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Press Release: United Nations Human Rights Commissioner

Business & Human Rights: UN Expert Group Launches First Fact-finding Visit to Ghana

GENEVA (4 July 2013) – A United Nations group of independent experts on business and human rights will undertake an information-gathering visit to Ghana from 8 to 17 July 2013, to look at current initiatives, opportunities and challenges in implementing the UN Guiding Principles* on Business and Human Rights in the country.

“The Ghanaian economy is booming and is set to continue growing rapidly, with high levels of investment and integration into regional and global supply chains in sectors like mining, oil and gas, agriculture, forestry, manufacturing, and services”, noted Alexandra Guáqueta, one of the members of the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights who will visit the country.

“The significant levels of business activity by local and international companies can have both positive and negative impacts on the human rights of the population,” the expert said, stressing the need for the Government and companies to implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

This set of principles, unanimously endorsed by the UN Human Rights Council in 2011, established for the first time an authoritative global standard that offers clarity and concrete guidance for authorities and companies to prevent negative impacts of business activities on human rights, and to ensure effective access to remedy when they do occur.

“This time of economic expansion is an opportune moment to look at how business impacts on human rights are being addressed in Ghana. The Ghanaian Government has been a key supporter of the business and human rights agenda at the United Nations, and we are keen to learn more about the government’s efforts to implement the Guiding Principles,” said Pavel Sulyandziga, who currently heads the UN Working Group.

“We will also speak to companies, civil society organizations, trade unions and other stakeholders to learn first-hand about opportunities and challenges in ensuring business respect

for human rights in Ghana,” added Mr. Sulyandziga.

Ms. Guáqueta and Mr. Sulyandziga, who visit the country at the invitation of the Government, will meet in Accra with authorities, companies, business organizations, workers organizations and civil society organizations. They will further carry out field visits and speak to local stakeholders in Ashanti and Central regions to explore initiatives, opportunities and challenges in specific economic sectors and at the local level.

They will hold a press conference to present preliminary observations from their visit at 1.30pm on July 17th 2013 at the conference room of the FAO Regional Office for Africa, Building #2 Gamel Abdul Nasser Road (located near the Ridge Church), Accra.

Findings from the country visit and recommendations will be included in an official report to be presented to the Human Rights Council in June 2014.

(*) Read the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights:
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Business/Pages/Tools.aspx>

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