



Submission to UN Working Group on Business & Human Rights

Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, 8 December 2011

Given that Business & Human Rights Resource Centre is an independent, impartial information hub bringing together reports, articles, commentaries, allegations, company responses and diverse viewpoints on the full range of business & human rights issues, this submission will introduce features of the Resource Centre that we hope will be useful to the Working Group, rather than providing specific recommendations for areas to prioritise.

One general recommendation that we would like to make is that the Group’s work be as grounded as possible in real cases and issues from all regions.

We wish the Working Group the best in developing and executing its work-plan, and look forward to being in touch over the course of its mandate.

Business & Human Rights Resource Centre is a non-profit organization facilitating constructive, informed decision-making and public discussion. We promote transparency and encourage companies to respect human rights by bringing information about their conduct to a global audience: allegations of misconduct (accompanied by responses) and positive steps they are taking. We also feature guidance materials for all those working in this field. Our staff are based in China (Hong Kong), Colombia, India, Senegal, South Africa, UK, Ukraine, USA – soon also Kenya and the Gulf Region of the Middle East. Mary Robinson (former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights) chairs our 80-member International Advisory Network, and 23 leading academic institutions comprise our Academic Partners.

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The Resource Centre website

Our website www.business-humanrights.org is updated every hour with news & reports about companies’ human rights impacts around the world, as well as regulatory and policy developments. The information comes from a broad range of sources, including NGOs, companies, business organizations, governments, journalists, the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations, and academics. The site links to material in English, Spanish and French, and increasingly other languages as well.

The full site-map is here: www.business-humanrights.org/Sitemap. The site-map shows the breakdown of the website’s main sections including regions/countries, sectors, companies, company policy/steps (impact assessments, policies, reporting, etc.) and issues ranging from discrimination to access to water, from security issues to indigenous people’s rights.

Weekly Updates by email

Each week the Resource Centre sends out a free Weekly Update to over 13,000 recipients worldwide. Subscribers include people in all sectors: NGOs, business, media, investment, government, etc.

The Updates highlight the latest developments by region, and include company responses to allegations. We encourage members of the Working Group to sign up if they are not already receiving the Updates: www.business-humanrights.org/weekly_update_signup

Company responses to concerns

Before posting an allegation against a company on our website we invite the company to respond, if it has not already done so. So far we have invited over 800 responses, from over 500 companies headquartered in 65 countries. The response rate is 74%. The content of the allegations and company responses is a good indicator of business and human rights patterns, developments and challenges globally.

When former UN Special Representative Ruggie conducted his survey "[Corporations and human rights: a survey of the scope and patterns of alleged corporate-related human rights abuse](#)" (UN document A/HRC/8/5/Add.2), he used the archive of the Resource Centre's company responses as the basis. As the survey stated, this source was chosen because "the Resource Centre's online library is the most comprehensive, objective source available."

The full archive of company responses is available here:
<http://www.business-humanrights.org/Documents/Update-Charts>

Special portals

In addition to its main website the Resource Centre has portals on particular subjects.

[Getting Started](#) – an introduction to the subject and to specific business & human rights issues.

[Tools & Guidance](#) – practical guidance to help companies operationalise human rights – for use by businesspeople and others. Each section of this portal features, when relevant, the corresponding UN Guiding Principle at the top.

[Corporate Legal Accountability](#) – profiling human rights lawsuits brought against companies around the world.

[Business, Conflict & Peace](#) – focusing on conflict zones, where abuses are most severe, where the risk of corporate complicity is greatest, and where victims are the most vulnerable.

[UN Special Representative on business & human rights](#) – featuring the work of the former United Nations Special Representative, John Ruggie, and commentaries about it.

[Business & Children](#) – featuring the full range of business' impacts on children's rights, and a special page on the Children's Rights & Business Principles Initiative (a joint initiative by UNICEF, Save the Children & UN Global Compact).

Forthcoming in 2012: "Freedom of Association".

