UN Virtual Forum on Responsible Business and Human Rights

Coordinator: UNEP

Co-organisers: OECD

Title of the session	Building Back Better: Responsible Business Conduct, Human Rights and the Environment
Date and Time	12 June 13:00 – 14:30 (Bangkok time) TBC
Background to the discussion (1 paragraph)	The discussion will cover 4 key themes: 1. Setting the Scene – International instruments, global guidance and trends on the nexus between Responsible Business Conduct (RBC), human rights and the environment 2. The importance of understanding and addressing environmental and human rights supply chain vulnerabilities and building resilience in the immediate and post COVID-19 recovery 3. Examples of good business practice in the face of environmental challenges: a. Plastic pollution: This example will highlight opportunities to engage informal waste workers in inclusive plastic recovery and recycling solutions. Many cities in the region rely heavily on informal waste management, yet the contributions of the urban poor and their exposure to pollution are largely unacknowledged. Representatives of the informal economy, waste recycling industry and/or packaging producers will share good practices of participatory supply chain management that help to future-proof informal livelihoods and tackle plastic pollution. Speakers may include a representative of Coca-Cola, whose PETCO producer responsibility model works with producers, recyclers and the informal sector to recover plastic resources in the absence of functioning formal waste management systems. This discussion will shed light on environmental rights of disadvantaged groups impacted by plastic pollution and discuss the possible effects of COVID-19 on plastic waste e.g. from take-away containers, pressures on informal workers during lockdown, and longer-term recovery measures.

	b. Climate change: This example will highlight how renewable energy can be used by business as a tool for the economic empowerment of women and simultaneously demonstrate a human rights-based approach while also addressing climate vulnerabilities. Discussion also to include how adopting a human rights based approach in the just transition to renewable energy business not only supports building climate resilience but can also lead to expansion for businesses into new markets that are otherwise under served. 4. Discussion of how business can be supported in better understanding, identifying and addressing the linkages between human rights and environment-related risks, adverse impacts and capacity to contribute positively to global environmental challenges
Short description of what the session is about (1 paragraph)	This session explores business policies, tools and practices that capture and address both environment and human rights impacts, risks and positive contributions to people and the planet. Drawing on international instruments including the OECD Guidelines for MNEs[1] and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, panellists will discuss the role of business in driving practical action to address global environmental challenges as well as the interlinkages with human rights. Particular attention will be paid to the environment and human rights nexus in terms of immediate and longer-term recovery measures in the face of the COVID 19 crisis. The event will provide global context around global instruments governing Responsible Business Conduct, trends, and practical examples of business practices in the face of environmental challenges such as pollution, climate change. While the session will raise awareness of links between business responsibilities and the intersection with human rights and the environment, it will focus on the sharing of ideas and good practices that are practical and solution-oriented.

[1] The OECD Guidelines for MNEs (OECD Guidelines) are the most comprehensive government-backed instrument on RBC, representing international consensus on all areas of business responsibility in addressing adverse impacts on people and the planet. The Guidelines cover all areas of business responsibility and including a dedicated chapter on the Environment (chapter VI), in addition to a chapter on Human Rights (Chapter IV), amongst others. Importantly, a number of the expectations within the OECD Guidelines, including and extending beyond the Environment Chapter, relate to business responsibilities with respect environmental matters as well as human rights.

Session objectives	The session will highlight:
	• The international expectations regarding the responsibilities of business in addressing human rights and environment-related risks and adverse impacts throughout their operations and supply chains
	• Existing practical tools for business on identifying and addressing environmental rights matters
	• Why having regard to the human rights and environment nexus by business is important for people and the planet – with particular focus on global environmental challenges
	• What support is needed to build understanding and implementation of environmental rights protections by business
Key discussion questions	1. Framework:
	• Why is it important for human rights and environmental risks, adverse impacts or positive contributions of business activity be considered hand in hand?
	• How is this relevant to business responses to COVID 19 and future crisis - building resilience and addressing supply chain vulnerabilities?
	2. Business practices:
	• How are human rights and environmental issues being addressed collectively as part of business risk management/supply chain due diligence?
	• What lessons can be learned from human rights responsible business conduct practices – including supply chain due diligence- when addressing environment related challenges and vice versa? What are some of the synergies between the two areas of risks and risk management processes for business?
	• What are some examples of how human rights and environmental matters have been considered or addressed as interconnected areas of risk by business? How have stakeholders responded or held businesses to account?
	3. Support:
	• What kinds of practical resources /tools might be most useful for business to enable respect and championing of environmental rights across business activity – including supply chain risk management? I.e. Would sector or issue specific resources be useful for business in understanding and addressing environmental rights issues at a practical level?
	• How does existing international guidance on supply chain due diligence support business in addressing environmental rights issues, i.e. the OECD

	Due Diligence Guidance on Responsible Business Conduct? How can the environmental aspects of existing human rights protections be further embedded into existing human rights due diligence guidance tools?
Speakers and moderators	Speaker details will be confirmed: 1. Natalie Harms, UNEP, COBSEA Secretariat – Moderator (confirmed) 2. Surya Deva, UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights (confirmed) 3. Stephanie Venuti, OECD (confirmed) 4. Sara Seck, Dalhousie University (confirmed) 5. Large business representative (plastics) 6. Informal sector representative (plastics) 7. Local business representative (climate change) 8. Investor (climate change) **[Intervenors (tbc)]** - OHCHR - Thailand Business Council for Sustainable Development (TBCSD)
Format of the session	Panel discussion format, starting with opening by moderator and then audience engagement through crowdsourcing responses to some core thematic issues through mentimeter. Audience engagement will be followed by interventions from panellists responding to the responses received and a series of agreed questions. 1) Moderators introduction 2) Audience questions posed - mentimeter 3) Q&A to the panelists 4) Moderated audience Q&A + interactive discussion