

THE 25TH SESSION OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL WORKING GROUP ON THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

Side event on “the role of business in realising the right to development”

14 May 2024, 13:15-14:15
XXIV, Palais des Nations, Geneva
(In person event only)

Realising the right to development in line with the 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development requires individual and collective actions on the part of States, international financial institutions, UN agencies, public development banks, businesses and civil society organisations. In addition to discharging their individual tripartite obligations, States should act collectively as part of a duty of international cooperation.

The focus of this side event will be on examining the equally critical role of businesses in realising the right to development. The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) and other international standards expect businesses to respect all internationally recognised human rights wherever they operate. As the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to development highlighted in his 2023 report to the UN General Assembly ([A/78/160](#)), several components of the right to development – such as improvement of human well-being, self-determination, non-discrimination, participation and international cooperation – are already part of the International Bill of Rights, referred to in principle 12 of the UNGPs.

Moreover, a significant number of business-related human rights abuses are linked to development projects pursued without meaningful participation of people. Businesses should therefore pay greater attention to various components of the right to development while conducting human rights due diligence. By doing so, they will not only support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development but also contribute to addressing pressing or systemic challenges such as poverty, inequality, conflicts and climate change.

In fact, a holistic understanding of the right to development can underpin a transformative shift needed in the current economic order to overcome these challenges and achieve accelerated progress towards the 2030 Agenda. The UN Special Rapporteur in his recent vision report ([A/HRC/54/27](#)) to the Human Rights Council articulated a new model of ‘planet-centred participatory development’. Businesses will be an integral part of such a model to ensure inclusive, equitable and sustainable development.

Against this backdrop, the UN Special Rapporteur and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights will co-organise a side event to discuss the role of businesses in realising the right to development.

Aims

The side event seeks to:

1. highlight the role of businesses in realising the right to development (economic, social, cultural and political facets of development);
2. underscore the importance of responsible business conduct, in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, in contributing to the implementation of the SDGs; and
3. showcase the importance of active, free and meaningful participation of individuals and entire populations in all decisions related to development.

Questions for discussions

- How can a holistic understanding and fulfilment of the right to development support the accelerated progress towards meeting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?
- What are good practices of businesses contributing to inclusive and sustainable development? How can these be scaled up?
- What has been the impact of responsible business conduct standards and mandatory human rights due diligence laws? What more is needed to harness the role of business in contributing fully to realising the right to development?
- How should States encourage businesses to change irresponsible business models and go beyond the ‘do no harm’ approach?

Moderator

Ms. Shyami Puvimanasinghe, Human Rights Officer, OHCHR (TBC)

Panellists

1. Mr Surya Deva, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to development
2. Mr Roberto Suárez Santos, Secretary General, IOE
3. Ms. Kinda Mohamadieh, Legal advisor at Third World Network
4. Representative of a State (tbc)
5. Ms. Llanos Maité, Deputy Director, International Trade Union Confederation

Contacts

If you have any questions about this side event, please contact Ms Antoanela Pavlova, Human Rights Officer (antoanela.pavlova@un.org or hrc-sr-development@un.org) or Mr. Emin Aslanov (emin.aslanov@un.org) at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva.