



Leadership, Leverage and the Special Challenges of Big Data

16 November 2016, 15.00-16.20, Room XXIII

Background and objectives:

Big Data will be one of the greatest human rights challenges for societies in the future – across many areas of government and business. Yet public awareness of the way in which information concerning them is collected, held and used is very low and businesses have tended to focus on the many advantages of such data more than the associated responsibilities. Obtaining and deploying large sets of data by businesses present unique challenges for embedding human rights into the internal workings of the corporation, and into the company's role in a supply chain. Leadership in standard setting and the duty to exercise leverage both have special profiles when Big Data is the concern.

This session will draw on the work being carried out by the multi-disciplinary *Human Rights, Big Data and Technology Project* at the University of Essex, Human Rights Centre. This project directly engages the concern to embed human rights into the management of the flow of this type of information by business in several key sectors of the world economy. The session will also make use of the insights and recommendations resulting from the Institute for Human Rights and Business Wilton Park meeting on the issue in June 2016. The report of this meeting engages some of the challenges involved in use of personal and bulk data in the pharmaceutical, automotive and financial sectors.

Focus of discussion:

The discussion will be centred around the following topics:

- Defining 'Big Data' and setting a link with human rights principles via the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.
- What challenges does the use of Big Data pose for identifying good business *leadership* in standard setting and enforcement? Given the vast amount of new knowledge about possible human rights impacts, both positive and negative, that Big Data provides, how should Government and Business collect and use such data responsibly? The questions to be asked of the Panel are here designed to see how one can confidently identify 'best practice' in a

sector. We will aim to see how an enterprise can reach the point of helping to set best practice standards for other firms to follow. We will also ask what use human rights are as benchmarks in this process; and will explore what special issues about *trust* – as a part of leadership - are raised by Big Data.

- What challenges does Big Data pose for identifying necessary *leverage* in a supply chain? Information transferred in a supply chain is different from, while overlapping with, supply of a good or a service. It is a commodity taken over and used by the purchaser, such that fresh human rights abuses can appear via the use of that data all along the supply chain. Questions put to the Panel can aim at seeing what this feature adds to the need to exercise leverage, as understood by the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

Panel composition:

Moderator: John Morrison, Chief Executive, Institute for Human Rights and Business

Panelists:

- Prof. Sheldon Leader, University of Essex, Director, Essex Business and Human Rights Project and member of the Human Rights, Big Data and Technology Project, Essex Centre for Human Rights
- Ms. Alice Priddy, Researcher, Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights
- Ms. Margaret Purdasy, Legal Counsellor, United Kingdom Mission to the United Nations
- Mr. Bernard Shen, Assistant General Counsel, Microsoft

Format:

The side event will be open to participants of the Forum and will be held in English.

The discussion will be led by the moderator who will begin with opening remarks, introducing the issues to be discussed. Two rounds of discussion of 30 minutes each will follow, led by the moderator, allowing each panelist three to five minutes of initial speaking time. The rest of the time will be dedicated to interaction between participants and panelists. Participants are encouraged to intervene in an interactive way, through questions, comments and sharing of experiences, best practices and challenges as well as suggested recommendations on the way forward, with a view to stimulating constructive debate. At the end of the panel discussion, panelists will be given three minutes each to make their concluding remarks.

Organizers:

- University of Essex, Human Rights Centre (Human Rights, Big Data and Technology Project/Essex Business and Human Rights Project)
- Institute for Human Rights and Business
- Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights