

## HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL - 50th SESSION

### Interactive dialogue with the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises

22 June 2022

In her opening remarks, **Ms. Elżbieta Karska, Chair of the Working Group**, noted the WG's thematic report focuses on the Coronavirus disease pandemic. It outlines ways in which various actors addressed the pandemic, and the business-related human rights abuses that accompanied it. The report further highlighted that many businesses profited from government relief programs that introduced layoffs, cut staff hours and salaries, prioritized pay-outs and cash dividends, and lobbied governments to deregulate environmental, tax and social protections. The report also raises concerns related to corporate human rights abuses in specific sectors. On the other hand, the report shows some positive business initiatives to mitigate negative impacts on the rights of workers and communities across supply chains during the pandemic.

Regarding the WG's **country visit to Italy** it welcomed initiatives by the Government to strengthen legal, policy and institutional frameworks to promote responsible business conduct and to address some of the abuses suffered by workers, particularly migrant workers in the agricultural, garment and fashion and logistics sectors. The report explains how the current regime of regularization exposes migrant workers to the risks of an exploitative cycle. The WG further welcomed the efforts by the Government to find a balanced approach towards industrial-economic development priorities and protection of human rights and the environment. It expressed that challenges remain in ensuring the meaningful participation of affected communities in environmental issues and in decisions regarding a transition to a green economy.

Regarding the addendum reports, Ms Karska presented four: ***“Implementing the Third Pillar: Lessons from Transitional Justice”*** through which the WG provides recommendations on the implementation of Pillar III of the UNGPs in post conflict and transitional justice scenarios; The ***“UNGP 10+ A Roadmap for the Next Decade of Business and Human Rights: Raising the Ambition – Increasing the Pace”***, which was launched at the annual Forum on Business and Human Rights in November 2021; ***“Building a regional roadmap for the next decade of business and human rights in Latin America and the Caribbean”*** which was held virtually between 4-6 October 2021; and finally, ***“The next decade of business and human rights: increasing the pace and scale of action to implement the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights”*** which reflected on the progress achieved by the UNGPs in the last 10 years and on what needs to happen in the next decade of business and human rights.

#### Interactive dialogue

The majority of countries agreed that the pandemic has greatly affected workers lower down the supply chain, particularly women, migrant workers and those employed in the informal economy. They expressed their support on enforcing labour and employment laws and regulations as well as ensuring protection against human rights harm by businesses. They condemned attacks against human rights defenders and trade unionists. Countries must safeguard the right to freedom of expression, association and collective bargaining. **Ecuador** stressed that as chair of the WG it is committed to elaborating an international legally binding instrument on business and human rights. **Libya** expressed its support for initiatives to facilitate intellectual property rules that protect the technology behind

(COVID-19) vaccines and treatments, highlighting that inequality in access to vaccines and treatments will exacerbate the injustices. **Venezuela** urged to put an end to the illegal UCMs that continue to damage the economy of the affected countries as they promote important violations of human rights by companies, by restricting financial services, sales of medical equipment, and even access to vaccines and treatments. **Russia Federation** mentioned that the report uses vague language that creates the ground for the politicization of transitional justice mechanisms and, as a result, the possibility of their use to interfere in the internal affairs of states. **Egypt** stressed the importance of civil society participation in efforts related to addressing crises and health emergencies. **China** expressed that enterprises must not dismiss workers in the context of the pandemic and that businesses in the **U.S.** have discriminated against minorities by conducting massive layoffs. **Ukraine** commended businesses that have seized operations in Russia and condemned those enterprises that continue to pay taxes to Russia and therefore finance the war against Ukraine. It urged businesses to break ties with Putin's government.

**Most NGOs** supported the adoption of an international legally binding instrument. Condemned the assassination of environmental defenders, mostly in conflicts involving mining and particularly targeting Indigenous peoples and other front-line environmental defenders. An NGO called upon the **Colombian transitional justice system**, which does not have direct power to investigate, prosecute and punish violations of businesses in the context of the Peace Agreement. Another NGO denounced the murders of environment and Indigenous community leaders in **Brazil**. Finally, another NGO further called upon the mandate to investigate the arms industry and its influence on State institutions in its upcoming guidance note on corporate capture, as well as in its work on corruption.

Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive Dialogue (33 country delegations):

*Finland (on behalf of the Nordic Baltic Countries), European Union, Côte d'Ivoire (on behalf of the Group of African States), Switzerland, France, Japan, Ecuador, Spain, Libya, Mauritius, Luxembourg, Germany, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Namibia, Cameroon, Belgium, Russian Federation, Malaysia, Egypt, China, India, Armenia, South Africa, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Ireland, Azerbaijan, United States, Indonesia, Mexico, Malawi, Ukraine, Cuba, Cambodia.*

NHRIs and NGOs that took the floor (14):

*UNDP - United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund, Conectas Direitos Humanos, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Conselho Indegenista Missionario (CIMI), Centre Europe - Tiers Monde, Centro de Apoio Aos Direitos Humanos "Valdicio Barbosa dos Santos", FIAN International e.V., Sikh Human Rights Group, Colombian Commission of Jurists, Peace Brigades International, Associazione Comunita Papa Giovanni XXIII, Center for Global Nonkilling, China Society for Human Rights Studies (CSHRS).*

To watch full meeting refer to [UN Web TV](#)