

Financing the SDGs Dialogue 2026: Advancing Country-Led Approaches to Financing Sustainable Development

Advancing Sevilla Platform for Action initiatives at the country level

From Compliance to Business Competitiveness: Operationalizing the Seville Plan of Action with B+HR and ISO/UNDP 53001

Date and time	28 October; 16:15-17:15 CEST
Location	Meliá Avenida América, Tenerife I (Level 2) (Google Maps link)
Organisers	UNDP, ISO
In-person registration	Financing the SDGs Dialogue 2026- Registration
Virtual registration	[Insert link]
Livestream link	[Insert link, if applicable]

Background

Financing the SDGs Dialogue 2026: Advancing Country-Led Approaches to Financing Sustainable Development will take place 27 to 29 October 2026 in Madrid, Spain, hosted by the UNDP Sustainable Finance Hub together with the Government of Spain.

Since the adoption of the Sevilla Commitment and launch of the Sevilla Platform for Action (SPA), global and concerted efforts have been advancing to help countries develop and deliver solutions. At the same time, countries have expressed a clear demand for a structured, technical space where practitioners leading financing reforms can exchange experiences, solve problems together, and connect their work with relevant global SPA initiatives and other supporting partnerships. Thus, the Dialogue will also bring together SPA initiatives working on relevant aspects of the Sevilla Commitment, enabling them to explore complementarities, strengthen collaboration, and enhance their collective impact in response to country needs and priorities.

This session will focus on moving from commitment to sustainable competitiveness in practice, **particularly focused on operationalizing clause 34 of the SPA**, which aims to support private business and finance to contribute to sustainable development while attracting long-term sustainable capital and diversified investor pools to developing countries . The session will explore how sustainability standards and management systems can help businesses and

financial institutions move beyond disclosure towards implementation by embedding human rights due diligence into governance, risk management, procurement, capital allocation, monitoring and continual improvement processes. **It will draw on the findings of UNDP Business and Human Rights (B+HR) report, *Human Rights vs. Competitiveness: A False Dilemma?***, which found no evidence that stronger corporate human rights performance comes at the expense of financial performance and identified a positive association with asset efficiency. **Together, these insights support a shift from sustainability reporting to sustainable competitiveness, with ISO/UNDP 53001 providing a practical framework for translating commitments into strong management systems.** The target participants include national decision-makers—Ministries of Finance, Planning, Environment, Economy, as well as Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Development, and local governments—alongside international standard setters, public development banks, private sector and financial institutions, and IFIs, financial institutions and investors, FfD4-related platforms, UN entities, academia, development partners and civil society.

Strategic Objectives:

Core Proposition: The Sevilla Plan of Action calls on the private sector to move from ambition to verifiable implementation and contribute to sustainable development. ISO/UNDP 53001 serves as the overarching sustainability operating system, the connective tissue that integrates crucial thematic imperatives, starting with embedding human rights due diligence (HRDD), directly into core business strategy, governance, risk management and capital allocation. Complementing this, the B+HR study provides an evidence-based rationale for embedding human rights into core business decision-making. Together they support a shift from sustainability reporting and compliance towards sustainable competitiveness, resilience, trust and long-term value creation.

The Sevilla Plan of Action demands a shift from passive sustainability disclosures to robust internal accountability. This session, co-convened with UNDP's Business and Human Rights (B+HR) team, explores how specialized thematic frameworks and management systems work together. Rather than duplicating or replacing specialized frameworks, **ISO/UNDP 53001** serves as a complementary, overarching operating system that integrates deep thematic pillars such as **Business and Human Rights (B+HR)** and the **UN Guiding Principles (UNGPs)** directly into core corporate governance. By providing the essential management architecture to operationalize environmental stewardship and human rights due diligence (HRDD), the standard transforms fragmented compliance into a cohesive, accountable, and auditable corporate workflow that systematically de-risks operations and delivers verified sustainable development impact.

Positioning within the Dialogue

Thematic area / sector	Standards for Sustainability and business competitiveness
Related SPA initiative(s)	<p>Direct: Clause 34(b) under the section "Financial incentives aimed at sustainable development impact.</p> <p>Indirect:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clause 32(a): Creating the Enabling Environment 2. Clause 34(f): Addressing Greenwashing and Impact Washing 3. Clause 31: Identifying the Core Problem: <i>misalignment between short-term financial incentives and long-term sustainable development impact</i>
Key Messages (internal)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Pledges and reports aren't enough anymore. Business needs a real operating system. ISO/UNDP 53001 is the practical management standard built to drive sustainable operations today and far beyond 2030. #ISO53001 #Sustainability</i> 2. <i>The evidence is clear: respecting human rights isn't just ethical—it directly boosts financial performance. Working with UNDP's B+HR team, we are proving that responsible operations are a company's strongest competitive edge. #BusinessAndHumanRights #ESG</i> 3. <i>In a world of tightening regulations and rising climate risks, there is no longer any margin for operational error. We must equip the next decade with robust, auditable corporate management systems. Enter #ISO53001. #CorporateManagement</i> 4. <i>To drive systemic change, sustainability management cannot stop at the headquarters of multinational firms. Through the global networks of UNDP and ISO, we are landing #ISO53001 in local policy and corporate realities worldwide. #GlobalSouth #SustainableDevelopment</i>

Objectives

The primary objectives of this session include:

