

REPUBLIC OF RWANDA



MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

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**REMARKS BY THE HON. MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND ATTORNEY  
GENERAL DURING THE DIALOGUE ON THE NATIONAL ACTION  
PLAN FOR BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

**21<sup>st</sup> February, 2024  
Lemigo Hotel, Kigali**

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The Honourable UN Resident Coordinator;  
Representatives from the Diplomatic Corps;  
Representatives from the UN Agencies;  
Colleagues, representatives from Government and Public Institutions;  
Representatives from the Private Sector Federation;  
Representatives from the Civil Society;  
Members of the media;  
Ladies and gentlemen,

**Good morning!**

I am honoured to welcome you all to this important dialogue on Business and Human Rights and sincerely thank you for having positively responded to our invitation and found time for this important gathering.

For those we are meeting for the first time since the beginning of this year, I believe it is not too late to wish you a good year ahead of us.

Let me also sincerely thank ONE-UN Rwanda and the National Commission for Human Rights for the great support and collaboration in putting this day together.

**Distinguished participants,**

We have gathered many times in order to discuss human rights advancement in our country and in separate fora, stakeholders have also met to discuss topical issues in the business sector in Rwanda. Today, we come together as stakeholders from diverse backgrounds and perspectives to share ideas on how we can collectively advance the protection and promotion of human rights in the business sector. Thus, the nexus between human rights and business is at the centre of today's discussions.

It is an undeniable fact that business has a profound impact on human rights and this has been either positive or negative. For example, on one hand, business' activities deliver services that improve the living standards of host communities and directly contribute to the realization of the human rights obligations from governments. Conversely, business when unchecked can have adverse impact on human rights for all. Examples of discriminatory practices, exploitation of workers, unsafe working environments, child labour and many other human rights abuses are reported almost everywhere in the world. In addition, the impact of bad business practices has been a driving factor in the climate change crisis that has globally a significant negative effect on human rights.

This indicates that the issue of business and human rights is a complex and multifaceted one. It thus, requires collaboration and dialogue among stakeholders to address the challenges and opportunities it presents within the specific Rwandan context.

**Distinguished participants,  
Colleagues,**

At the international level, efforts have been made to explain how business and human rights should co-exist, one reinforcing the other. In this regard, the United Nations published in 2011, the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

The Guiding Principles provide a blueprint for action, defining parameters within which States and companies should develop policies, rules and processes based on their respective roles and particular circumstances. They also provide clarity to States on the implications of their existing duty to protect human rights against adverse impact caused by companies, including as it relates to ensuring that those affected by business activities have access to an effective remedy.

Additionally, they provide practical guidance to companies about what steps they should take to ensure that they respect internationally recognized human rights and address any impact. By establishing a global framework, they create a common platform for action and accountability against which the conduct of both States and companies can be assessed.

Dear participants, you will allow me not to go into much detail about these principles, as a separate slot on our agenda today is dedicated to this.

I would, however, say a few things about the context of our own country.

For the last two and a half decades, Rwanda has known a stable economic growth. Sectors such as manufacturing, agro-processing, tourism, real estate and construction, ICT, mining, infrastructure and energy have been steadily growing and fairly contributing to the business sector. Rwanda is among the leading countries in doing business on the continent. This is due to a deliberate decision by the Government to create an enabling investment environment. In this regard, enabling laws and policies have been adopted and institutions have been established or strengthened.

During the same period, Rwanda's commitment to uphold its national and international human rights commitments and obligations remained firm. In this regard, equal importance is given to all sets of rights, including civil, political, cultural, social and economic in recognition of the indivisibility and interconnection of human rights. This creates an environment where both business and human rights naturally co-exist and mutually reinforce each other.

However, permit me to note that Rwanda has yet to adopt a standalone, standard-setting document (i.e. National Action Plan) on Business and Human Rights.

**Distinguished participants,**

**Colleagues,**

As I conclude, permit me to note that today's dialogue kicks off the consultation process, which will lead to the development, the adoption and the implementation of the first ever Action Plan on Business and Human Rights.

The Ministry of Justice had already started the process to develop the second phase of the National Human Rights Action Plan, but the process has been stayed to ensure that the part on business and human rights is considered as integral part of the document.

The Ministry of Justice would therefore, continue to count on your usual support and collaboration throughout the process.

**THANK YOU!**