

UN experts report: Business 'dragging its feet' on human rights worldwide

Too many businesses are putting profit above human rights and “ignoring” their obligations, while governments fail to “regulate and lead by example”, according to a United Nations human rights report, published on Tuesday.

In the report drawn up by a group of UN rights experts, companies are being urged to comply with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights , which provides a framework for how States and investors, should address shortcomings in board rooms and business practice at all levels.

Ensuring that human rights are respected across their own activities and value chains, is the most significant contribution most companies can make towards sustainable development—*Chair of Working Group on Business and Human Rights*

The Chair of the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights, Dante Pesce, said that that “human rights due-diligence” was fundamentally “about preventing negative impacts on people.” He explained that identifying and being transparent about risks, was the first step toward prevention of abuses.

“Ensuring that human rights are respected across their own activities and value chains, is the most significant contribution most companies can make towards sustainable development,” he added.

More investors are beginning to take note of human rights risks and pressuring companies to step up their efforts to prevent abuses, according to the report, but further progress needs to be made.

With a few companies leading the way, most are still either unaware of their duty to human rights standards, or unwilling to implement due diligence, said the experts. Greater government action is also required.

“In spite of an overall picture of slow progress, the good news is that human rights due-diligence can be done,” Mr. Pesce said, pressing that businesses can no longer blame a lack of knowledge for inaction.

“Evidence is clearly suggesting that doing the right thing is also the smart thing to do,” he added.

Congolese expelled from Angola returning to 'desperate situation': UN refugee agency

Congolese nationals forced back across the border to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), after being expelled from neighbouring Angola, "are returning to a desperate situation," a UN Refugee Agency ([UNHCR](#)) spokesperson said on Tuesday.

Speaking at a media briefing in Geneva, the spokesperson said that the agency is concerned by a "fast-developing humanitarian situation in the Kasai region" of the DRC, where the situation is already fragile: around 200,000 people have arrived over the last two weeks.

The mass population movement follows the Angolan Government's decision to expel Congolese migrants, many of whom were working in the informal mining sector in the northeast of the country.

The deadline for expulsion expired Monday and, within some areas of Angola, there have been reports of violent clashes between migrants and law enforcement agents. Thousands have been arriving at the border, where complaints have included sexual violence and harassment, bodily frisking and theft of belongings – at the hands of security forces on both sides of the border.

The prospects for the returnees are bleak: they have limited means to travel to their home regions, in an area hit by recent conflict and destruction, and where ethnic tensions are still high.

The UNHCR spokesperson reported over-crowding in the town of Kamako in Kasai Province, on the Angola border, with people staying overnight outdoors, in host families, church compounds, and on the streets.

The spokesperson pointed out that mass expulsions are contrary to country obligations under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and that the Agency is asking Angola and DRC to work together to ensure a safe and orderly population movement, and to respect the human rights of those affected.

UN migration agency: young Rohingya

girls, largest group of trafficking victims in camps

More than a year into the [crisis](#) in Cox's Bazar, the number of Rohingya refugees has reached nearly one million, with young girls in Bangladesh refugee camps sold into forced labour accounting for the largest group of trafficking victims, reported the UN Migration Agency ([IOM](#)) on Tuesday.

The agency says that families desperate to earn money are frequently sending their daughters to work in dangerous environments.

"There is a very limited number of jobs in the camp and for women there is almost nothing. That's why I went outside of the camp," one Rohingya woman working gruelling hours for little pay in the fish-processing industry told IOM.

IOM reports that women and girls lured into forced-labour, account for two-thirds of those receiving the agency's support in Cox's Bazar; another 10 percent were victims of sexual exploitation. Men and boys are not exempt, accounting for about a third of refugees forced into labour.

"We are struggling to meet our everyday needs and there is no scope to get any job inside the camp," said one Rohingya father, who was physically abused and unpaid for his work. "So, we agreed to go outside of the camp to work."

Despite the often false promises of work and a better life, some victims are unaware of the risks, or so desperate to escape the situation, that no measure is too drastic.

IOM's head of protection services in Cox's Bazar, Dina Parmer, explained that sometimes, "sacrificing one family member for the sake of the rest of the family" is the rationale.

IOM counter-trafficking and protection staff have helped nearly 100 people who have escaped trafficking situations and returned to Cox's Bazar since the crisis began in August, 2017, leading to an exodus of more than 700,000 refugees across the border into Bangladesh, escaping human rights abuses.

