

APRIL 2023 UPDATE

Concept note: Action Coalition on Responsible Technology

In 2021, the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs initiated the [Tech for Democracy Initiative](#). The initiative brings together a wide range of stakeholders including civil society, the tech sector and governments to explore current issues and concrete solutions to aid digital technologies in supporting democracy and human rights. A key component of the initiative are the ‘Action Coalitions’, which should take concrete actions in support of the initiative during 2022.

This concept note provides the outline for the ‘Action Coalition on Responsible Technology’.

1. BACKGROUND

That businesses have a responsibility to respect human rights in their activities and throughout their value chains has been clear since the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) were unanimously endorsed by the UN Human Rights Council in 2011. Since then, much work has been done by civil society, academia, governments, the private sector, multilateral organisations and others to provide further clarity around the expectations on businesses with regard to specific sectors (e.g. extractive industries), complex issues (e.g. operating in conflict-affected contexts) and specific activities (e.g. purchasing practices).

Whilst certain initiatives emerged early on to address human rights issues in the tech sector, concerns as to the development and use of digital technologies beyond the scope of government oversight and regulation were not generally an area of focus for the business and human rights community. However, as significant human rights issues related to these technologies have become ever more evident, greater efforts have been made to articulate the scope of the UNGPs in relation to the development and use of technologies, and yet more action is still needed.

2. ACTION COALITION PARTICIPANTS

Members of the Action Coalition come from diverse stakeholder groups and are all committed to ensuring respect for human rights in the development and use of technology (cf. Copenhagen Pledge: *“Applying our shared democratic values and a human rights-based approach in the design, development, deployment, and use of digital technologies”*) and sharing lessons learned from their own practices and activities.

All participants are encouraged to read the Copenhagen Pledge, as well as:

- Having a commitment to ensure and support respect for human rights in relation to the development and use of technology (cf. Copenhagen Pledge: *“Applying our shared*

democratic values and a human rights-based approach in the design, development, deployment, and use of digital technologies”).

- Deciding which of the key themes of particular interest to you (choosing perhaps one or, possibly, all).
- Contributing your time and expertise, for instance through: Action Coalition workshops, and contributions to or review of action coalition publications.
- Sharing lessons learned from your own practice and activities with the Action Coalition and its members.

The [Danish Institute for Human Rights](#) (DIHR) will, in addition to itself being a member of the Action Coalition, coordinate and support the Action Coalition in close dialogue and collaboration with the other members of the Coalition. The development and execution of the Action Coalition’s workstreams is being led by the [Business for Social Responsibility](#) (BSR), the DIHR, the [Global Network Initiative](#) (GNI), and the [UN B-Tech Project](#).

Members of the Coalition are not required to adopt or endorse any of the outputs that stem from the work of the Coalition.

3. OBJECTIVE

The overarching objective of the Action Coalition is to support the improvement of human rights due diligence efforts and activities in relation to the development and use of digital technologies.

The Action Coalition on Responsible Technology represents a community of actors that believe that a business and human rights lens on the development and use of digital technologies is critical and necessary. The Action Coalition brings together actors that already work with the UNGPs and see an opportunity and benefit to engaging in the Action Coalition to share existing work, identify synergies and complementarity, and to align efforts and gain further momentum for key business and human rights messages.

This will be achieved by:

- i) Collectively identifying guidance, knowledge, and resources gaps
- ii) Participating in activities aimed at bridging the identified gaps
- iii) Producing public outputs for the benefit of the larger ‘responsible technology’ community, as well as for the Action Coalition members themselves.

A secondary objective is for the Action Coalition to function as a coordination mechanism and as a venue for further discussion and dissemination of reports, guidance and other public output.

4. ACTIVITIES

The Action Coalition was launched at the time of the high-level [Tech for Democracy](#) conference in November 2021.

For the 2022 Year of Action, the Action Coalition on Responsible Technology (ART) was organising a number of activities under 3 workstreams:

- **Workstream 1 - Ecosystem Mapping:** BSR and GNI co-led the ART's workstream on 'ecosystem mapping', which has developed a framework for identifying existing and potential relationships across relevant actors on a range of different information and communications technology (ICT)-related products, services, and scenarios. The result of this effort is the [ACROSS THE STACK TOOL: Understanding Human Rights Due Diligence \(HRDD\) Under an Ecosystem Lens](#). The lead organisations BSR and GNI are currently seeking ways to further advance the uptake of the tool, including by making the format more interactive and accessible to users.
- **Workstream 2 - Stakeholder Engagement:** The OHCHR B-Tech project led a process to identify a small number of priority areas of improvement to strengthen the role of stakeholder voices as part of HRDD by tech companies.
- **Workstream 3 - Policy Coherence:** The objective of this workstream was to understand the synergies and complementarities, as well as conflicts, of various regulatory developments on tech as they relate to and support responsible business practices. This was done through a number of Roundtables co-organized with members of the ART. The materials from these Roundtables can be shared upon request to the DIHR.

For 2023 and onwards, the ART will focus on dissemination of materials developed during the 2022 Year of Action. In addition, the ART will conduct its own convenings and events, speak and organise participation of its membership in externally organised convenings and events.

Action coalition members will be provided with updates, including on events and convenings, as relevant.