



# Regional conference on business and human rights highlights the importance of action plans that protect the rights of affected communities

- The Ministry of Justice, Constitutional and Religious Affairs, in partnership with the United Nations Development Program, held between the 6th and 8th of December, in Maputo City, the Regional Conference on the Action Plan on Business and Human Rights in the Southern African region.



The Conference focused on dialogue to provide a space for learning and exchange with a view to stimulating and supporting the development and adoption by the Member States of the African Union of the National Action Plan for the effective implementation of the United Nations programs for the development of the continent. This event constituted an important moment to strengthen the partnership between the institutions, offering an opportunity for the creation of regional networks between key actors in the business and human rights.

In addition to the Ministry of Justice, Consti-

tutional and Religious Affairs and the United Nations Development Program, the event was organized by the African Union, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations for Development (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für International Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI), the Danish Institute of Human Rights (DIHR) and the Center for Democracy and Development (CDD).



In his speech, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Justice, Manuel Malunga, contextualized the situation in which Mozambique finds itself and reiterated the Government's commitment to human rights.

"This event aims to provide a welcoming space for dialogue on the topic of business and human rights, in addition to showing the commitment and willingness that the Government has to implement the Action Plan on Business and Human Rights".

Manuel Malunga also mentioned that, despite the development of the extractive industry, its impact on citizens' lives has not always been positive, which is why there is a need to implement national action plans that respect communities and human rights.

"We cannot fail to mention the phenomenon of terrorism and violent extremism in the north of the country, which represents a great denial of fundamental human rights, which is life, and enormous material damage, as well as climate change that also affects the population".



Roberto Nanima, the representative of the African Union, highlighted the importance of dialogue on the Business and Human Rights Action Plan and its implementation.

"The implementation of the National Action Plan is important because it provides necessary tools for businesses to respect human rights. This is a time when we all need all hands to meet these challenges."

Roberto Nanima also mentioned the importance of placing human rights at the center of the debate, especially children's rights. "We need to put human rights at the center of the dialogue. This is a great opportunity to make a distinctive effort and make positive changes for all states. National Action Plans should be based on international standards, including standards for children".



David Omozuafah, the representative of UNDP Africa, recognized the importance of corporate social responsibility but considers that it is not enough to solve the problems that African countries have been facing.

“One thing is clear: corporate social responsibility is not enough. We need a National Action Plan, an effective plan to ensure that human rights are respected in business”.

David Omozuafah spoke of the importance of public trust and the interaction between all those responsible for respecting human rights in business. “We also need to build trust. Citizens must feel trust in companies and in the Government. Everyone must participate, Government, companies, and civil society. It is not just the role of the Government”.



“UNICEF is honored to participate in this program with the Government and other organizations. This regional dialogue offers a unique opportunity for the countries of the southern region to exchange experiences”, began by saying Isabel Burchard, the UNICEF representative.

In her speech, Isabel Burchard spoke of the importance of implementing the National Action Plan and the importance of including children in this plan. Two-thirds of Africa’s population are children. We must decide and influence children’s lives. We at UNICEF want to ensure that this dialogue also has a focus on children’s rights. We are here to support and ensure that children’s rights are protected.”



Laila Sheik, the representative of the Swiss Embassy in Mozambique, spoke of the role of the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights and Switzerland’s willingness, together with its partners, to warmly welcome Mozambique’s adherence to the Voluntary Principles Initiative.

“We are also very proud and satisfied with the excellent cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, Constitution and Religious Affairs. The commitment shown by Her Excellency Minister Helena Mateus Kida and her team in conducting the Voluntary Principles and in the process of their implementation in Mozambique is exemplary”.



“This is a very important meeting. Business and human rights is a very relevant subject in Mozambique”, said Kimura Hajume, Ambassador of Japan in Mozambique. The Japanese Ambassador highlighted the importance of human rights in business, as well as some human rights violations he observed during the COVID-19 pandemic. “When the pandemic happened, many factories expelled their workers for more than a month, they couldn’t take care of their families, they couldn’t take care of their children, and that was a violation of human rights.”

The Ambassador of Japan mentioned the challenge of child labor and the opportunity that exists today to overcome this problem. “When I was a kid, I came from a small town and worked a lot, but now times have changed. At that time, it was very challenging, but now we have the opportunity to implement the action plan to ensure that children’s rights are also respected in business”.



In his speech, Prof. Adriano Nuvunga, Executive Director of the CDD, spoke of the responsibility of the Government and the business sector in respecting human rights, but also of the importance of community development.

“In the context of human rights and business, profits and income must also result in the development of communities. This platform is not only for the formal part of medicine, it is not only for raising awareness of human rights but also focuses on the need for community development.”

Still in his speech, Prof. Adriano Nuvunga spoke of the importance of Mozambique formally adhering to the Principles of Volunteering on Security and Human Rights and the role of civil society. “Mozambique needs to formally join for accountability. Through the Voluntary Principles, civil society has an effective instrument to oblige the Government of Mozambique to fulfill its duties to protect human rights”.





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