

Mandate of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to development

Roundtable on “*business models for inclusive and sustainable development*”

28 November 2023, 9:00am-10:30am
Room XXIII, Palais des Nations, Geneva
(In person event only)

Background

The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and other international standards expect businesses to respect all human rights wherever they operate. Some of these expectations are increasingly solidifying into binding obligations through mandatory human rights laws. Businesses are also expected to contribute to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Despite these normative expectations, the world is seriously offtrack to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. It is also increasingly becoming clear that businesses would need to play a more transformative role to overcome global challenges such as poverty, inequalities, child labour, modern slavery, hunger, affordable housing, biodiversity loss, climate change, conflicts, corporate capture and shrinking civic space.

In his [2023 report](#) to the UN General Assembly, the Special Rapporteur calls for a fundamental shift in how businesses operate in society by reorienting the purpose of business, changing irresponsible business models and going beyond the “do no harm” approach. Only by making these systemic changes, businesses will be able to make a meaningful contribution not only to achieving inclusive and sustainable development but also to building a human rights economy.

Building on this 2023 report and other work done by various scholars and civil society organisations, the Special Rapporteur is starting a new project on “business models for inclusive and sustainable development”. The project will focus on addressing the *root causes* of business-related human rights abuses and structural inequalities or exclusions in society as well as markets. It will examine whether the current business models are fit for the purpose. The project will result in developing practical policy briefs unpacking how transformative business models may look like, highlighting legal and policy changes required, and showcasing good practices. It is envisaged that several thematic drafting groups will be constituted to take the project forward.

Discussion questions

This brainstorming roundtable will focus on questions such as the following:

1. Is a course correction required about the role and purpose of business in society? If so, how should this look like?

2. What changes are needed to the legal architecture concerning corporations such as corporate laws and international investment agreements?
3. How could people have an institutionalised say in corporate decisions making processes?
4. Are certain business models or business practices inherently problematic for being incompatible with the goal of realising all human rights or ignoring planetary boundaries?
5. Are there any good practice examples of business models that place people and the planet central to how business is run?

Registration

Kindly complete the registration form for the roundtable [here](#).

If you need a badge to enter Palais des Nations, please contact Ms Antoanela Pavlova (antoanela.pavlova@un.org).

Contacts

If you have any questions about this project or would like to receive further updates or contribute to developing the policy briefs, please contact Ms Antoanela Pavlova, Human Rights Officer and Ms Namindranasoa NY HAJA supporting the Special Rapporteur mandate at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva (+41 22 917 93 31, antoanela.pavlova@un.org ; namindranasoa.nyhaja@un.org or hrc-sr-development@un.org).