The 2030 Agenda, Human Rights, and Building Back Better:
What to Expect from the World’s Most Influential Companies

A Virtual Parallel Event of the 2020 High-Level Political Forum

9 July 2020: Time: 8:00-9:00am (EST) / 14:00-15:00 CET

As countries and economies move to build back better following the COVID-19 pandemic, this multi-stakeholder and interactive dialogue will explore the role of transparency and accountability from the private sector in achieving the 2030 Agenda and human rights commitments alike. Scheduled as the 2020 High-Level Political Forum in New York and the 44th session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva convene concurrently, this conversation will bring different stakeholders on what is needed to fulfill the Decade of Action and escape traditional silos and divides.

The actions of the business community today will impact the livelihoods and human rights of billions of people globally. UN member states from every region, along with UN Secretary General António Guterres, have cited the importance of private sector action in the effort for societies to build back better and achieve the SDGs. In the report “Shared Responsibility and Global Action” the Secretary General calls for businesses and corporations to “step up to the challenge” in the aftermath of COVID-19. Similarly, the Secretary General’s 2020 “Call to Action on Human Rights” observes, “Collective action is the only answer for the multiple crises that humanity is facing. And it must be truly collective – no longer the domain of States and international organizations alone but of the many civil society and private sector actors who have a role to play in solutions to our shared problems.”

Prior to the pandemic, two intersessional meetings of the UN Human Rights Council referenced the need for robust private sector engagement and alignment on human rights and the 2030 Agenda. The UN Human Rights Council also passed Resolution 43/27 “Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda” by consensus in June 2020. The texts calls for a continuation of UN Human Rights Council efforts on the SDGs-human rights nexus, including through the provision of inputs to the annual HLPF in New York. As the 2020 HLPF will also consider “Building back better after COVID-19: and acting where we will have the greatest impact on the SDGs,” there is heightened urgency for solutions that break bottlenecks and building bridges between Geneva and New York.

Cognizant of these developments, the World Benchmarking Alliance (WBA) launched the “SDG2000,” a groundbreaking list of 2000 companies in more than 70 countries in the global north and south that will have a key influence on the planet’s ability to achieve the 2030 Agenda. All 2000 companies will be assessed on core social topics that are central to protecting human rights and the achievement of the SDGs including gender equality, forced labor, and discrimination. By using this information in benchmarks, WBA aims to accelerate the systemic changes that must take place to create thriving, resilient economies that work for all. Similarly, the Universal Rights Group has produced new research calling on governments to leverage the economic rescue and stimulus packages to build a better, fairer, more just and greener post-crisis world. The April 2020 Financing for Sustainable Development Report from the Interagency Task Force on Financing for Development also similarly affirms, “Policymakers and consumers cannot hold companies accountable without proper information both on social and environmental issues.”
Objectives

— Examine steps that the UN, governments, companies, and civil society can take to strengthen global norms for transparency from and accountability of the private sector on human rights and the SDGs
— Accelerate implementation of UN Human Rights Council Resolution 43/27, including helping inform planned Council intersessions on the 2030 Agenda and human rights
— Identify the most urgent needs and best practices from business community to protect the rights of workers and vulnerable populations in the workplace, marketplace, community, and across their supply chains.

Speakers

— Lene Wendland, Chief of Business and Human Rights Section, UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR)
— Crispin Conroy, Permanent Observer, International Chamber of Commerce to the UN Office in Geneva
— Marc Limon, Executive Director, Universal Rights Group
— Pauliina Murphy, Engagement Director, World Benchmarking Alliance

Logistics

Participants can register here and join the discussion online using #HLPF and #HRC44. This event will be recorded and is considered on-the-record. Please send questions to Ryan Kaminski at r.kaminski@worldbenchmarkingalliance.org.