

# Land, Corruption, & Human Rights: A Roundtable Discussion on the Human Rights Implications of Large-Scale Land Investments and Constructive Responses

Monday, November 16, 4:40-6:00 pm, Room XXIV



**QUNO**  
Quaker United Nations Office

## Theme and Objectives

In recent years, there has been an unprecedented rise in the sale and lease of large areas of agricultural land, particularly in developing countries. The regions concerned are those where land is suitable for cultivation and water is abundant, the workforce is cheap, and access to the global market is relatively easy. The investors are either local elites or, increasingly, foreign investment funds or agribusiness corporations. Investors also include governments of cash-rich but resource-poor countries seeking to outsource food production in order to ensure a stable and reliable supply of food for their populations.

The International Corporate Accountability Roundtable (ICAR), Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO), and Center for Peacebuilding (KOFF) at swisspeace are pleased to co-organize this session, which will provide an overview of how large-scale land investments result in a wide range of adverse human rights implications, ranging from forced displacement of communities without adequate compensation or access to basic needs like food and water to the targeting and killing of land defenders. The major issue of corruption will also be highlighted in terms of how it taints land deals in the following ways: (1) investors pay bribes to public officials in exchange for favorable land deals that violate the rights of local communities; (2) elite capture of the titling process through illegal means and at the expense of local land users; and (3) investor reliance on weak rule of law or corrupt remedial schemes in order to block access to remedy.

Discussants will explore the practical challenges hindering implementation of legal frameworks and guidelines relating to land investment, as well as the due diligence obligations of investors such as, seeking information about the state of the land they seek to lease or buy, consulting affected communities, and providing or supporting access to remedy. Focusing on constructive responses, discussants will bring examples of good practice that demonstrate investor responsibility, meaningful engagement with local communities, and the potential these provide “win-win” outcomes for civil society, business, and government.

## Format

- **Welcome and Introductory Remarks** (5 min.)
- **Overview of the adverse human rights implications of large-scale land investments** (10 min.)
  - Presentation of preliminary findings and initial reflections from ICAR, Global Witness, and Oxfam’s draft report
- **Multi-Stakeholder Panel** (35 min.)
  - Guiding Questions:
    - *What are the practical challenges hindering implementation of legal frameworks and guidelines relating to land investment?*
    - *What is the role of corruption in large-scale land deals, and what can be done to address this more effectively?*
    - *How are companies engaging in due diligence with respect to land rights? Does such due diligence adequately address corruption-related risks? How can the home States of these companies enforce and strengthen these due diligence obligations?*
    - *What are the most effective approaches to support constructive, multi-stakeholder engagement?*
    - *Is the collaboration between host States and home States sufficient to combat bribery or should further steps be taken to strengthen such cooperation? What is the role of the private sector in this regard?*
  - **Open Floor Discussion** (25 min.)
- **Concluding Remarks** (5 min.)

## Interventions

- **Moderator**
  - Sara Blackwell, International Corporate Accountability Roundtable (ICAR)
- **Presentation of preliminary findings and initial reflections**
  - Olivier De Schutter, Former UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food
- **Multi-stakeholder panel**
  - Josie Cohen, Senior Land Campaigner, Global Witness
  - David Bledsoe, Sr. Director, Corporate Partnerships, Landesa
  - Marcela Manubens, Global VP for Social Impact, Unilever
  - Sin Sokhomony, Agriculture and Land Policy Project Coordinator, NGO Forum Cambodia
  - Yuliya Neyman, Land Governance and Legal Advisor, Land Tenure and Resource Management Office, USAID

## Contact Information

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