

Towards rights-compatible use of digital technologies in stakeholder engagement

Keeping humans in the loop: Balancing the roles of technology and human involvement in stakeholder engagement

Online Multi-Stakeholder Consultation | 8-9 December 2025 | [Registration Link](#)
Concept Note

Background

Stakeholder engagement plays a central role in whether or not companies meet their **corporate responsibility to respect human rights**. And the quality of that engagement bears directly on human rights outcomes for affected people.

Stakeholder engagement is an indispensable part of **human rights due diligence**. The [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights \(UNGPS\)](#) stress the importance of understanding the concerns of affected stakeholders by consulting them directly and “in a manner that takes into account language and other potential barriers to effective engagement.” Stakeholder engagement is also essential for ensuring that people have **ways of raising grievances with companies that they can readily use and trust**, and that the outcomes of these processes deliver **effective remedies** to individuals and communities whose human rights have not been respected.

Human rights due diligence is about people. It reflects the entitlement of every human being to be treated with dignity. It therefore involves relationships – between an enterprise and those on whom it may have an impact.

OHCHR, [The Corporate Responsibility to Respect: An Interpretative Guide](#), p. 33

For stakeholder engagement to be effective, it must be meaningful. This means that stakeholders are genuinely listened to and understood, and that their concerns are taken properly into account. **Digital products and services** – such as reporting tools, virtual assistant and digital case management systems, and online survey tools – **have the potential to positively enhance the reach, accessibility and effectiveness of stakeholder engagement efforts, but they can themselves pose human rights risks in the way that they are developed, designed and used and negatively impact how meaningful the engagement is.**

To better understand **how digital technologies can best facilitate meaningful stakeholder engagement efforts**, OHCHR is convening a series of online consultations. The learnings from these discussions will be included in a report to be presented to the Human Rights Council at its 62nd session.¹

Timeline of Activities

- **12-13 November 2024:** 1st consultation – *The landscape of digital tools for stakeholder engagement, opportunities, and challenges* ([concept note](#); [summary](#))
- **8-9 December 2025:** 2nd consultation – *Keeping humans in the loop: Balancing the roles of technology and human involvement in stakeholder engagement*
- **Early 2026:** 3rd consultation – topic to be determined following the 2nd consultation
- **April 2026:** Deadline to consolidate research outcomes and draft report
- **June or July 2026:** Presentation of report to the Human Rights Council

¹ This work is being conducted in response to [Human Rights Council Resolution 53/3](#), which requested OHCHR to convene yearly consultations regarding challenges, good practices, and the implementation of the UNGPs, and to submit a report thereon to the council at its 62nd session.

Aims of the consultation

The [first consultation in this series](#) (held in November 2024) explored the existing **landscape** of tools, and the **opportunities, limitations and challenges** they presented as regards facilitating meaningful stakeholder engagement. Over the course of two days, 70 representatives from States, companies (from a range of sectors, including technology, extractive, textile and garment, food, pharmaceutical and investment), unions, civil society organizations, international organizations and academia, shared their experiences and views.

This second consultation will dig deeper into the limitations of technology in this context to better understand **where human involvement in stakeholder engagement activities is necessary or desirable** to ensure that such activities are meaningful and rights compatible. In other words – what can technology do and what must humans do? Where is human judgment most important and why?

Over the course of two days, the following key questions will help guide the discussion:

- What have been the key developments in this field since our November 2024 consultation? How are these new technologies used in stakeholder engagement and what do these tell us about market trends?
- Based on experiences thus far, which stakeholder engagement tasks seem particularly amenable to technological (or largely technological) solutions and why?
- Which stakeholder engagement tasks can (or should) *only* be undertaken by humans and why? Which tasks need significant input or supervision by humans?
- To the extent that technologies make use of blended approaches (e.g., automated processes with human interventions as necessary), what features or processes are needed to ensure that stakeholders are referred to humans at appropriate points in the process?
- What features and processes are needed to ensure that there is appropriate human accountability for the design and implementation of these tools, for the ways in which data is gathered and interpreted, and the decision-making taken as a result?
- What are the key questions that need to be asked by (a) companies and (b) regulators to be able to understand whether the stakeholder engagement facilitated by the use of these tools is in line with the expectations of the UNGPs?

The outcomes of the consultation will help inform future work OHCHR plans to do in this area and will be included in OHCHR's report to the Human Rights Council at its 62nd session.

Dates and times

The consultation will be conducted **online** and will take place on two successive days:

- **Session 1: Monday, 8 December 2025 @ 15-17h30 CET**
- **Session 2: Tuesday, 9 December 2025 @ 10-12h30 CET**

[Registration is required through Indico to obtain connection details](#). We very much hope that participants will be able to attend both sessions.

Format and participation

The format will be an informal, facilitated discussion involving representatives and experts drawn primarily from business, technology developers, civil society, unions, regulators, government, law and academia.