



17 November
15:00 – 16:20
Room XXIII (Building E)

See also session on 16 November at 11:40 on “Measuring States’ implementation of the Guiding Principles”

Measuring and tracking businesses’ implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

The session is organized by the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights, jointly with the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, the Danish Institute for Human Rights, the Institute for Human Rights and Business, Measuring Business and Human Rights Project, Shift, University of Denver, and the US Council for International Business

Focus and background of the session

Businesses can have an adverse impact on every human right, in any country in the world. Yet there is no comprehensive data on the nature, scale and extent of that impact, or on the efforts made by States and companies to prevent and remedy business-related harm. Measuring and tracking progress on business and human rights, and getting that fact-based data, is crucial to assessing whether current efforts by all stakeholders to implement the Guiding Principles are effective, and to speed up their implementation.

With this in mind, the Working Group on Business and Human Rights focused its recent report to the General Assembly* on measurement. This report informs the present session.

This session will discuss measuring companies’ implementation of the UN Guiding Principles and their respect of human rights. It will take a critical look at existing measuring, tracking, ranking and reporting initiatives relevant to measuring companies’ respect of human rights, from those initiatives specific to the Guiding Principles to those broader initiatives related to environmental, social and governance (ESG) performance, and sustainability reporting. It will assess the extent to which businesses’ efforts to respect human rights are being measured and where gaps are. The discussion will also focus on measuring availability and access to company-related non-judicial remedies as part and parcel of measuring business respect of human rights.

A complementary session on 16 November focuses on measuring the State’s duty to protect against business-related harm. Reflections from that discussion are expected to feed into this session. Both sessions will discuss the state of play of measurement initiatives, their strengths and weaknesses, and the gaps in data. They will also weave in broader methodological, operational and strategic questions related to measurement, drawing lessons from existing initiatives. The two sessions should be taken together to encourage learning across fields.

Targeted audience

The session is intended for anyone from business, government, international and non-governmental organizations interested in measuring and tracking as an essential tool to manage efforts to implement the Guiding Principles, to secure accountability and help incentivize actors.

Those companies and organizations already involved in measuring initiatives will be able to reflect on what they are doing, and learn from and create synergies with others.

Aims of the session

- Delve into operational, methodological and strategic issues related to measurement of corporate respect of human rights, drawing lessons from existing initiatives
- Promote and discuss good practices on measuring and tracking progress
- Understand obstacles and risks associated with measurement and how to overcome them
- Identify key entry points for increased and more robust measuring on business and human rights

Panel discussion

Moderator: Damiano de Felice, Deputy Director Strategy, Access to Medicine Foundation

Introductory remarks: Margaret Jungk, Chairperson of the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights

Panellists:

- Ariel Meyerstein, Vice President, Labor Affairs, Corporate Responsibility & Corporate Governance, United States Council for International Business
- Margaret Wachenfeld, Director of Research and Legal Affairs, Institute for Human Rights and Business (on behalf of the Corporate Human Rights Benchmark -CHRB)
- Caroline Rees, President, Shift
- Farnam Bidgoli, Manager, Sustainalytics
- Richard Howitt, MEP, Rapporteur on Corporate Social Responsibility
- Bennett Freeman, Former Senior Vice President, Sustainability Research and Policy, Calvert Investments; Steering Committee, CHRB

An open dialogue with the audience, facilitated by the moderator, will follow.

Key discussion questions

- Is measuring helpful in promoting a ‘race to the top’, offering added incentives to improve performance and increase accountability of companies?
- What are the strengths/weaknesses of existing measuring approaches?
- What are key challenges in measuring businesses’ implementation of the Guiding Principles? What are some solutions to these challenges?
- Where are gaps in business-related data and needs for further data?
- What are key entry points for better and more robust measurement of corporate respect of human rights?

****Background reading***

Working Group’s report to the General Assembly on “Measuring the implementation of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights” (A/70/216), and Executive Summary, available at:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Business/Pages/Reports.aspx>