The agency has provided physical and mental health assistance, legal counselling, shelters and emergency cash assistance to support survivors, but due to the nature of human trafficking, many victims are reluctant to come forward and are unaccounted for.

According to Ms. Parmer, the Rohingya refugee community is extremely vulnerable to human trafficking due to their brutal life experiences, and lack of education wrought by long-term discrimination back home in Myanmar, where they have been an oppressed minority for decades.

IOM and NGO partners are developing creative ways to communicate the dangers

of trafficking in the camps, including comic illustrations, street drama and music illustrating real-life stories to spread the message.

[Top UN rights official urges transparent probe into Khashoggi disappearance](#)

The top United Nations human rights official has [called](#) on Saudi Arabia and Turkey to “reveal everything they know” about the disappearance of Jamal Khashoggi.

The Saudi journalist and critic of the Kingdom has not been seen since he visited his country’s consulate in Istanbul on the afternoon of 2 October, Michelle Bachelet said in a statement.

Speaking to journalists in Geneva amid news reports that details of Mr. Khashoggi’s death may surface soon, indicating that it was an accident, UN human rights office ([OHCHR](#)) spokesperson, Rupert Colville, noted the High Commissioner’s belief that “two weeks is a very long time for the probable scene of a crime not to be subject to a forensic investigation”.

He noted that “in view of the seriousness of the situation”, the High Commissioner had also called for diplomatic immunity to be “waived immediately” to allow for a “prompt, thorough, effective, impartial and transparent” investigation.

Anyone responsible should be held accountable, and that means anyone – *Rupert Colville, OHCHR*

Protection from national jurisdictions is bestowed on consular premises and officials by treaties such as the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, Mr. Colville explained, before noting that Ms. Bachelet had welcomed the agreement between Saudi Arabia and Turkey allowing investigators to enter Saudi buildings in Istanbul.

But potentially serious crimes had been committed, he insisted, and the perpetrators should be held accountable.

“The one thing we really know as a solid fact is that Mr. Khashoggi went into the consulate and he..was never seen coming out again,” Mr. Colville said, adding that it seemed “very probable” that some crime had been committed.

“Enforced disappearance or murder, if that has occurred, extra-judicial

killing, either way, those are very serious crimes,” he added. “We all need to know what it was, how it happened and who was responsible and where the evidence leads”.

Responding to a question about whether there was a chance that the probe into Mr. Khashoggi’s disappearance risked becoming a “whitewash”, Mr. Colville said there was no question of impunity.

“Anyone responsible should be held accountable, and that means anyone,” he said, “who committed a crime or who was involved in the planning of the crime or executing it. There should be accountability; if it’s a serious crime, that’s a fundamental principle of law; national law and international law.”

[World Health Organization calls crisis meeting over deadly Ebola outbreak in DR Congo](#)

World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) Director-General, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, has called an Emergency Committee meeting on the Ebola virus outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which has already claimed around 130 lives.

The WHO has assessed the national and regional risk of the current Ebola outbreak in DRC as “very high,” although the global risk remains low and, so far, the UN’s health watchdog has not called for any trade or travel restrictions to be imposed.

The Emergency Committee, scheduled for Wednesday at WHO headquarters in Geneva, will decide whether the outbreak constitutes a public health emergency of international concern, and what recommendations should be made to manage the spread of the disease.

This outbreak, the tenth to hit the DRC over the last four decades, was declared in North Kivu Province on 1 August, this year and, based on the worsening security situation in and around the city of Beni, WHO elevated the risk from “high” to “very high” on 28 September.

The agency identified 39 new confirmed cases were reported between 1 and 11 October, 32 of which are from Beni.

The DRC Ministry of Health, WHO and other partners have been responding to the outbreak with teams on the ground, but WHO has warned that continuing insecurity severely affects both civilians and frontline workers, forcing the suspension of the response for several days in late September, and raising

the risk that the virus will continue to spread.

More than 20 civilians in Beni were killed in the incident that provoked the suspension, which came on the heels of multiple attacks in previous weeks. It's estimated by the UN that more than a million civilians under threat from armed groups, are internally-displaced in North Kivu; around 500,000 this year alone. The eastern region is close to the border with Uganda, and Rwanda.

Meanwhile, the [UN Children's Fund \(UNICEF\)](#) reports that one month after the beginning of the school year, 80 per cent of school-aged children have returned to school in Beni and Mabalako health zones, the two epicentres of the Ebola outbreak. UNICEF has identified more than 1,500 schools in the areas affected by the epidemic.