



Concept Note

13th United Nations Forum on Business and Human Rights 25 - 27 November 2024

Realizing the “Smart Mix of Measures” to protect human rights in the context of business activities

Overview

Since its first session in 2012, the annual UN Forum on Business and Human Rights has brought together thousands of participants from governments, international organizations, business, civil society, trade unions, communities, lawyers, and academia from around the world (there were 4,000 participants in 2023). Centred on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) – the authoritative global framework for States and businesses in relation to preventing the adverse impacts on human rights arising from business activities – the Forum provides a unique multi-stakeholder platform for discussing key trends and challenges in implementing and advancing the UNGPs.

Established by the UN Human Rights Council, the Forum is guided and chaired by the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights. It is organized by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Focus of the 2024 Forum

The “smart mix of measures” – national, international, voluntary and mandatory – has been central to the realization of the UNGPs over the past decade. Already into the second decade of implementation, this is the moment to reflect on what the “smart mix” means now and into the future, what has worked and not worked, and how should the smart mixes that are emerging in different parts of the world better integrate access to remedy as the third pillar of the UNGPs in view of novel challenges, including those presented by the fragility of global value chains.

Accordingly, this Forum will offer participants a multi-stakeholder platform to explore key trends and prospects at the national, regional, and global levels in relation to the implementation of the UNGPs through a “smart mix”. This may include specific application and implementation of a smart mix of measures in the following proposed, but not exhaustive areas :

- State action;
- Technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI);



- Access to Remedy for all;
- Climate change, environmental challenges, and nature-based solutions;
- Indigenous Peoples rights; and
- Human rights due diligence.

These sessions and others will examine both the challenges and opportunities of the smart mix.

In considering these challenges, the key questions which are likely to be considered at the Forum include:

- What are the drivers for, and obstacles to, a smart mix in any area?
- To what extent is there evidence of smart mixes at the national, regional, and international levels?
- What, if any, are the impacts of smart mixes on the lived experiences of those affected by business activities?
- What good practices of smart mixes can be found in the actions of States, businesses, and other stakeholders?
- What are effective multi-stakeholder approaches for ensuring an effective smart mix of measures?

This Forum provides an opportunity to reflect critically on the changes which have been made by smart mixes since the UNGPs were adopted. Participants will consider whether and to what extent these changes have proved effective, especially for rights-holders, and what still needs to be achieved.

The Forum will also provide an opportunity to address various other issues in focus. These may include “standing items” for the Forum agenda, such as:

- Region focused sessions;
- Sessions led by organisation such as ILO, OECD, and the Business and Human Rights Unit of the OHCHR;
- Indigenous Peoples rights and impacts of business activities; and
- Gender, business and human rights

Discussions may also include emerging or systemic issues that confront the business and human rights agenda.

A tentative Forum programme is expected in July 2024.

The full agenda will be posted on the [Forum web page](#) by the end of September 2024.

[Participating in the Forum](#)



The Working Group makes an open call for session proposals and side events, as part of its inclusive approach for the Forum. However, as renovations to the United Nations buildings in Geneva are ongoing, it is still unclear at this stage as to how many sessions will be possible and whether the format will be in-person only or hybrid.

Proposals for sessions are very welcome. These must include:

- An outline of the proposed topic and its focus and key objectives – limited to 250 words;
- Proposed speakers, with a maximum of 5 speakers plus a moderator
 - Please indicate name, organization, and envisaged contribution
 - Emphasis will be given to identifying skilled moderators/facilitators with expertise in the topics on the Forum agenda
 - Proposed speakers must reflect diversity of gender, region and stakeholder background (e.g, State, business and civil society organisation). The Working Group will not accept proposals with panels that are not well balanced.
- The organisers of the proposal – only one proposal per organization will be considered.
- Joint proposals are accepted but only a maximum of two joint proposals for any one organisation.

Please be aware of the following:

- Given the growth in the number of submissions since 2012 and the limited capacity due to ongoing building renovations, it will not be possible to accommodate all proposals. In some instances, two or more proposals may be merged.
- The Working Group is a co-organiser of all sessions. This means that we may need to recommend speakers to reflect better a diversity of stakeholders. So please do not confirm with any proposed speakers before the agreement by the Working Group of the speaker panel.
- We are not sure yet if there will be space this year for accommodating externally organized “side event” requests. Those wishing to organize “side events” in Geneva before or after the Forum are encouraged to explore options outside of the UN premises and to keep the Forum organizers informed via ohchr-forumbhr@un.org. We kindly ask those organizing side events to refrain from scheduling them at the same time as the forum. Side events that are organized outside of the official hours of the forum can be advertised on the official forum website.
- All proposals must be submitted to the Forum organisers **by 19 April 2024**
- **Form for call for session proposals:** <https://forms.office.com/e/3CfTmqNVAm>
- These proposals will be considered by the Working Group at their meeting in the first week of May 2024. Successful proposals will be informed in June-July 2024.



Information about the agenda, registration process and virtual participation will be posted on the [Forum's dedicated webpage](#) in due course. Stay also posted on updates by following us on X: [@WGBizHRs](#) and LinkedIn: [UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights](#).