

RAHBAR KISAN INTERNATIONAL

NHRC Organizes Inaugural Business and Human Rights

Dialogue in Arab Region



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Doha, October 28 (QNA)— Chairperson of the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) and President of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), Maryam bint Abdullah Al Attiyah, highlighted both transformative opportunities and serious challenges faced by Arab countries as they pursue economic growth, at the opening of the inaugural Business and Human Rights Dialogue for the Arab Region. Organized under the Ministry of Interior's auspices, the event emphasized the need to protect human rights as businesses rapidly expand, with special attention to vulnerable groups such as migrant workers and women.

Her Excellency noted the urgency of implementing the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights across the Arab world, which require states to safeguard human rights, corporations to respect them, and ensure effective redress mechanisms for victims. She stated that national human rights institutions (NHRIs), through their unique mandate, act as critical advocates for human rights in the business sector, fostering collaboration among governments, companies, civil society, and affected communities to ensure accountability and support a human rights-driven approach in business practices.

Al Attiyah underscored the significant role of NHRIs in translating these guiding principles into reality by advising states and corporations, aiding in the development of laws aligned with

international standards, and monitoring the impacts of business activities on human rights.

NHRC's work includes raising awareness among vulnerable communities, facilitating their participation in business decisions affecting their lives, and ensuring access to remedies for those impacted by business-related human rights abuses.

GANHRI, in collaboration with regional NHRI networks, the UN, and civil society, also coordinates efforts to uphold human rights across business sectors globally. Through its Business and Human Rights Working Group, active since 2009, GANHRI supports capacity-building, knowledge sharing, and engagement on key issues like climate change and civic freedoms in business. This year's GANHRI conference, under the theme "Business and Human Rights: The Role and Experiences of NHRIs," concluded with a pledge by human rights institutions worldwide to bolster human rights protection in business, focusing on environmental issues and online civic spaces.

At the dialogue's core are discussions on corporate human rights due diligence, access to effective remedies, the development of national action plans, and the role of small and medium enterprises in fostering responsible business practices. Al Attiyah encouraged an open and innovative approach to collaboration, essential for overcoming the Arab region's unique challenges in business and human rights.

Arab Network Advocates for Rights in Business Practices

Secretary-General of the Arab Network for National Human Rights Institutions (ANNHRI), Sultan bin Hassan Al Jamali, reiterated the dialogue's importance in guiding responsible business within a framework of universality and interdependence of human rights. He highlighted ANNHRI's work with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to strengthen NHRIs' roles in overseeing economic, social, and cultural rights while also promoting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly in relation to business practices.

Al Jamali called for robust legal frameworks that regulate commercial activities to protect and promote human rights, especially for marginalized groups often left vulnerable to exploitative practices. He asserted that NHRIs, established under the 1993 Paris Principles, are vital mechanisms in realizing the "leave no one behind" principle of the 2030 Agenda. Their support of rule-of-law principles enables them to address root causes of conflict, fostering stability and equality through responsible business practices.

Support from Regional Leaders and International Experts

NHRC Deputy Chairperson Dr. Mohammed bin Saif Al Kuwari emphasized the role of businesses in supporting human rights, particularly through initiatives aimed at benefiting vulnerable groups

such as persons with disabilities, women, children, and the elderly. He noted the inaugural dialogue's focus on the Arab region's unique challenges, aiming to inspire businesses to contribute more meaningfully to local livelihoods and support human rights-driven projects.

Dr. Al Kuwari proposed the creation of a permanent platform connecting civil society, businesses, governments, and officials to foster continuous dialogue, develop national human rights plans, and address current and future challenges.

Professor Damilola S. Olawuyi, from the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights, highlighted the global need for economic diversification and clean technology adoption, areas where businesses in essential sectors can take a leadership role. He commended Qatar's initiative in convening a safe, open space for dialogue, facilitating knowledge exchange, and promoting constructive discussions on business and human rights challenges.

Representatives from the UN Development Programme (UNDP) echoed the importance of businesses' dual role in advancing human rights through fair labor practices and service delivery, while acknowledging the risks of exploitative practices. Biplove Choudhary, UNDP Technical Representative, pointed out that transparent, rights-respecting supply chains improve business outcomes and align with global human rights objectives.

Pioneering Role of National Institutions in Protecting Rights in Business

Engineer Ali Ahmed Al Derazi, Chairperson of the National Institution for Human Rights in Bahrain, acknowledged NHRC's efforts to involve both society and major corporations in promoting a human rights culture. He emphasized that the UN's 2011 Guiding Principles require businesses to share responsibility with states for human rights protection, particularly for workers. Corporations, especially large ones, must observe these standards, which serve as benchmarks for human rights and sustainable development practices.

Representatives from Iraq and other countries praised Qatar's initiative, highlighting the region's interconnectedness in trade and its impact on human rights-focused business practices. UNDP Adviser Livio Sarandrea stressed the importance of regional alignment with these principles, as businesses are integral to trade networks that prioritize human rights alongside economic development.

Forging a Path for the Future of Business and Human Rights

As the dialogue concluded, the participants committed to working together on practical measures to embed human rights at the heart of business activities. NHRC and GANHRI's efforts are expected to serve as a model for other regions, ensuring that corporate responsibilities align with the global

agenda for sustainable development and human rights.

Through this dialogue, Qatar continues to demonstrate its leadership in fostering an environment where businesses are held accountable for their human rights impact, paving the way for sustainable practices that prioritize the dignity and rights of all stakeholders.