1. **Translate Sevilla Policy Commitments into Auditable Corporate Action (SPA Clause 34b & 34f):** Position ISO/UNDP 53001 as the practical, multilateral delivery vehicle for the Sevilla Plan of Action. Shift the dialogue from passive disclosure and fragmented reporting toward auditable, process-driven management systems that actively prevent greenwashing and impact-washing.
2. **Establish 53001 as the "Connective Tissue" for Thematic Mandates (Centering B+HR as a crucial scaled up initiative in action):** Drawing on UNDP's B+HR study Human Rights vs. Competitiveness: A False Dilemma?, which found that stronger human rights performance does not come at the expense of financial performance, explore how ISO/UNDP 53001, can provide the common management architecture needed to operationalize specialized frameworks, specifically the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) and mandatory European due diligence regimes (e.g., Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive- CSDDD). It ensures that human rights and labour standards are not isolated in compliance silos but embedded in enterprise decision-making.
3. **Align Public Policy, Procurement, and Private Market Incentives:** Convene policymakers alongside corporate executives to explore concrete enabling mechanisms (such as preferential public procurement, export credit access, and sustainable finance incentives) that reward enterprises adopting verified sustainability management systems.
4. **Mobilize "Lighthouse" Pilot Commitments:** Secure targeted interest from forward-leaning multinationals, existing B+HR practitioners, industry associations, and public financial institutions to serve as the inaugural cohort of "Lighthouse Adopters" across strategic cross-border value chains.

Guiding Questions (for panel discussion)

1. **Translating Commitment into Daily Action (The Operational Gap):** *While international standards and reporting frameworks have successfully raised sustainability awareness, businesses still struggle with internal fragmentation and compliance fatigue. How can organizations shift their focus from retrospective reporting to establishing proactive, day-to-day corporate management systems?*
2. **Integrating Social Impact as a Business Driver (The Human Rights Baseline):** *As mandatory human rights due diligence (HRDD) becomes the global norm, what does the established evidence show regarding the positive correlation between robust social performance and superior financial and asset performance? How can businesses move these considerations out of isolated CSR silos and into core strategy?*
3. **Mitigating Risk and Preventing Greenwashing (The Integrity Shield):** *In an era of rising regulatory and legal scrutiny, why are self-declared ESG disclosures no longer sufficient to*

build trust? How do independently verified management system standards provide a legally defensible and credible shield against greenwashing and impact-washing?”

4. **Structuring Policy Incentives to Reward Best Practices (The Market Enabler):** *For these standards to achieve systemic scale, what role must regulators and financial institutions play? How can public policy—such as preferential public procurement, export credit access, and sustainable finance incentives—be aligned to actively reward enterprises that implement certified corporate management systems?”*
5. **Adapting to Local Realities in the Global South (The Equity Question):** *To ensure a globally equitable transition, sustainability management cannot stop at multinational headquarters. How can global networks, such as those of UNDP and ISO, be utilized to land these corporate management standards directly in the local policy and business realities of the Global South?*
6. **Future-Proofing Corporate Management Beyond 2030 (The Strategic Choice):** *As we look past the 2030 SDG horizon, how can businesses ensure their sustainability architecture remains permanent, adaptable, and resilient—irrespective of what new global targets, goals, or acronyms emerge next?*

Proposed Agenda

[Insert total duration- 60 minutes]

TIME	SESSION	SPEAKERS
3 minutes	Welcome remarks and setting the premise for the session	Moderator: Lauren Willington , Finance Policy Engagement Lead, World Benchmarking Alliance
10 to 12 minutes	Setting the context for the discussion- framing presentations on ISO 53001 and B+HR initiative: 1. International Standard Organization (ISO)	On ISO/UNDP 53001 as a gateway standard: Javier Garcia Diaz, CEO of UNE, the Spanish Association for Standardisation and Vice President, ISO

	2. UNDP- B+HR	<u>On Human Rights vs. Competitiveness:</u> Lauren Willington, Finance Policy Engagement Lead, World Benchmarking Alliance
30 minutes	<p><i>Panel discussion (moderated)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>International Standard Organization (ISO)</i> 2. <i>Business network and association with experience in advancing certifications in ethical governance using ecosystem approach</i> 3. <i>Multilateral representative from UNDP on supporting and advancing global frameworks and management system standards.</i> 	<p>Panelists:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>ISO:</u> Javier Garcia Diaz, CEO of UNE, the Spanish Association for Standardisation and Vice President, ISO 2. <u>Foretica:</u> Natalia Montero Llorente, Director Public Affairs 3. <u>UNDP:</u> Marcos Mancini, Global Head, Financial Policy and Regulatory Affairs
10 minutes	Q&A	Audience
5 minutes	Summary and call to action	Lauren Willington , Finance Policy Engagement Lead, World Benchmarking Alliance

Format

The following is the suggested format:

1. **Opening act: Setting the context-** introducing ISO/UNDP 53001 and the Business + Human Rights Initiative; What connects the two? **Articulating the shared, collective challenge that needs to be resolved-** both as a run up to 2030 and as part of the preparedness for what comes next.
 - a. **On ISO/UNDP 53001:** Javier Garcia Diaz, CEO of UNE, the Spanish Association for Standardisation
 - b. **On Human Rights vs. Competitiveness:** Lauren Willington, Finance Policy Engagement Lead, World Benchmarking Alliance
2. **Panel Discussion-** creating value for businesses, investors, regulators/governments, communities and the planet by using a rational operating system and governing principles; thinking of a sustainability infrastructure that goes beyond 2030
 - a. **Two rounds of questions per panelist** with some flexibility for the moderator to ask follow up questions to clarify message and information flow.

3. **Q&A-** 5 minutes for questions from the audience.
4. **Summary and call to action.**
 - a. **Key takeaways and actionable points for advancing the Seville Plan For Action**
by Lauren Willington, Finance Policy Engagement Lead, World Benchmarking Alliance