**UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS 2013**

***International Legal Roundtable:***

***Regional Initiatives for Advancing the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights***

**PROPOSAL FOR A SIDE EVENT ORGANIZED BY THE AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION**

**BACKGROUND**

The American Bar Association (ABA) is an independent, voluntary, non-governmental organization of judges and lawyers with nearly 400,000 members worldwide. The ABA has endorsed the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), recognizing the important role of the legal profession in their implementation. Through its Section of International Law and Center for Human Rights, the ABA is actively engaged in a range of relevant initiatives. A high-level ABA delegation participated in the first UN Forum on Business and Human Rights. In the session on access to judicial remedies, the President of the ABA emphasized five themes: reinforcing the remedy pillar of the business and human rights framework; advancing the rule of law; strengthening national legal systems; facilitating legal empowerment, and supporting human rights advocates. The delegation also hosted a dynamic “side event” which brought together bar leaders and legal experts from throughout the world to address the theoretical, practical and ethical challenges of the UNGPs. The ABA is pleased to be returning to the UN Forum on Business and Human Rights this year, and is proposing another law-related side event for the consideration of the Forum organizers.

**PROPOSED SIDE EVENT**

The ABA, though the relationships it maintains with law-related organizations throughout the world, can convene key leaders to engage with the evolving mandate of the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights (UNWG). The various consultations of the UNWG over the past year have brought out the need to focus on regional differences in implementation strategies as well as the availability of practical resources. The ABA proposes a roundtable in which regional bar association representatives will introduce some of the key initiatives their organizations have undertaken in response to the UNGPs. These may include legislative reviews, law reform recommendations, specialized reports, advocacy briefs, training sessions, company toolkits, country and industry risk analysis, and the like. A key theme is legal accountability in the continued advancement of the “Protect, Respect, and Remedy” framework.

The ABA will ask participants to take note of various types of legal professionals – private practice, government service, corporate counsel, NGO advocates, and academics. What specific tasks are they undertaking in the field of business and human rights? This is also a way to highlight stakeholder engagement.

The aim will be for short presentations in a moderated panel, with roundtable interventions from other panelists and ample time for audience questions and reactions. For supporting materials, the ABA will prepare a resource guide with links to the reports and tools cited during the presentation. This will promote information exchange and the sharing of best practices.

**PARTICIPANTS**

Members of the ABA delegation will host the side event, which will be open to all Forum registrants. In addition to those involved in the legal profession, many advocates, policy-makers, diplomats and corporate managers will find the session of value. Roundtable participants will be leaders invited from the following types of organizations:

*International Bar Association (IBA)*

*Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE)*

*Union Internationale des Avocats (UIA)*

*Association des Jeunes Avocats (AIJA)*

*Inter-American Bar Association*

*Inter-Pacific Bar Association*

*LAWAsia*

*Pan-African Lawyers Union (PALU)*

*East African Lawyers Association*

*Commonwealth Lawyers Association*

If the organizers of Forum find it of interest, the ABA could also reach out to certain national bar associations (such as the Swiss Bar, the Law Society of England and Wales, the Federation of French Bar Associations, the Nigerian Bar, the Korean Bar, the Barra Mexicana, the Shanghai Bar, etc.) and to specialist legal organizations (such as the Association of Corporate Counsel, the International Commission of Jurists, the International Criminal Bar Association, the British Institute for International and Comparative Law, Advocates for International Development, etc.)

The ABA looks forward to working with the UNWG and OHCHR staff in crafting an international legal roundtable that enhances and complements the overall agenda for the 2013 Forum. We trust that a focus on the regional and the practical will also help to promote the UN mandate for business and human rights in the years ahead.

**CONTACT DETAILS:**

The co-organizers of the ABA’s involvement in the 2012 Forum are again undertaking this task for the 2013 Forum, in consultation with delegation members:

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