

Outcome Note

The thirty-ninth session of the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises, 30 September – 4 October 2024

The present outcome note summarizes the key items discussed at the 39th session.

Present: F. Hopenhaym (Chair), L. Jakulevičienė (Vice-Chair), R. McCorquodale, D. Olawuyi and P. Yeophantong.

- I. The Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises (the Working Group) held its **thirty-ninth session from 30 September to 4 October 2024**. The 39th session was the second session to be held in person during 2024, instead of the third, as would have been usual.
- II. The Working Group welcomed its new member from the Central and Eastern Europe region, Ms. Lyra Jakulevičienė.
- III. During the session, the Working Group met with representatives of different stakeholders, including the OHCHR, UNDP, OECD, ILO, UN Global Compact, members of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, relevant Special Procedures mandate holders, and representatives of Member States. The Working Group held a virtual meeting with 65 business entities, and another virtual meeting with over 80 civil society actors.
- IV. During the session, the Working Group discussed its working methods. It also discussed a wide range of issues, such as its priority activities and projects for 2024, 2025 and beyond. The issues discussed included:

A. Thematic Reports

1. The Working Group's upcoming thematic reports to the Human Rights Council and General Assembly in 2024 and 2025:
 - a) The Chair provided an update on the preparations for the presentation of the report on **respecting the rights of LGBTI people in the context of business activities**, to be presented to the 79th session of the General Assembly in November 2024. Updates were provided on the drafting and editing process, and the consultations that have been held to collect inputs from different stakeholders in different regions.
 - b) The Working Group discussed the topic for the thematic report to be presented to the 59th session of the Human Rights Council in June 2025, to be led by the Member from the Central and Eastern Europe region. This report will focus on the issue of **Artificial Intelligence and the Business and Human Rights agenda**. The Working Group reflected on the consultations to be undertaken, including at the forthcoming annual Forum on Business and Human Rights.
 - c) The Member from the Asia-Pacific region provided an update on the preparations for the report on **Migration, Business and Human Rights**, to be presented to the 80th session of the General Assembly in October 2025. The Working Group reflected on the consultations to be undertaken, including at the forthcoming annual Forum on Business and Human Rights.

B. Country Visits

1. The Working Group discussed its country visits during 2024 and those planned for 2025 and beyond:

- a) A country visit to **Colombia** took place from 29 July to 9 August 2024. Due to the UN liquidity crisis, this will be the only country visit to take place in 2024. The Working Group had planned to visit Tunisia during the first quarter of 2024, but this visit was postponed by the Government of Tunisia shortly before the planned start of the visit. The Working Group usually undertakes two country visits per year. The Working Group expressed a hope to be able to undertake two country visits during 2025.
- b) Following its country visit to **Japan** which took place from 24 July to 4 August 2023, the Working Group presented the report on that visit to the 56th session of the Human Rights Council in June 2024. It reflected on the interactive dialogue that took place following the presentation of the report.
- c) The Working Group reflected on its engagement with several other States regarding the possibility of visits that could take place over coming years and the members reviewed the options for 2025 and discussed priority regions and countries.

C. The Annual Forum on Business and Human Rights

The Working Group discussed the preparations for the 13th Annual Forum on Business and Human Rights, scheduled to take place **from 25 to 27 November 2024** at Palais des Nations in Geneva, under the theme “Realizing the “smart mix of measures” to protect human rights in the context of business activities”. The Working Group reflected on the large number of proposals for sessions at the Forum that were received further to the call for submissions issued earlier in 2024. The Working Group discussed the plans for sessions, reviewed the agenda for the Forum and decided on the action points to be undertaken before the Forum.

D. Academic visits and regional forums on business and human rights

1. The Working Group shared the outcomes of the members’ different academic visits to a range of countries.
2. The Working Group discussed engagement in **regional forums** in 2024, including the regional forum for Asia held in September in Thailand, and the forthcoming regional forum for Africa to be held in October in Ethiopia, the regional dialogue for the Middle East and North Africa (October in Qatar), and the regional forum for Central and Eastern Europe (November in Montenegro).
3. The Working Group discussed steps to try to develop a series of sub-regional events for the Western European and Other Group (WEOG) region, with the potential for a first sub-regional event for this region to be held in 2025.
4. The Working Group discussed the work done under the **Responsible Business Conduct in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) project**, including the activities taking place during 2024 under phase 2 of the project. The regional forum will take place early in 2025 and online dialogues will be held later this year. The Working Group is exploring the possibility of co-hosting a second dialogue on business and human rights in the Caribbean.
5. Members of the Working Group held meetings with UN regional groups in Geneva.

E. Communications procedure

The Working Group reviewed the communications issued to date in 2024 and decided to **continue to give priority to** communications, in collaboration with other relevant mandate holders.