



Concept Note

12th United Nations Forum on Business and Human Rights

27 - 29 November 2023

Towards Effective Change in Implementing Obligations, Responsibilities and Remedies

Overview

Since its first session in 2012, the annual UN Forum on Business and Human Rights has brought together thousands of participants from governments, international organizations, business, civil society, trade unions, communities, lawyers, and academia from around the world. Centred on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) – the authoritative global framework for States and businesses in relation to preventing the adverse impacts on human rights arising from business activities – the Forum provides a unique multi-stakeholder platform for discussing key trends and challenges in implementing and advancing the UNGPs.

Established by the UN Human Rights Council, the Forum is guided and chaired by the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights. It is organized by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Focus of 2023 Forum

After more than 12 years of normative development that has established business and human rights standards in line with the UNGPs, this Forum will reflect on the actual changes that have occurred in the implementation of these standards. These include the actions that States have taken to incorporate these standards through regulation and policies, the extent to which businesses have applied these standards in their practices throughout their operations, and whether judicial and non-judicial remedies in this area are more available and accessible to those negatively impacted by business-related human rights abuses.

In considering these changes, the key questions which are likely to be considered at the Forum include:

- What are the drivers for, and obstacles to, effecting positive change?
- How can progress be measured?
- To what extent are there observable changes at the regional and sub-regional levels, and what are the remaining challenges at the different levels of implementation (e.g., local and national)?
- What, if any, are the impacts of these changes on the lived experiences of those affected by business activities?
- How can the ambitions of States and businesses be raised to make real change?
- What good practices can be found in the actions of States, businesses, and other stakeholders?
- What judicial and non-judicial approaches have been implemented and what are their outcomes?
- What are effective multi-stakeholder approaches for advancing the business and human rights agenda?

This Forum provides an opportunity to reflect critically on the changes which have been made since the UNGPs were adopted, with a particular focus on sharing examples and stories of positive change. Participants will consider whether and to what extent these changes have proved effective, especially for rights-holders, and what still needs to be achieved.

The Forum will also provide an opportunity to address various issues in focus. These may include “standing items” for the Forum agenda, such as:

- Regional focused sessions
- Human rights defenders, civic freedoms and the role of business
- Gender, business and human rights
- Indigenous Peoples rights and impacts of business activities

Discussions may also include emerging or systemic issues that confront the business and human rights agenda.

A tentative Forum programme is expected in July 2023.

The full agenda will be posted on the [Forum web page](#) by the end of September 2023.



Participating in the Forum

This Forum will return to having an open call for session proposals and side events. However, as renovations to the United Nations buildings in Geneva are ongoing, it is still unclear at this stage as to how many sessions will be possible and whether the format will be in-person only or hybrid.

Proposals for sessions are very welcome. These must include:

- An outline of the proposed topic, focus and key objectives – limited to 250 words;
- Proposed speakers, with a maximum of 5 speakers plus a moderator
 - Please indicate name, organization, and envisaged contribution
 - Emphasis will be given to identifying skilled moderators/facilitators with expertise in the topics on the Forum agenda
 - Proposed speakers must reflect diversity of gender, background and region
- The organisers of the proposal – only one proposal per organization will be considered

All proposals must be submitted to the Forum organisers **by 21 April**.

These proposals will be considered by the Working Group at their meeting in the first week of May 2023. Successful proposals will be informed in June 2023.

Please be aware of the following:

- Given the growth in the number of submissions since 2012 and the limited capacity due to ongoing building renovations, it will not be possible to accommodate all proposals.
- The UN has a very limited budget for the Forum, including for travel of participants. For the small number of UN-sponsored participants, priority is given to stakeholders from the Global South.
- There is no space this year for accommodating externally organized “side event” requests. Those wishing to organize “side events” in Geneva before or after the Forum are encouraged to explore options outside of the UN premises and to keep the Forum organizers informed via ohchr-forumbhr@un.org.

Information about the agenda, registration process and virtual participation will be posted on the Forum's dedicated webpage in due course. Stay also posted on updates by following us on Twitter: [@WGBizHRs](https://twitter.com/WGBizHRs)