



## INVITATION to Side Event

# Corporate Influence and Accountability in the UN

## Current Trends in the Governance of Business & Human Rights, Global Health, Agriculture, Food and Nutrition

25 October 2016, 18.30-20.30

The Graduate Institute, Maison de la Paix, Chemin Eugène-Rigot 2, Geneva (Auditorium A2)

The international debate surrounding the environmental, social and human rights responsibilities of corporations has been gaining momentum. Growing public criticism of transnational corporations and banks has contributed to this debate. The list of criticisms is long: pollution scandals, disregard for basic labour and human rights standards, massive bribery allegations, on top of widespread corporate tax avoidance. At the same time, corporations and their interest groups have become powerful actors in international policy debates on poverty eradication, development, the environment and human rights. They are themselves positioning as more flexible, efficient and un-bureaucratic than states and are promoting “multi-stakeholder initiatives” and “public-private partnerships” as innovative models to tackle global issues. Corporate actors often use a double strategy to achieve their goals. On the one hand they demonstrate their willingness to cooperate by participating in these kinds of non-binding dialogues and multi-stakeholder initiatives. On the other hand they use massive legal and political pressures against governments to avoid compulsory regulation. Corporations and their interest groups use various methods to influence discourses and political decision-making processes – including the discussions about food and nutrition at the Committee of World Food Security (CFS), the discussions on global health at the World Health Organization (WHO) and the business and human rights agenda of the UN.

On the other hand, there are emerging initiatives of civil society and some governments to counteract corporate power and to establish binding rules for transnational corporations. With the Working Group “to elaborate an international legally binding instrument to regulate, in international human rights law, the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises”, for the first time since decades, an intergovernmental body of the UN has been established to address the international regulation of corporations.

The panel will assess the state of corporate influence in the business and human rights debates, in global health, the agriculture, food and nutrition policy domains. It will discuss possible policies and safeguards such as WHO’s Framework of Engagement with non-State Actors (FENSA) and the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control that have been put in place to protect against conflicts of interest in these respective domains. It will also inform about further debates to regulate the UN’s engagement with private actors such as the discussions in the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR).

### Speakers:

- *Flavio Valente (FIAN International)*
- *Barbara Adams (Global Policy Forum)*
- *Roberto Bissio (Social Watch)*
- *Mirza Alas (Third World Network)*
- *Nathalie Rengifo (Corporate Accountability International)*
- *Stefano Prato (Society for International Development)*

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