Summary Note

"The road from Delhi to Geneva:

Fostering responsible industry practices to advance respect for human rights in AI - key takeaways from the India AI Impact summit and priorities for the AI Global Governance Dialogue"

Roundtable hosted by
the UN Human Rights B-Tech Project and the UN Office for Digital and Emerging Technologies (ODET)

17 March 2026, United Nations Headquarters

The consultation, held under Chatham House rule, comprised representatives from tech companies, member states, multi-stakeholder organizations and civil society revealed a strong, crosscutting consensus that responsible business conduct in AI must be grounded in existing, universal human rights frameworks. Participants repeatedly emphasized that the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) and OECD standards already provide a solid, globally recognized foundation for corporate responsibility in the AI ecosystem. Human rights are a theme recognized as key objective and principle in the Global Digital Compact (GDC) as well as a theme in the modalities resolution (A/RES/79/325). As for business activities, human rights are specified in objective 3 of the GDC, recalling the UNGPs. At the same time, human rights are cross-cutting in nature and thereby affecting all other themes.

Human Rights as the Normative Baseline for Business Conduct in the Technology sector

A central theme was the insistence that international human rights law is the basis on which companies need to operate (Pillar 2 UNGPs), including with regard to the role of States to ensure businesses uphold human rights (Pillar 1 UNGPs). Participants agreed on the collective need to build on the UNGPs as the primary framework for responsible business conduct, along with the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Companies on Responsible Business Conduct. Also, UNESCO's AI ethics recommendations are reinforcing human rights obligations and recalling the UNGPs. The emphasis was on universality, clarity, and enforceability, distinguishing human rights as an integrated and targeted approach from softer "good vs. bad AI" ethics narratives. Participants stressed that human rights, including through a lens of responsible business conduct, should be a core theme of this year's Dialogue, especially given Geneva's unique position with the strong presence of UN Human Rights mechanisms alongside many specialised agencies.

Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD) at the Core of Responsible Business Conduct: "The Art of the Feasible"

Participants stressed that while HRDD is the backbone of responsible business conduct in AI, it must evolve to match the speed and complexity of AI development. This includes the recognition that the form of traditional stand-alone human rights impact assessments is challenging in the context of fastmoving AI systems. To ensure human rights are respected in a fast-paced innovation environment, companies are shifting toward integrated, embedded HRDD models within product teams to wire human rights considerations directly into the product design processes while applying the same rigor of quality. Some participants emphasized the challenge of ensuring effective human rights due diligence across the entire value chain.

HRDD covers both upstream and downstream impacts, including supply chain/value chain and end-use contexts. Special attention is needed for high-risk and "edge" cases, where harms are more likely. This reflects a pragmatic approach: human rights responsibilities of companies and State obligations remain non-negotiable, while implementation must be technically grounded in the UNGPs and what companies confirmed is "the art of the feasible".

Contextual Risk Assessment and Use-Case Sensitivity, Including Sectoral Implications

Participants emphasized that risks to people stemming from or being linked to AI are context-dependent, and responsible business conduct has to consider this. In that regard, general-purpose AI models have different risk profiles depending on deployment. Here, companies should account for and assess use case–specific risks, not just model-level risks, and mitigate identified impacts on people. Some sectors (e.g., health, labour, humanitarian settings) require specialized expertise that is currently missing from many governance discussions. This reinforces the need for sector-specific human rights expertise in AI governance.

Multi-Stakeholder Engagement as a Pillar of Responsible Business Conduct and the AI Dialogue

Responsible business conduct requires ongoing engagement with civil society, academia, and affected communities. Participants highlighted civil society's critical role in identifying harms (e.g., deepfakes, nonconsensual imagery) and working with business to address these. Also, there is a strong need for companies to collaborate with organizations supporting survivors of AI-enabled abuse as well as involving youth and children in consultations, given their unique vulnerabilities. Participants added that the multi-stakeholder aspect reflects a shared responsibility in the sense that is it is also the role of governments' and civil society to ensure that the AI Dialogue

incorporates various stakeholder views. Additionally, and to reflect the spirit of multi-stakeholder engagement and collective action, each event in the AI Summit series should coalesce towards shared goals of advancing human rights in the technology sector and translating the UNGPs into practice, rather than being repetitive or standalone activities.

Capacity Gaps and the Need for Enhancing the Plurality of Voices

A recurring theme was the knowledge gap between technical developers and many stakeholders, including governments, civil society, and even some business actors. Responsible business conduct requires the building of shared understanding of technical concepts, supporting capacity building for non-technical stakeholders and ensuring that HRDD processes are informed by both technical and human rights expertise. At the same time, digital divides and differences in capacity to engage across geographies are key challenges, undermining the equal enjoyment of human rights. How to overcome these inequities should be a core topic of the Dialogue. The India AI Impact Summit highlighted how AI solutions need to be grounded in a solid framework of safeguards, taking into account the local context and potential adverse impacts on people, in order to fulfil their full promise and advance the sustainable development agenda, in particular with a view towards including the voices of the Global Majority.

Predictability and interoperability across policy frameworks

Participants warned that fragmented national regulations could undermine responsible business conduct and were fully supportive of the AI Dialogue Co-Chairs' commitment to inclusivity. Multi-stakeholder participation in the development and implementation of policy and regulatory frameworks is key to avoiding siloes across sectoral applications. Key concerns evolved around how divergent regulatory regimes create compliance burdens and uneven protections while instead, companies are seeking alignment with existing human rights frameworks to avoid conflicting obligations. Here, a human rights baseline can act as a contributor to the interoperability of frameworks across borders. This underscores the need for coherent, globally aligned human rights–based governance.

The following organizations participated: Access Now, Amazon, Cisco, Council on Foreign Relations, Data Society, GNI, Google, ITU, Meta, Microsoft, OECD, Salesforce, The Future Society, UN Foundation, UNICEF, Witness, Women at the Table.

Representatives from Member States were also present.