



Global Compact
Network Nigeria

COMMUNIQUE
ISSUED AT THE 2023 NATIONAL BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS ROUNDTABLE
LAGOS, NIGERIA
AUGUST, 2023

Background:

For the past eight years, **Global Rights**, which serves as the secretariat of the National Business and Human Rights Roundtable, has facilitated the hosting of the annual Roundtable in partnership with the **National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)**, **Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC)**, **Integrity Organization Limited (Gte)**, **CSR-in-Action**, Abuja Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI), Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) and **the United Nations Global Compact Network Nigeria (UNGC-NN)**, who co-convened this year's Roundtable.

The 2023 convening, themed "**Giving Effect to the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights in Nigeria**", provided a dynamic multi-stakeholder platform for dialogue on business and human rights, with the attendance of over 70 business leaders, government representatives, civil society actors, human rights activists, business host communities, media, and academia to facilitate the extensive understanding and effective implementation of Nigeria's recently approved "**National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights**". The Action Plan gives effect to the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPR) Framework, effectively operationalizing the government's **Duty to Protect**, the context of how businesses operationalize the **Responsibility to Respect**, and pertinently, how to ensure **Access to Remedy** for individuals or communities adversely affected by business operations in Nigeria.

Recognizing the role of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in the development of the Action Plan that considered input from the government, civil society organizations, and other critical stakeholders, the theme for this year was hinged on ensuring effective implementation of the Action Plan to ensure business activities are conducted with respect for human rights;

Realizing that business activities can affect citizens' inalienable human rights, positively or negatively;

Observing the urgent need for all stakeholders, particularly businesses, to integrate and implement the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights in their operations;

The 2023 Roundtable noted the following:

- The strategic role played by the NHRC in driving the Federal Government's approval of the National Action Plan is commendable;
- The National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights in Nigeria provides opportunities for promoting responsible business and human rights conduct and corporate accountability;
- The Action Plan requires the development and close monitoring of an efficient implementation strategy with an oversight Working Group;
- With increased foreign direct and local investments in key sectors, there is a need to strengthen standards and regulatory frameworks promoting and protecting human rights in business operations;
- The 2023 Roundtable provided an invaluable opportunity for stakeholders, including government, human rights actors, businesses, business host communities, and civil society, to explore the opportunities provided by the Action Plan, share best practices and engage in constructive dialogue;
- More than one in five workers globally have faced some form of violation of their fundamental human rights at their workplace, be it physical, emotional, psychological, neglect, or sexual. There is a need for businesses to prioritize respecting human rights internally.
- Businesses have to commit to community welfare beyond profit-driven CSR initiatives genuinely.
- There is a wide gap between business aspirations and business actions on human rights. Many businesses have policies on human rights, but gaps still exist, such as monitoring the value chain.
- Some multinational corporations are often perceived to exert considerable power and sometimes conduct their businesses at the expense of human rights and environmental sustainability. There is a need to build trust between businesses and host communities continuously.
- There are weak government regulatory and enforcement mechanisms. Many regulatory agencies in Nigeria lack the requisite capacity to properly monitor how business activities are conducted across the states, mainly due to underfunding and a lack of understanding of human rights.
- Collaboration between civil society, communities, and businesses is essential to upholding human rights.

Consequently, the Roundtable recommendations are as follows:

1. The Federal Government must, as a matter of priority, constitute and inaugurate the National Working Group on Business and Human Rights (NWGBHR) as provided for in the Action Plan to effectively develop strategies and closely monitor the implementation of the National Action Plan on Business

and Human Rights.

2. The government must set measurable targets, responsibilities, and baselines for monitoring and evaluating the success of the implementation of the Action Plan.
3. Strategies for implementing the Action Plan must, of necessity, include the key principles in the Child Rights Act, Labour Act, Data Protection Act, Persons with Disability Act, and other relevant legislation to ensure inclusivity and consideration of all interests in promoting human rights.
4. The NWGBHR, once constituted, must create an independent body responsible for managing a grievance reporting mechanism. This body should escalate grievances to the appropriate public authorities or regulators, track the response by the authority, ensure rapid response to grievances, and establish clear consequences for violations.
5. Strategies for implementing the Action Plan must include recognition of good practices and strict sanctions for violations.
6. Establish a centralized report for various actions and initiatives, ensuring all relevant matters are properly documented and accessible.
7. The government must ensure that available stakeholder platforms for meaningful engagements remain open to all stakeholders, including business host communities, in designing the structure of engagements and reflecting inclusivity in participation.

The National Business and Human Rights Roundtable in Nigeria is a multi-stakeholder initiative that provides a platform for dialogue between the various stakeholders of the business and human rights community in Nigeria, including businesses, the government, regulators, business host communities, consumers, and civil society. The Roundtable is coordinated by a National Steering Committee, co-chaired by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and the Convention on Business Integrity (CBI) with Global Rights as Secretariat. Other steering committee members include CSR in-Action, Accountability Lab Nigeria, the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria, Paradigm Initiative, Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI), Oxfam in Nigeria, and EarthNews Nigeria.

Unanimously adopted by the Roundtable on August 18, 2023.