

Address by the Chairperson of the National Human Rights Council

Arab-African Forum on Business and Human Rights:

Towards a Regional Dialogue Supporting a Responsible, Human Rights-Based Economy

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The nexus between business and human rights has become a major strategic focus not just a topic for academic or institutional dialogue, but a key gateway to advancing social justice and reinforcing human security.

Our gathering today is an opportunity for us to collectively explore how to bridge the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals with the African Union's 2063 Agenda..

This year marks fourteen years since the adoption of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, as well as the Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact which are a reference framework addressing four key areas: human rights, labour, environment, and anti-corruption.

However, we've witnessed some concerning developments in recent years:

- Environmental degradation accelerating;
- Forced displacement on the rise;
- Growing social disparities;
- and increasing vulnerability of already vulnerable groups across the African continent which faces alarming child labor figures, estimated at 72 million, highlighting the fragility of its socioeconomic rights system.

The national legislative system poses serious challenges in ensuring that laws regulating labour relations and investment guidelines align with international principles of decent work and balancing investment interests with respect for

human rights.

With Morocco's growing economic momentum, It's increasingly important to include human rights in major projects, infrastructure, and supply chains ensuring a decent work environment that is free from discrimination, respects human dignity, and meets environmental and social standards.

The due diligence principles raise practical challenges that require developing national and regional mechanisms for implementation and broadening participation to include national human rights institutions and civil society.

Key challenges monitored by the National Human Rights Council and its peer institutions in this regard include:

1. Embedding human rights in international investment frameworks;
2. Making climate issues a core focus of economic policies;
3. Aligning SDGs with human rights commitments;
4. Involving vulnerable groups in the policy making process;
5. Speeding up ratification of the international convention on the right to development.

The National Human Rights Council's strategy covers several areas:

Encouraging both voluntary and binding measures to ensure businesses respect human rights;

- Monitoring complaints related to the environmental and social impact of economic activities;
- Contributing to Morocco's World Cup bid through a human rights-based approach;
- Supporting a national human rights strategy that integrates the BHR dimension;
- Promoting a rights-based approach in the African Continental Free Trade Area;
- Holding training workshops that are balanced across genders and regions;
- Engaging with Parliament and civil society to develop a national action plan;
- Engaging with UN committees and treaty bodies;
- Publishing two reports on how artificial intelligence affects business and human rights.

Ladies and gentlemen, our Arab and African regions are rich in natural resources and promising human potential. This calls upon us all to devise development models that are rooted in local realities, grounded in respect for human rights, and that actively engage small and medium-sized enterprises and involve communities in assessing the human rights impact of development projects.

The challenge today, human rights defenders, is not only economic, but also social, cultural, environmental, human, and ethical. There can be no true development without dignity, and no sustainable investment without respect for human rights not as a means to an end, but as the very essence of true development and the most priceless form of wealth: human dignity.

Thank you.