



**United Nations Responsible
Business and Human Rights
Forum, Asia-Pacific**

From Commitment to Action

6-9 June 2023 | Bangkok, Thailand

#RBHRF2023

Background

The 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR75) provides us with an important opportunity, as well as a potential inflection point, to move from commitment to action by strengthening the State duty to protect human rights, the corporate responsibility to respect human rights, access to effective remedy and, ultimately, global solidarity for the rights of all.

Since the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) were unanimously endorsed by the UN Human Rights Council in June 2011, our planet and society have undergone significant change. From conflict, ecological decline and climate change to shrinking civic spaces, gender inequality and modern slavery, the collective challenges that we face have grown in complexity, scale and urgency. The nature of these challenges demands concerted action at all levels of governance—from the grassroots to regional and global levels—and from all stakeholders. Alongside States as the primary duty-bearers, businesses are particularly central to forging a more sustainable future grounded in freedom, equality and justice for all rights holders.

The perennial question is how this more sustainable future is to be achieved. The past decade of the UNGPs' implementation has featured successes in terms of legislative and policy frameworks to promote responsible business conduct, including national action plans (NAPs) on business and human rights and the growing application of due diligence principles in both law and practice. However, sustained and coordinated action is required to drive positive change, further advance the BHR agenda and make tangible progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Indeed, the 4th UN Responsible Business and Human Rights (RBHR) Forum, which took place in 2022, highlighted how policy coherence, multistakeholder cooperation, and a 'smart mix' of policy and regulatory initiatives are prerequisites to effectively harnessing levers of change to promote responsible business. But it also conveyed a resounding message from participants on how we must not become complacent: even with the gradual proliferation of incentives, policies, regulations and legislation aimed at promoting business respect for human rights, our work in preventing and addressing business-related human rights impacts is far from done.

To this end, the 2023 UN RBHR Forum will discuss how commitments can be put into action. In view of how the UDHR75 Initiative inspires us to reflect as much on current realities as on future possibilities, the

Forum will bring diverse interlocutors to discuss, debate, and share insights on issues ranging from the regulation of global supply chains and the implications of corporate sustainability due diligence to the recently recognized right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, for example. The Forum will also highlight issues, challenges, and sectors that the BHR community needs to act upon, including the intersection of climate-induced labor migration, biodiversity and BHR, the responsibility of development financiers, and the role of micro-, small, and medium-sized enterprises, among others. The Forum will also bring attention to specific groups at heightened risk of abuses such as Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities and displaced persons, while taking an intersectional and interdisciplinary approach to promoting, disseminating, and implementing the UNGPs in the Asia-Pacific region.

About the UN Responsible Business and Human Rights Forum

Held annually, the UN RBHR Forum convenes various stakeholders in the Asia-Pacific, including governments, civil society organizations, human rights defenders, trade unions, business enterprises, industry associations, employers' organizations, international organizations, national and regional human rights institutions, journalists, lawyers, activists and campaigners, and academia, for constructive dialogue and peer-learning on how to strengthen responsible business and corporate accountability in the region.

The UNGPs and the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration) will serve as the central instruments and a foundation for the Forum to explore good practices and complementary strategies for governments, businesses, rights holders, and other social partners to leverage in promoting responsible business. Accordingly, in addition to raising awareness about these two instruments as well as related legislation and guidelines such as the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, the Forum will identify practical solutions and effective ways forward to actualize and advance responsible business that can make a real difference in the lives of peoples in the region.

The Forum will be held on 6-9 June 2023, co-organized by the International Labour Organization (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), and the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights (UNWG).

Objectives

The Forum aims to

- Raise awareness and strengthen capacity in relation to the implementation of the UNGPs and the MNE Declaration into the next decade
- Take stock of the progress and challenges in promoting responsible business practices in the Asia-Pacific region and reflect on the lessons learnt to scale up progress
- Create an inclusive space for multi-stakeholder dialogue and facilitate peer-to-peer learning and promote collaboration and networking among a wide range of stakeholders, including rights holders, governments, businesses and industry associations, national human rights institutions, civil society organizations, trade unions, human rights defenders, academia, lawyers, and journalists

Programme

The Forum programme will be made available on www.rbhrforum.com on 9 May 2023. The Forum will be held in person in Bangkok, Thailand, and will be live-streamed online.

Side Sessions: For those interested in organizing side sessions, please submit a concept note by 5 May 2023 (see contact details below). Please note that organizations submitting proposals may be asked to collaborate. All the side sessions will be organised outside of main forum sessions: all day on 6 June and during the lunch hours *(1300-1400 hrs) on 7-9 June.

Queries

For general queries, please reach out to the Forum Secretariat at unrbhrforum@undp.org.

For queries related to sessions and speakers, please contact Harpreet Kaur, Business and Human Rights Specialist, UNDP (harpreet.kaur@undp.org), and copying Kevin Lehmann, Business and Human Rights Analyst, UNDP (kevin.lehmann@undp.org).