development system reform, the Network will also work towards inclusion of human rights in the workplan and discussions of the UNSDG, and strive to keep the UNSDG informed of the work of the Network.

Members

The Network is open to all UN entities working on human rights, LNOB and sustainable development. Each UN entity is encouraged to have at least one member and one alternate.

Chair & Secretariat

The Network is co-chaired by OHCHR and one more Network member (rotating every year). OHCHR will act as the Secretariat, support the coordination of the group, facilitate the organization of the meetings and share any relevant information with members.

Agreed by the Network in May 2023.