



HRCSL CONSULTS STAKEHOLDERS ON DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

With support from UNDP and Irish Aid, the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone through its Directorate of Business and Human Rights and Labour Relations on Thursday 28th and Friday 29th November, 2024 facilitated a consultative engagement with 40 key stakeholders including: MPs, MDAs, mining companies and CSOs on the development of a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights at the Bombali District Council Hall in Makeni.



The objectives of the engagement were to foster an inclusive, transparent and participatory approach for the development of the NAP and also solicit vital information from stakeholders that will form part of the document, among others.



In March 2017 and December 2021 to February 2022, HRCSL conducted two baseline assessment surveys on the business and human rights situation in the country. Both surveys strongly recommended the need for policies/laws for a comprehensive regulation of the actors within the investment sector that will pave the way for the development of the NAP on business and human rights.



The finalization and adoption of the NAP will serve as a comprehensive framework to address key human rights issues in the business sector. It is expected to foster collaboration between public and private sector actors, ensuring they are well-equipped to uphold human rights principles within the business environment.

Chairperson of HRCSL, Mrs. Patricia Narsu Ndanema said, the Commission over the years has expanded its scope of monitoring to capture the operations of businesses, especially their implications on the enjoyment of human rights during their operations.

While acknowledging the tremendous contributions made by businesses in terms of paying taxes and meeting their corporate responsibility, Mrs. Ndanema expressed concern about the several human wrongs in their operations which affect the enjoyment of human rights.

She emphasised that the process of developing the NAP is state-led and that the Commission is only serving as a facilitator.

"As a Commission we remain optimistic to see a Sierra Leone where responsible businesses and the enjoyment of human rights coexist for the benefit of all its rights holders. We want to see businesses operate in line with human rights standards," she said.



On behalf of the UNDP, Senior Human Rights and Rule of Law Officer, Alie B. Sesay spoke about the need to build a business environment that respects and promotes human rights and where companies understand their responsibilities and contribute positively to the development of the country.



Mr. Sesay emphasised that the NAP document will serve as a framework that guides both the public and private sectors in their efforts to align business practices with human rights standards.

Josephus Ellie, Senior Governance Advisor at the Irish Embassy, expressed hope that the consultation will not only heighten participants' understanding of business and human rights but also solicit their inputs to the development of the NAP.

Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights, Hon. Abdul Karim Kamara pledged Parliament's support to the development of the NAP for an environment that supports the rights of citizens.



The Consultant, Dr. Nana Busia led presentation on the introduction and application of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, as well as plenary discussions on the nature of businesses in Sierra Leone and the key challenges, and grievance mechanisms, gaps and recommendations.



At the end of the two-day consultation, participants were able to make valuable inputs to the development of the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights.

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