

Session 3

From Soft Law to Hard Law: Challenges and Opportunities in Regulating the Financial Sector

November 28

13:30 – 14:45

In recent years, the European Union, some of its Member States, and other States have adopted or are in the process of adopting mandatory human rights due diligence laws in response to the lack of voluntary due diligence by businesses under their jurisdiction. The issue of whether and how to include the financial sector within the scope of such laws continues to spark debate amongst governments, civil society organizations, and financial institutions. This session will consider recent and emerging mandatory human rights due diligence laws as well as ESG investment laws that oblige investors, banks, insurers, and other financial sector actors to conduct human rights due diligence and/or disclose modern slavery risks, impacts, and actions to address these issues.

Panelists will speak on the impact or potential impact of recent and emerging laws on vulnerable populations, challenges the financial sector and Global South suppliers face in complying with the laws, how the laws can be improved to meet their purpose, and other solutions needed to ensure the laws are effective in advancing all three pillars of sustainable development.

Moderator

Andy Shen, Multilateral Organizations and Government Lead, Finance Against Slavery and Trafficking

Andy Shen is the Government and Multilateral Organizations Lead for the Finance Against Slavery and Trafficking (FAST) initiative, a project based at United Nations University Centre for Policy Research. An international human rights lawyer, Mr Shen has nearly a decade of experience in forced labour, human trafficking, and labour migration. He is an internationally recognized expert on human rights in industrial fisheries, and also has extensive experience on business and human rights and international labour standards.

Panelists

Nazma Akter, Founder and Executive Director, Awaj Foundation, and President, Sommilito Garments Sramik Federation

Nazma Akter is an Ashoka Fellow, President of Sommilito Garments Sramik Federation (SGSF), and the Founder and Executive Director of Awaj Foundation. She has dedicated the past 32 years to advancing workers' rights, particularly for women. She established SGSF and under her leadership the Federation now represents over 60,000 women garment workers and 71 affiliated trade unions.

Signe Andreasen Lysgaard, Chief Advisor on Business and Human Rights, Danish Institute for Human Rights

Signe Andreasen Lysgaard is Chief Advisor on Business and Human Rights at the Danish Institute for Human Rights. She serves as the focal point for the Institute's work on human rights and finance. Mrs. Lysgaard served on the EU Platform on Sustainable Finance (2020–2022) and continues to serve as expert advisor to external bodies, for example as a member of the EFRAG Sustainability Reporting Technical Expert Group and the PRI Human Rights Technical Expert Group. Signe regularly leads human rights training sessions for investors.

MD Lutful Matin, Director, Natural Indigo

Major MD Lutful Matin (Retired) has been the Director at Natural Indigo Ltd since 2015. With a distinguished military career spanning 24 years, he has served in various roles, including as a Military Staff Officer in Côte d'Ivoire with UN Peacekeeping. He actively engages in business and human rights seminars globally, serving as a panelist at the UN South Asian Forum and the Annual Business and Human Rights Conference.

Yumi Fujita, Senior Engagement Specialist, Sustainable Investing, Robeco

Yumi Fujita is a Senior Engagement Specialist at Robeco where she focuses on global ESG and human rights issues, urging companies to align with international standards like the OECD Guidelines and UN Guiding Principles. She collaborates with Robeco's investment teams, chairs an internal committee overseeing investments in compliance, and recently spearheaded the launch of the 'Modern Slavery in Supply Chain' engagement theme.

Resources

- [Deciphering EU Regulation on Finance and Human Rights - The Sum and Its Parts](#) (Business and Human Rights Resource Centre)
- [How Do the Pieces Fit in the Puzzle? Making Sense of EU Regulatory Initiatives Related to Business and Human Rights](#) (The Danish Institute for Human Rights)
- [E-Learning Module for South East Asia Government Officials](#) (FAST).