Human Rights Council, 38th Session  
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Agenda Item 5 – General Debate  
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I refer to the report of the Forum on Business and Human Rights.

There can be no doubt that private business is oftren responsible for severe human rights violations. It is urgent to ensure accountability for these.

Business can also abuse the processes of this Council.

Earlier this week, we heard a British corporate lawyer, masquerading as an African ngo, delivering a statement which might have been drafted by the Eritrean Government denying the well-documented¹ charges against her client of exploiting slave labour in Eritrea, and making accusations against the other ngos which had taken the floor which if directed against States would have provoked points of order, or at the very least “rights of reply”.

Of course when a business obeys political instructions about with which partners and where it should work it is no longer a private actor but an arm of the State. But States can and should tell businesses with whom they MAY NOT work because to do so would violate international law. The most clear-cut case is the prohibition against supporting the economic activity of the illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Arab territories, and we strongly uphold the work of the Office in compiling a blacklist of firms which breach this.