Global Agenda Council on Human Rights 2012-2014

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

COMMITTED TO IMPROVING THE STATE OF THE WORLD

Understanding/Context

At a time when business success means managing complex global challenges, human rights issues are part of the landscape for many corporate leaders. Human rights challenges confront businesses in all sectors, including factory safety in the garment and retail sectors; privacy and free expression in the information and communication technology field; preventing child and forced labour on farms supplying food and beverage companies; and stemming the flow of conflict minerals in the electronics industry. In 2011, the United Nations Human Rights Council unanimously endorsed a set of "Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights". The principles recognize that while the primary duty to protect rights rests with governments, global companies have a corresponding responsibility to respect human rights. Businesses in many different industries are now working together, along with other stakeholders, to develop concrete standards, benchmarks and implementation plans to operationalize these broad principles, and to provide effective remedies when these standards are not met.

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Shaping the Agenda

Consistent with this framework, the Global Agenda Council on Human Rights is developing work streams in several sectors to encourage industry-wide approaches to human rights challenges.

Working conditions in the manufacturing sector
The Council is contributing a chapter to a volume produced by the Global Agenda Council on the Rule of Law, focused on new governance models. The chapter will examine factory safety issues in the garment industry in Bangladesh and various efforts by global brands and other international actors to address the problems.

Internet freedom and privacy in the IT sector
The Council is consulting with IT companies to explore how they can best address the challenges they face when governments are placing greater demands on them to provide large amounts of user data in connection with national security and law enforcement demands.

Security in the extractives sector
The Council is focusing on World Economic Forum regional meetings to explore issues for oil and mining companies in places like Nigeria and Myanmar, looking especially at new reporting requirements for companies and how they can be satisfied in ways that are both efficient and effective.

Forum statement on sustainability
The Council is leading an effort among several Global Agenda Councils to develop a comprehensive Forum statement on sustainability. It will encompass a range of environmental, development, human rights, rule of law and other elements that businesses must consider as they adopt and implement sustainable business practices.

Contact Information

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