



GIMPA
Faculty of Law



Gimpa Law
Conferences



Business and Human Rights in Africa: Towards Sustainable Progress

GIMPA Executive Conference Centre, Accra

(13th – 15th March 2024)

I. Background

On 16th June 2021, the United Nations Guiding Principles (UNGPs) on Business and Human Rights marked its 10 years anniversary. This milestone was significant in the sense that corporate respect for human rights and sustainable business was put into a whole new perspective with the adoption of the UNGPs. The three pillars of the UNGPs i.e. Promotion of human rights by States; Respect for human rights by businesses; and the provision of Effective Remedies for victims of human rights abuses, have provided an authoritative framework and become the hallmark by which global respect for human rights and sustainable business is measured. However, almost thirteen years after its adoption, what has been the real impact of the UNGPs on Business and Human Rights in Africa generally? More specifically, have African States (including Ghana), actively promoted human rights in a sustainable way in the past decade? Have African businesses and multinationals operating within the continent encouraged respect for human rights within the corporate setting in a sustainable way in the past decade? Finally, has there been institutionalized effective remedies for victims of human rights abuses on the continent in the past decade? The myriad of problems that the world faces today and its human rights implications, from the shrinking of civic spaces to climate change & environmental

degradation, populism & isolationist nationalism, systemic corruption, technological advancement with its attendant cyber threats etc., makes it imperative that we take stock of what has actually been accomplished so far and the challenges in implementing the UNGPs in Africa. It is important to also assess the progress that has been made so far, even if nominal, and reflect on the future of the UNGPs by planning towards the Africa we want within the next decade in terms of human rights and sustainable business.

II. Objective of the Event

Under the auspices of the African Centre on Law and Ethics (ACLE) at the GIMPA Faculty of Law, the objective of this conference is to provide a platform for discussions relating to the future of the UNGPs in Africa generally, and Ghana in particular, thirteen years after its adoption. This is because, the UNGPs have ostensibly provided a new and authoritative framework and become the hallmark by which global respect for human rights and sustainable business is measured. The event would thus provide an opportunity for all stakeholders within and outside Ghana to meet in a collegial environment and debate their ideas leading to concrete resolutions and proposals.

To this end, some of the issues to be discussed will include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. The role of the UNGPs towards global sustainable development;
2. Perspectives from the United Nations Global Compact;
3. Understanding the UNGPs;
4. The UNGPs and its implementation in Ghana;
5. Planning, crafting, and implementing solution-oriented UNGPs fit for the African purpose;
6. Corporate Governance and sustainable human rights;
7. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and sustainable human rights;
8. Continuous Business and Human Rights education;
9. Standards for sustainable business;
10. Cyber Security, Technology and its impact on business and human rights;
11. Comparative perspectives on the implementation of the UNGPs in Africa;

12. Making business and human rights more relevant and practical in the African society;
13. Consolidating a multi-stakeholder approach to sustainable business; and
14. Encouraging practical research into sustainable business and human rights.

III. About GIMPA Law Conferences

The GIMPA Law Conference series (<http://www.gimpalawconferences.org>), initially a biennial event but now held annually, was introduced in 2016 to provide a collegial platform for the discussion of topical national and international issues, and propose solutions to these. The maiden edition in 2016 (<https://www.gimpalawconferences.org/2016/index-en.html>) was organized by the GIMPA Faculty of Law in collaboration with the Leitner Center for International Law and Justice at the Fordham University School of Law in New York, United States of America, and with the support of the Embassy of The Kingdom of The Netherlands in Accra. The two-day conference was on the theme – *International Criminal Court and Africa: A Discussion on Legitimacy, Impunity, Selectivity, Fairness and Accountability* in Accra, Ghana. The aim of this conference was to discuss the frosty relationship between the ICC and Africa in an open and frank manner, and explore how to strengthen or sever the relationship once and for all.

The conference attracted academics, civil society organizations, policy makers etc. from all over the African continent and beyond. The two-day conference explored various themes regarding the relationship between the International Criminal Court (ICC) and Africa. The Prosecutor of the ICC, Her Excellency Madam Fatou Bensouda of The Gambia, was the Special Guest of Honour, given the fact that the conference focused on perceptions facing the Court on the African continent.

Building upon the success of the conference, the GIMPA Faculty of Law decided to propose the establishment of a Research Center that focused on International Criminal Law and Justice. Thus, in May 2017, the African Center of International Criminal Justice (ACICJ) (www.acicj.org) was established at the GIMPA Faculty of Law, with the support of the Embassy of The Kingdom of The Netherlands in Accra, Ghana. The ACICJ is thus dedicated to growing

the body of knowledge on international criminal justice, its necessity, and the place of Africa within that paradigm.