Forthcoming in 2012 (funding permitting):

- "UN Working Group on business & human rights"
- "UN Guiding Principles on Business & Human Rights"

The Centre also has various “mini-portals” such as:

[UN Working Group on business & human rights](#) – where we feature key developments regarding the UN Working Group to date. We plan to keep this updated with new statements and activities by the Working Group and relevant commentaries, encouraging a broad range of stakeholders to follow its work. As mentioned above, we hope to develop this into a major portal in 2012.

[UN Guiding Principles on Business & Human Rights](#) – this provides the text of the Principles and is updated regularly with examples of their implementation by different sectors. As mentioned above, we hope to develop this into a major portal in 2012.

[Company policy statements on human rights](#) – a running list of companies’ human rights policy statements, currently linking to 291 policy statements. The Resource Centre plans a new project to reach out to companies in all regions and encourage them to adopt policies, building on our [2008](#) and [2010](#) projects undertaken in partnership with Mary Robinson and her former organization Realizing Rights.

[Human rights impacts of oil pollution](#) – focusing on Ecuador, Nigeria, US Gulf Coast.

[NGO reports](#) – this section links to reports on company conduct by NGOs. As well as providing easy access to the reports themselves, it gives a helpful indication of which NGOs in which regions are active on business & human rights issues.

Regional briefings

The Resource Centre issues annual [regional briefings](#). They provide a round-up of developments in the region, including specific cases and legal/policy developments. To date we have issued briefings on [South Asia](#) and [Anglophone Africa](#). Our next two briefings will be on Francophone Africa and on Eastern Europe/Central Asia.

Corporate Legal Accountability Briefing

The Resource Centre will issue its first annual briefing on Corporate Legal Accountability in early 2012.

On the Horizon

Five times a year the Resource Centre issues “On the Horizon – A practical bulletin on what is ahead in the field of business & human rights”. [Past bulletins are here](#). The purpose of the bulletin is to keep people informed of what lies ahead, and to help them spread the word about forthcoming initiatives. The Working Group is welcome to include entries in the bulletin – we will send you an invitation in advance of each issue.

Regional researchers

Key to the Resource Centre’s ability to highlight company impacts worldwide – positive and negative – are its regional researchers. They are in close touch with local NGOs, businesses, government representatives and journalists. Currently we have regional researchers based in China (Hong Kong), Colombia, India, Senegal, South Africa and Ukraine – Western Europe and North America are covered from our London and New York offices. Recruitment is currently underway for researchers based in Kenya and in the Gulf Region of the Middle East. And funding permitting, we also hope to recruit researchers based in Brazil, Egypt, Mexico and South East Asia. We have found that there is no substitute for having a staff person based on the ground in a region, someone who speaks local languages and understands the regional context.

Below are all of our staff involved in research, indicating where each is based and with a link to their bio. Working Group members are very welcome to contact any of our researchers with particular questions ([contact details are available here](#)).

- [Christopher L. Avery \(Director, based in London\)](#)
- [Joanne Bauer \(Senior Researcher, based in New York\)](#)
- [Malena Bengtsson \(Researcher, based in London\)](#)
- [Lowell Chow \(East Asia Researcher & Representative, based in Hong Kong\)](#)
- [Aliou Diouf \(Francophone Africa Researcher & Representative, based in Dakar\)](#)
- [Marta Kasztelan \(Project Researcher, based in London\)](#)
- [Harpreet Kaur \(South Asia Researcher & Representative, based in Delhi\)](#)
- [Mauricio Lazala \(Deputy Director, based in London\)](#)
- [Danielle McMullan \(Researcher, based in London\)](#)
- [Abiola Okpechi \(Anglophone Africa Researcher & Representative, based in Cape Town\)](#)
- [Gregory Tzeuschler Regaignon \(Research Director, based in Paris\)](#)
- [Amanda Romero-Medina \(Latin America & Caribbean Researcher & Representative, based in Bogotá\)](#)
- [Annabel Short \(Programme Director, based in New York\)](#)
- [Ella Skybenko \(Eastern Europe/Central Asia Researcher & Representative, based in Kyiv\)](#)
- [Sif Thorgeirsson \(Manager, Corporate Legal Accountability Project, based in Washington DC\)](#)