



## UNRBHR Forum Proposal Review and Selection Process

The UN Responsible Business and Human Rights Forum, Asia-Pacific (UNRBHR Forum) is the region's leading multi-stakeholder platform on business and human rights. Now in its eighth year, the Forum brings together governments, businesses, investors, civil society, human rights defenders, workers' representatives, affected communities, academia, youth and international organizations to advance implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

The 2026 UNRBHR Forum will take place from 14 to 17 September 2026 at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok, Thailand, with a hybrid component for virtual participation. The 2026 Forum will be held under the theme "Building Resilience, Advancing Rights."

The 2026 Forum is co-organized by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and International Organization for Migration (IOM), in collaboration with the United Nations Working Group on Business and Human Rights (UNWG). UNDP B+HR Asia serves as the Forum Secretariat.

### About this document:

A call for proposals to organize sessions at the 2026 Forum was announced to invite contributions from stakeholders across the region. Applicants were invited to propose sessions aligned with the Forum theme and thematic tracks.

This document provides an overview of the proposal review and selection process. It explains how proposals were reviewed by co-organizing UN agencies, the considerations applied during programming, and the final decision categories used to communicate outcomes to applicants.

## Overview

The Forum received a total of 190 proposals under 5 thematic tracks. The number and quality of proposals reflected strong interest from a wide range of stakeholders across the region.

Given the limited number of available slots within the Forum programme, the selection process was designed to be thorough, balanced and transparent. The criteria for shortlisting and selection were made available as part of the call for proposals.

The process combined independent review by co-organizing UN agencies, joint discussion by UN agency review teams, thematic clustering, and final program-level consideration with support from the Forum Secretariat.

## Distribution of proposals by thematic track

Applicants were asked to select the thematic track they considered most relevant to their proposal. Proposals were received under the following four thematic tracks, with an additional option for cross-cutting proposals or those that did not fit clearly under one track.

<b>Thematic track</b>	<b>Proposals received</b>
<b>Strengthening Governance and Regulatory Coherence</b>	25
<b>Resilient Markets and Supply Chains</b>	59
<b>Remedy, Accountability and Trust</b>	38
<b>Inclusion, Participation and Protection</b>	46
<b>Cross-cutting / does not fit one track</b>	22
<b>Total</b>	190

## Proposal review teams

Each proposal was reviewed under the relevant thematic track by at least two UN agency review teams, with support from the Forum Secretariat, UNDP. The review of thematic tracks was led by the following UN agencies, with support from the Forum Secretariat

Track	Reviewing UN agencies + Forum Secretariat, UNDP
<b>Track 1: Strengthening Governance and Regulatory Coherence</b>	ILO and UNEP
<b>Track 2: Resilient Markets and Supply Chains</b>	IOM and ILO
<b>Track 3: Remedy, Accountability and Trust</b>	UNEP and OHCHR
<b>Track 4: Inclusion, Participation and Protection</b>	OHCHR and UNICEF
<b>Cross-cutting / does not fit one track</b>	UNICEF and IOM

## Review and selection process

### Stage 1: Independent review

Each proposal was reviewed independently by three UN agencies and scored against the agreed review criteria shared during the call for proposals. These included relevance to the Forum theme, clarity of objectives, contribution to the field, diversity of perspectives, regional relevance, and fit within the Forum programme.

### Stage 2: Joint review by reviewing agencies

Following independent scoring, the respective agencies and the secretariat met to discuss the tracks/proposals they had reviewed. These discussions considered both the scores and the qualitative comments provided by reviewers. The reviewing agencies then developed joint recommendations on whether proposals should be accepted, declined, merged with related proposals, or accepted with changes to format, duration or placement.

The review process recognized that strong Forum sessions do not always emerge only from the most polished proposals. In some cases, proposals that were less fully developed at the submission stage were still considered valuable because they raised an important issue, introduced a less-visible perspective, reflected the experiences of affected stakeholders, or came from organizations and constituencies with limited prior engagement with the Forum.

