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## **Business & human rights: Guiding Principles for a socially sustainable globalization**

GENEVA – A long anticipated set of guidelines on business and human rights has been presented by the United Nations Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Business and Human Rights, John Ruggie, during the current session of the Human Rights Council.

“The Principles seek to provide for the first time a global standard for preventing and addressing the risk of adverse human rights impacts linked to business activity, by outlining what States and business enterprises should do in practice,” said Mr. Ruggie, who is a Professor on Human Rights and International Affairs at Harvard University.

The document is the product of a 6-year long and inclusive process that, according to the Special Representative, “will help ensuring a socially sustainable globalization, which will have impact far beyond the UN system, shaping the practices of governments, companies, civil society groups, and investors around the world.”

The Guiding Principles are based on 47 consultations and site visits in more than 20 countries; an online consultation that attracted thousands of visitors from 120 countries; and thousands of pages of research and submissions from experts around the world.

“The Principles will enable the global community to move beyond the confusion and polarization of the past by establishing an authoritative point of reference that recognizes the central role that States need to play,” said Mr. Ruggie. “They also give businesses predictability in what is expected of them, and provide other stakeholders, including civil society and investors, the tools to measure progress where it matters most – in the daily lives of people.”

The Guiding Principles outline how States and businesses should implement the UN “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework in order to better manage business and human rights challenges. That Framework, which the Special Representative proposed in 2008, was unanimously welcomed by the Human Rights Council at the time, and has since enjoyed extensive uptake by international and national governmental organizations, businesses, NGOs and other parties.

Under the ‘State Duty to Protect,’ governments get guidance on how to take more proactive ownership of their human rights responsibilities and provide stability, clarity, and consistency to citizens and businesses. The ‘Corporate Responsibility to Respect’ principles provide a blueprint for companies on how to know and show that they are respecting human rights. And the ‘Access to Remedy’ principles are about assurance, making sure that States and companies are held accountable.

“To be sure, Human Rights Council endorsement of the Guiding Principles will not solve all of the world’s problems. But it will put an authoritative stamp on what has already become a global normative standard,” underscored UN Special Representative Ruggie.

(\*) Check the new Guiding Principles: <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G11/121/90/PDF/G1112190.pdf?OpenElement>

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*The Special Representative’s mandate was created in 2005 by the then UN Commission on Human Rights (now Human Rights Council) in order to move beyond what had been a long-standing and deeply divisive debate over the human rights responsibilities of companies. Professor Ruggie, of Harvard University, was appointed to the position by Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General at the time, and was extended in his role by current Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. His aim was to build meaningful consensus among all stakeholders about the roles and responsibilities of both States and companies with regard to business’s impacts on human rights. To achieve that consensus, he conducted extensive research and convened consultations around the world.*

*Learn more about the mandate and work of the Special Representative, visit: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/TransnationalCorporations/Pages/Reports.aspx> and <http://www.business-humanrights.org/SpecialRepPortal/Home>*

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