

3rd UN Regional Forum on Business and Human Rights in Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Responsible Business in Times of Crisis

10-11 November 2022 | Istanbul & Online



NEXT DECADE | 10+



About the event

In 2011, the UN Human Rights Council unanimously endorsed the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), which have strengthened its position as the authoritative global framework on business and human rights (BHR) and provide a fundamental basis for governments and businesses to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, implementation of the UNGPs in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ECIS) region remains uneven. The numerous crises in the region further complicate the effective implementation of the Guidelines. The current situation imposes additional responsibilities on both authorities and companies to comply with internationally recognized human rights standards and corresponding constitutional guarantees in times of conflict. The UNDP scoping study on the state of implementation of the UNGPs on business and human rights in Europe and Central Asia, which will be presented during the event, addresses some of these challenges and seeks to identify current trends and key developments in the region. One of the main issues in this context is the responsibility of companies to conduct heightened human rights due diligence (hHRDD) in times of crisis.

The 3rd UN Regional Forum on Business and Human Rights in Eastern Europe and Central Asia will take place on 10-11 November 2022 in Istanbul (in a hybrid format). The event is organized by UNDP, the UN Working Group on BHR and other partners. This is the annual UN meeting which follows the [1st and 2nd Regional Forums on Business and Human Rights](#) held in 2020 and 2021 and seeks to serve as the ECIS BHR regional platform that allows exchanges among the ECIS countries about their experiences and challenges in advancing the business and human rights agenda. The platform gathers representatives of national governments, multilaterals, civil society, NHRIs, trade unions, academia, and businesses (of all kinds, state-owned enterprises, extractive industry companies, transnational supply chains and SMEs).

The 3rd UN Regional Forum will discuss the key challenges to the implementation of the UNGPs in the region, with a focus on the obstacles arising from the crises. These will include the development of laws and policies, the introduction and implementation of Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD) by businesses, and the role of the State as an economic actor in crisis decision-making. In addition, it will address key regional trends, challenges and opportunities for the business and human rights agenda in the ECIS region, with particular attention to the implications brought by conflicts and other crises, including the war in Ukraine on the political, economic, and human rights situation in the region; upcoming EU's directive on HRDD, human rights protection in extractive industries, the role of trade unions, persistent discrimination and inequalities in business practices, and shrinking civic space for human rights defenders. The event will also explore views on the development of a regional roadmap for scaling up implementation of the UNGPs over the next decade.

Forum format: The Forum will be held in a hybrid format, with up to 50 persons participating in person and the remainder online on Day 1, 10 November 2022, between 07:00-15:30 Central European Time (CET)/09:00-17:30 Istanbul time (TRT). On Day 2, 11 November 2022, there will be an internal session for UN agencies on strategizing their work on business and human rights in the region (hybrid format) between 07:00-10:00 Central European Time (CET)/09:00-13:00 Istanbul time (TRT). The Forum will be hosted by UNDP and the UNWG in the offices of the UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub. The virtual Forum will enable a mix between traditional panel discussions and more interactive sessions to allow the broader participation of all relevant stakeholders from the ECIS region and beyond.

Draft Agenda

3RD UN FORUM ON BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

"RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS IN TIMES OF CRISIS"

10-11 NOVEMBER 2022 / HYBRID (IN ISTANBUL AND ONLINE)

DAY 1

Thursday, 10 November 2022/Istanbul Time (TRT)

9:00 – 09:35 Registration and introduction of the Forum platform

09:35 – 10:20 *High-Level Opening Plenary*

Objective: The opening plenary will set out the key global and regional business and human rights trends to be discussed in the 3rd UN Forum on Business and Human Rights for Eastern Europe and Central Asia. It will set out the challenges amidst the crises besetting the region, while presenting the key challenges to be tackled in the region in the short and medium term. The session will feature a panel discussion that will frame the business and human rights work in the region in the context of key developments such as the wave of mandatory human rights due diligence legislation and policies in jurisdictions including the EU, Japan and beyond, the ongoing conflicts in the region, environmental degradation, concomitant citizens' movements, and others.

10:20-10:35 Break

10:35– 11:35 *Session I – Business and Human Rights in Eastern Europe and Central Asia: the state of play*

Objective: To frame the discussion on the state of play to business and human rights in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, this session will feature the launch of the ***UNDP Scoping Study findings on the Implementation of UNGPs in Eastern Europe and Central Asia***. The Scoping Study, conducted in 2021 and finalized in 2022 by a team of leading BHR academics and researchers in the region, sets out the key trends in, and challenges to, the BHR agenda in the region. It will be followed by a discussion on key regional challenges, the multitude of crises present in the region and the opportunities presented for accelerating the business and human rights agenda.

11:35 – 11:50 Break

11:50 – 13:00 *Session II - Mandatory human rights due diligence developments in the EU and beyond: The implications for Eastern Europe and Central Asia*

Objective: In its Roadmap for the Next Decade of Business and Human Rights, issued in November 2021, the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights urged countries to “seize the wave” of mandatory human rights due diligence, which has principally been generated by EU member states,

such as Netherlands, Norway, Germany and France. Following their adoption of mandatory human rights due diligence laws, the EU itself issued its draft Mandatory and Environmental Human Rights Due Diligence Directive in February 2022. In addition, the Government of Japan recently issued its own draft guidelines on the subject, demonstrating that companies in Eastern Europe and Central Asia wanting to do business in, or with, major markets will increasingly have to introduce human rights due diligence in their operations. This session will explore the principal implications of this trend for governments, businesses, workers and other stakeholders in the region.

13:00 – 14:00 Lunch

14:00 – 15:00 *Session III – Heightened human rights due diligence (hHRDD): unpacking the responsibilities of businesses in conflict-affected contexts*

Objective: Eastern Europe and Central Asia are home to a number of ongoing and protracted conflicts. Businesses and states have heightened responsibilities in conflict-affected contexts; chief among these is the responsibility of businesses to carry out heightened human rights due diligence (hHRDD). In June 2022, the UNWG and UNDP issued a Guide on hHRDD; this session will unpack what this responsibility entails – and what it will require from businesses, states, the UN and other stakeholders.

15:00-15:45 *Session IV –The responsibilities of states and businesses in alleviating the consequences of crises in Eastern Europe and Central Asia*

Objective: Eastern Europe and Central Asia have been beset by myriad crises, including the Covid-19 pandemic, the climate crisis, and ongoing armed conflicts. This session will highlight the consequences of these crises, including widespread joblessness, increasing levels of poverty, outflows of refugees and migrants, and so on. It will further examine the responsibilities of states and businesses in this regard under the framework of the UNGPs, and consider what steps should be taken by these and other actors to alleviate these consequences.

15:55 – 16:05 Break

16:05-17:00 *Session V – The path to a regional Roadmap in Eastern Europe and Central Asia*

Objective: Following the launch of the UNGPs 10+ Roadmap of the Next Decade on Business and Human Rights in November 2021, the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights is aiming to develop regional roadmaps. As part of this process, this session will be used to consider stakeholder perspectives on the path forward on the implementation of the UNGPs in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

17:00 - 17:30 *Closure of the Forum*

DAY 2

Friday, 11 November 2022/Istanbul Time (TRT)

09:00 - 13:00 *Session VII – Internal session for UN agencies on the business and human rights*

Objective: This session will provide an opportunity for UN agencies active on business and human rights, including UNDP and OHCHR, to strategize on possible joint programming, build their capacities on chosen topics, such as human rights due diligence, and to engage in peer-learning.