For this reason, the review process considered both the quality of the proposal as submitted and its potential contribution to the overall programme. Where appropriate, proposals requiring further development were considered for mergers with related proposals, placement in a more suitable format or thematic track, or inclusion as a contributing perspective within a broader session.

This approach was intended to support an inclusive and equitable programme, and to ensure that the Forum did not unintentionally favor only those applicants with greater experience in preparing session proposals or navigating Forum processes. It also helped create space for emerging issues, underrepresented constituencies, practical experiences and perspectives that may require further support to be developed into a strong Forum session.

At the same time, due to the large number of submissions, not all proposals requiring further development could be accommodated. Decisions also had to take into account the limited number of available session slots, the overall coherence of the programme, duplication across proposals, thematic balance, representation from a broad range of organizers, and the feasibility of developing a meaningful session within the available time and resources.

### **Stage 3: Thematic classification and clustering**

Following the joint decision-making, proposals were grouped under thematic tracks and sub-themes that emerged from the review process. This allowed the review teams and the Secretariat to consider proposals alongside others addressing similar themes, sectors, stakeholder groups, or implementation challenges.

The thematic clustering helped identify areas of overlap, potential duplication, emerging priorities, gaps in the programme, and opportunities to bring complementary proposals together.

### **Stage 4: Track-level discussion and programme consideration**

The relevant UN agency review teams discussed proposals within each thematic cluster and arrived at joint recommendations, with support from the Forum Secretariat. These discussions considered the independent scores, qualitative comments, the strength of each proposal, possible duplication, complementarities and overall contribution to the Forum programme.

### **Stage 5: Programme coherence review**

The Forum Secretariat worked with the review teams to look across the full programme, identify overlaps and opportunities for alignment, support balance across themes and stakeholders, and determine the most appropriate session format for selected proposals.

This stage also helped ensure that the overall programme reflected a balance between policy discussion, practical implementation, stakeholder experience, regional relevance and emerging issues.

### **Stage 6: Session formats identified through the review process**

As part of the review and programming process, the Secretariat and UN agency review teams also considered the most appropriate format for selected proposals. Given the high number of strong submissions and the limited programme space, different formats were identified to accommodate proposals in a way that best matched their content, purpose and level of interactivity.

Some proposals were best suited to a full panel or workshop format, while others were better suited to shorter, more focused or more interactive formats. These formats were intended to allow the Forum to include a wider range of issues, perspectives and practical experiences, while maintaining coherence across the programme.

The formats identified through the review process included:

<b>Format</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Indicative duration</b>
<b>Sectoral Spotlight</b>	To showcase developments, trends or emerging issues in a specific sector, commodity or industry.	30 minutes
<b>Deep Dive</b>	To explore a complex issue or implementation question in greater depth, with fewer speakers and more focused discussion.	45 minutes
<b>Policy Lab</b>	To develop practical responses, recommendations or action pathways around a policy, regulatory or governance challenge.	45 minutes
<b>Panel</b>	To present multiple stakeholder perspectives on a shared issue or challenge, with emphasis on discussion and debate.	60 minutes
<b>Workshop</b>	To enable participants to actively work on a challenge, practise an approach, develop tools or generate draft solutions together.	90 minutes
<p><b>B+HR Asia Exchange Café (30 minutes)</b></p> <p>The B+HR Asia Exchange Café is designed as an informal, interactive space for participants to exchange practical knowledge, tools, experiences and ideas. Rather than formal presentations or panel discussions, each Café will be hosted at a dedicated table or station by one or more facilitators, who will engage participants through conversation, demonstrations, practical examples, or guided discussion. Multiple Café sessions will run simultaneously in the same venue, creating a dynamic marketplace of ideas. Participants will be free to move between tables, join discussions that interest them, ask questions, and interact directly with facilitators and other participants. Each table should therefore be designed as an interactive experience rather than a presentation, encouraging dialogue, peer learning, networking, and the exchange of practical knowledge.</p> <p>Depending on the Café stream, sessions may showcase new tools and methodologies, share implementation experiences and lessons learned, or facilitate dialogue around lived experiences and community-based approaches. Facilitators are encouraged to minimize formal presentations and instead create opportunities for participants to engage actively, ask questions, test ideas, and exchange experiences. The emphasis is on interaction and exchange rather than presentations, with participants encouraged to join, leave, and move between Café tables throughout the session.</p>		
<b>Innovation and Solutions Café</b>	To present and test new tools, methodologies, technologies, platforms, scorecards, certification models or practical solutions.	30-minute rotating format
<b>Learning and Practice Café</b>	To share research findings, lessons, evaluations, pilots, case studies or implementation reflections.	30-minute rotating format
<b>Community and Trust Café</b>	To create space for lived experiences, grassroots approaches, relationship-building, peer exchange and community dialogue.	30-minute rotating format

