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NEWS RELEASE

BUSINESS EXPLORES CHALLENGES, SUCCESSES AND SOLUTIONS IN ADVANCING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES AT THE SECOND ANNUAL UN FORUM ON BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN GENEVA



Procter & Gamble's Clifford Henry leading the discussion on the support needed from governments to progress companies' human rights responsibilities at the Business Stakeholder Meeting during the UN Forum on Business and Human Rights, Geneva 2 – 4 December 2013 © IOE

The IOE has participated this week in the second annual UN Forum on Business and Human Rights which has attracted some 2,000 representatives from all relevant stakeholder groups, sectors and disciplines to Geneva to consider various aspects of the [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#) which were endorsed by the Human Rights Council in 2011.

The wide range of training and discussion topics covered in the full [programme](#) included, among others, the implications of the Principles for multinational enterprises, as well as their implementation from regional and national perspectives, and across different economic sectors, such as the financial, extractive, agribusiness and recruitment industries.

IOE Secretary-General Brent Wilton spoke in the plenary panel on ***Overcoming barriers to effective judicial remedies***, arguing that access to judicial remedy needed to be ensured at the local level, where any eventual adverse impact occurs: “Extraterritorial jurisdiction is no alternative to an effective judicial system at national level, since the aim must be to ensure access to remedy for any adverse impacts caused by the operations of *all* companies, both local and multinational, and to improve law enforcement in general – not only regarding human rights, but also commercial law and property rights.”

IOE also joined forces with ICC, Global Compact, GBI and BSR to organise a pre-meeting on 2 December which provided more than 150 business participants with a platform for the exchange of experiences. Dan Bross of Microsoft introduced the challenges being faced by companies, such as communicating externally and internally on human rights issues; Vale's Liesel Filgueiras looked at how companies are engaging with civil society to implement the Principles, and Procter & Gamble's Clifford Henry considered the expectations of companies with regard to the help offered by host and home governments to progress companies' human rights responsibilities. Mr Henry also invited the business group to think about how governments might enable more companies to advance the corporate responsibility to respect.

The pre-meeting re-affirmed the strong support of the global business community for the Guiding Principles, showcasing that companies are very active in implementing the Principles, although the activities are often not publicly visible to the outside world because they relate to internal company measures. Business also called on governments to better implement their duty to protect human rights, in order to create the environment necessary for companies to discharge their responsibility to respect such rights.

Informed by the preceding three days' discussions, the Chair of the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights, Alexandra Guáqueta, concluded with a strong call to governments for action plans to implement the Guiding Principles, and to include them in the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Dr Guáqueta went on to urge their use by international institutions such as the World Bank.

In terms of the focus of the Working Group for the near future, she highlighted the needs of indigenous people and access to remedy, sectoral implementation of the Principles, and cooperation with regional institutions.

For further information on the IOE's participation in the Forum, or on its work in the area of business and human rights, please contact IOE Senior Adviser, [Matthias Thorns](#), and/or consult the [Business and Human Rights section](#) of the IOE website for fact sheets, guidance and position papers.