“Better governance lies at the heart of any progress on the human rights front in Africa,” says IOE Board Member Jacqueline Mugo

IOE members from Africa are gathering in Addis Ababa from 16-18 September for a multi-stakeholder forum dedicated to dialogue around the implementation in the continent of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

Convened by the United Nations Working Group on Business and Human Rights, the African Regional Forum is organised with the support of the African Union Commission’s Department of Political Affairs, UNECA, OHCHR, UNDP and the Global Compact.

The event aims to promote dialogue and cooperation on the implementation of the UN Principles; to provide capacity-building opportunities for practitioners and civil society; identify material issues and challenges on business and human rights in the region; identify emerging innovative practices designed to manage corporate impacts; and reinforce synergies between global efforts and initiatives at the regional and local levels.

Key issues to be addressed include challenges and opportunities for implementing the Principles, such as the creation of National Action Plans (NAPs); access to effective remedies, both judicial and non-judicial; the important role of SMEs, and more.

Speaking on behalf of members in Africa, IOE Board Member Jacqueline Mugo reaffirmed the commitment of business to treat human rights as a high priority, adding that she hoped the forum would “stimulate a commitment for action from all actors to improve the human rights situation on the ground.” She said that Employers’ organisations would continue to intensify their awareness-raising activities with their members.

Ms Mugo went on to underscore the key importance of good governance as a prerequisite for States to properly comply with their duty to protect human rights, paving the way for businesses to respect them.

She said that Employers’ organisations would continue to intensify their awareness-raising activities with their members.

Ms Mugo went on to underscore the key importance of good governance as a prerequisite for States to properly comply with their duty to protect human rights, paving the way for businesses to respect them.
intergovernmental working group on business and human rights, stating that, despite the initiative enjoying the support of many African governments, the UN Guiding Principles remained the global authoritative reference on business and human rights and provided a sound basis for making progress today.

The fact that no African government had launched a National Action Plan for the implementation of the Principles was, she said, “highly regrettable”, and she called on governments to develop NAPs as a matter of urgency and in close consultation with business, both directly and through their representative organisations to ensure that the voice of SMEs would be heard in the debate.

In her closing remarks, Ms Mugo expressed the appreciation of the African business community for the external support for improving the human rights situation on the ground in Africa, but cautioned western NGOs against well-intentioned initiatives (such as the Dodd-Frank Act) that could have unintended and damaging consequences. “The engagement of African business and civil society in these initiatives must also improve,” she said.

*For further information, please contact, IOE Senior Adviser for Business & Human Rights, Mr Matthias Thorns, and/or IOE Senior Adviser for Africa, Mr Frederick Muia whose contact details can be found in the side panel.*