These formats helped the review teams consider not only whether a proposal could be included, but also how it could contribute most effectively to the Forum programme.

## **Stage 7: Final decision categories**

Final decisions placed proposals into one of four categories:

1. accepted as a standalone session;
2. accepted as a merged session with related proposals;
3. accepted with changes to format, duration or placement; or
4. not selected.

## **Considerations applied during final programming**

In addition to proposal quality, final programming decisions considered the overall shape and balance of the Forum. The following considerations were applied across tracks:

- relevance to the Forum theme and thematic tracks;
- clarity of objectives, proposed format and expected contribution;
- diversity of speakers, stakeholders, geographies and perspectives;
- balance between policy, practice, lived experience and implementation learning;
- regional relevance and potential for shared learning across countries or sectors;
- avoidance of duplication across sessions or lead organizations
- opportunities to strengthen proposals through complementarity or merger;
- inclusion of emerging issues, underrepresented constituencies and less visible perspectives; and
- fit within the limited number of available programme slots and session formats.

## **Approach to mergers and revised formats**

Mergers were considered when they could strengthen the overall discussion, improve balance, avoid duplication, or accommodate strong, related proposals within the available programme space.

Mergers were considered in several situations, including where proposals addressed the same conversation, added complementary perspectives, explored the same implementation challenge across different sectors or countries, reflected different actors within the same ecosystem, or where one strong proposal could serve as an anchor and be strengthened by additional case studies, perspectives or examples.

Some proposals were also recommended for a revised format or duration where the content was strong but better suited to a shorter, more focused or more interactive format. These formats may include sectoral spotlights, deep dives, policy labs, panels, workshops or café-style exchange formats.

## Final decision categories

Decision category	Description
<b>Accepted as standalone</b>	The proposal is accepted as a session in its own right, subject to routine programme coordination and speaker confirmation.
<b>Accepted as merged session</b>	The proposal is accepted as part of a combined session with one or more related proposals, to strengthen the discussion, avoid duplication and support programme coherence.
<b>Accepted with revised format, duration or placement</b>	The proposal is accepted, but the format, timing or placement may be adjusted to better fit the programme and the nature of the proposed contribution.
<b>Not selected</b>	The proposal cannot be accommodated in the programme this year, due to limited space, overlap, fit with the final programme, or other programming considerations.

## Note for applicants

The review and selection process required difficult decisions, as the number of strong proposals significantly exceeded the available programme space. The selection of some proposals and non-selection of others should therefore be understood in the context of overall programme design, thematic balance, and limited session capacity, rather than as a judgment on the importance of the issues raised.

The Forum Secretariat and UN agency review teams are grateful to all applicants for the time, thought and effort invested in preparing proposals, and for their continued engagement in advancing responsible business and human rights in the region. We hope to see all applicants at the Forum, regardless of the outcome of their proposal submissions.