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**Business
AND Human Rights Journal**

2015 United Nations Annual Forum on Business and Human Rights Geneva, 16-18 November 2015

Parallel session

“Putting the UNGPs into Practice: Making Business Sense of Human Rights”

The participants are pleased jointly to coordinate a parallel session at the 2015 Forum on Business and Human Rights. The session will address the complexities of “operationalising” the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, considered from the viewpoints of different stakeholders, from company directors and in-house specialists, to external advisors and other stakeholders.

The session will take the form of a discussion amongst a panel of experts, led by a moderator. The audience will be presented with the key facts of the case study by the moderator at the beginning of the session, and will be encouraged to participate in a question-and-answer session open to everyone present.

The panel members will each represent a different perspective, using their own varied expertise and “real world” experience to bring to life issues presented by the case study. The panel will identify and explore various key challenges, including: engaging corporate boards and articulating a business case for good business practices; embedding respect for human rights within business cultures; effective stakeholder engagement; and meaningful corporate due diligence and reporting on human rights impacts. The session aims to provide guidance on how the various players can best navigate competing and sometimes apparently contradictory priorities to design and implement practical solutions.

1. Organisers

The organisers of this parallel session are:

- ❖ Business and Human Rights Journal;
- ❖ Fair Play Human Rights Consulting;

- ❖ Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP;
- ❖ Omnia Strategy LLP;
- ❖ Sancroft International; and
- ❖ UN Global Compact (Australia).

2. Aims and objectives

(1) Examine current practices of business enterprises and “unpack” what implementation of the Guiding Principles means in practice

This session will:

- Consider ways to “translate” the UNGPs and human rights so they are more readily understandable to business;
- Propose ways to bring home to business leaders the relevance of human rights, the importance of adopting a holistic approach to human rights and the Ruggie Framework, the opportunities for respecting and being seen to respect human rights, and the risks of failing to do so;
- Identify the key drivers (voluntary and mandatory) of the “operationalization” of the UNGPs;
- Advise how businesses should approach and navigate the various different instruments and standards – including the UNGPs, the UN Global Compact, the OECD Guidelines, UN Conventions, and regional/domestic legislation and regulations, which can be daunting to non-specialists;
- Consider corporate practices (and the role of human rights considerations) – including in risk assessment; finance and investor relations; reputation management; communications; employee relations; legal; compliance (including capacity building and training); and government relations – and implications on the bottom line;
- Highlight how the UNGPs present opportunities for businesses as well as developing the legal and regulatory framework in which companies operate; and
- Identify ways in which internal and external stakeholders from various backgrounds can drive corporate engagement on human rights issues and improvements in policy and practice.

(2) Strengthen multi-stakeholder dialogue and engagement

This session will:

- Educate different stakeholders on the positions adopted and pressures experienced by other stakeholders, e.g. educating government/civil society on the position of corporates, and vice versa;
- Articulate the need for a holistic, multi-stakeholder approach to the UNGPs; and
- Identify practical improvements and collaborative approaches to advance the BHR agenda.

3. Format/agenda/speakers

This parallel session will take the form of a **facilitated panel discussion** based upon a **hypothetical case study**. The panellists will identify and discuss key “real world” issues and experiences, using the case study to highlight how various issues, threats and opportunities arise from simple and routine business activities.

The last thirty minutes (approximately) will be reserved for a moderated open-floor discussion, with comments and questions from the audience encouraged.

Potential Panelists

Professor Michael Santoro
Co-editor, Business and Human Rights Journal

Mary Johnson
Founder, Fair Play Human Rights Consulting

Paul Bowden
Partner, Freshfields Bruckaus Deringer LLP

Adam Smith-Anthony
Senior Associate, Omnia Strategy LLP

Lord Deben
Chairman, Sancroft International

TBC
UN Global Compact, Australia

4. Target audience

All BHR stakeholders.

5. Link between focus of session and forum mandate

The forum aims to strengthen multi-stakeholder dialogue and engagement. This session is centred on the sharing of experiences from different approaches, primarily within the context of Pillar 2.

Additionally, the mandate aims to examine current practice of States and business enterprises and “unpack” what implementation of the Guiding Principles means in specific areas. The panel will explore how the successful implementation of the UNGPs will only occur when there are collaborative and solution-oriented approaches.

6. Contact details

The following individuals are the main points of contact for each of the participants in this parallel session:

- Michael A. Santoro (Business and Human Rights Journal): msantoro@business.rutgers.edu; 1-848-445-5756.
- Mary Johnson (Fair Play Human Rights Consulting): mary@consultfairplay.com; +447428348901.
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