In 2018, the second edition of the GIMPA Law Conference series (<https://www.gimpalawconferences.org/2018/>) was organized by the African Centre on Law and Ethics (ACLE) (www.acle-gh.org) at the GIMPA Faculty of Law in collaboration with the Judicial Service of Ghana, the Leitner Center for International Law and Justice at the Fordham University School of Law in New York, United States of America, and with the support of White & Case LLP, New York, United States of America. The theme of this conference was: *The Judiciary and its contribution to Ghana after 60: Reflecting on the Past, Analyzing the present, preparing for the future.*

The conference was attended by all the stakeholders in the Justice delivery system, including Superior Court Justices, the leadership and members of the Ghana Bar Association, the leadership of Parliament, faculty of the various Law Faculties, Civil Society Organizations and the general public at large. The Chief Justice of Ghana at the time, Her Ladyship Justice Sophia Akuffo delivered the keynote address and participated in most of the sessions during the two-day period.

In 2020, due to the outbreak of COVID-19, the 2020 edition of the GIMPA Law Conference (<http://www.gimpalawconferences.org/uploads/2020%20Gimpa%20Law%20Conference%20-%20Banking%20&%20Financial%20Sector%20Crisis.pdf>) was held online via ZOOM under the auspices of the African Centre on Law and Ethics (ACLE), in partnership with the Bank of Ghana and the Securities and Exchange Commission. The theme for the conference was: **The Banking and Financial Sector Crisis in Ghana: Towards Sustainable Reform.** This highly successful, first of its kind law conference in Ghana was also broadcast live on radio and across various social media platforms. The Governor of the Bank of Ghana, Dr. Ernest Addison and the Director-General of the Securities and Exchange Commission, Reverend Daniel Ogbarmey Tetteh, were the Keynote Speaker and Guest Speaker respectively.

In 2023, the GIMPA Law Conference (<https://gimpalawconferences.org>) was organized at GIMPA on the theme: **The 1992 Constitution @ 30: Taking Stock, Assessing Progress and Reflecting on the Future**. The keynote speakers of this conference were the President of Ghana, His Excellency Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo; the Speaker of Parliament of Ghana, Rt. Hon. Alban S.K. Bagbin; and the then Chief Justice of Ghana, His Lordship Justice Kwasi Anin Yeboah.

IV. Format of 2024 GIMPA Law Conference

The GIMPA Law Conference (2024 Edition) on business and human rights in Africa will be organized and hosted by the GIMPA Faculty of Law as a hybrid event i.e. in-person and virtual. The conference will be in the form of paper and poster presentations, moderated panel discussions, and high-level conversations involving all the stakeholders in the business and human rights value chain in Ghana and across the African continent. The conference will thus feature keynote speeches from distinguished personalities from across the continent and beyond, who will be invited to grace the occasion, as well as panel discussions and interviews featuring leading experts in business and human rights. Depending on the format of presentations, panel discussions and conversations, questions, comments and contributions will be subsequently sought from the audience. At the end of the conference, a detailed Report of the key recommendations and proposals will be submitted to the appropriate authorities and stakeholders for their consideration and possible implementation. An edited book of selected peer reviewed papers presented at the conference is also anticipated.

V. Participation

The event seeks to take a multi-disciplinary and multi-stakeholder approach, and will therefore be open to persons and professionals from varied disciplines.

VI. Steering/Organizing Committee & Call for Papers

Senior members from the GIMPA Faculty of Law, under the leadership of Ms. Humu-Annie Seini constitute the Steering/Organizing Committee for this conference. The Steering Committee

of the 2024 GIMPA Law Conference is therefore inviting submissions in the form of papers, panel proposals, poster presentations etc. from scholars, academics, professionals and other stakeholders within the business and human rights value chain in Ghana and beyond, on any of the aforementioned or ancillary topics/sub-themes.

The submissions are to include:

- An abstract of the paper, panel proposal, or poster presentation etc. of about 500 words (or at least one page) clearly indicating the sub-theme the author wants his or her abstract to be reviewed under; and
- A Curriculum Vitae (CV) of the Author.

The deadline for submissions is **31st January 2024**. They are to be sent as email attachments to gimpalawconferences@gimpa.edu.gh, with a copy to Ms. Humu-Annie Seini at hseini@gimpa.edu.gh.

On acceptance of an abstract by the organizers, the author will be invited to submit a draft paper, details and structure of the panel proposal (to be incorporated in the conference programme), or draft poster presentation etc. by **29th February 2024**, which will be circulated to all conference participants in advance, and in the case of the poster presentations, they will be displayed at strategic locations at the conference venue throughout the duration of the conference.

Registration for participation in the conference is free and interested persons may register by visiting the conference website at: www.gimpalawconferences.org

VII. Contact Person

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