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Corporate Accountability Newsletter: 2006, No. 26, 07/04/2006

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Welcome to the new Corporate Accountability Website

In order to enable a better handling and enhanced search functions, WEED and the Federal Environmental Agency (Umweltbundesamt, UBA) decided to relaunch the Corporate Accountability Website.

The Document Archive has a new structure - users can now browse the documents by subject as listed on the left bar.

The search functions have been enhanced and an advanced search has been added. Thus the search can be restricted, respectively refined to find documents with specific topics and publishers and publishing dates only. Important new documents, news and new weblinks will be displayed in the "Hot Topic" section on the right bar. Additionnally we will commence to do a Newsletter Archive. The "Your Input" section facilitates direct response to and interaction with the editors.

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**\*\*In the News\*\***

- Interim report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises

This report is submitted in response to Commission resolution 2005/69, which asks the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises to submit an interim report to the sixty-second session of the Commission. The report is intended to frame the overall context encompassing the mandate as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General sees it, to outline the general strategic approach taken, and to summarize the current and planned programme of activities.

Download the interim Report (PDF; 109 KB):

[http://www.corporate-accountability.org/eng/documents/2006/un\\_norms\\_interim\\_report.pdf](http://www.corporate-accountability.org/eng/documents/2006/un_norms_interim_report.pdf)

- Spain plans to ban sex discrimination at work

The proposed law will oblige companies with more than 250 workers to introduce "equality plans" aimed at eliminating discrimination against women in pay, promotion and benefits. It also introduces eight days of paternity leave for men.

Read the article (Financial Times):

<http://msnbc.msn.com/id/11656856/>

- Draft Sustainability Reporting Guidelines. By the Global Reporting Initiative

The GRI Reporting Framework is intended to serve as a generally accepted framework for reporting on an organization's economic, environmental, and social performance. It is designed for use by organizations of any size, sector, or location, and takes into account the practical considerations faced by a diverse range of organizations - from small enterprises to those with extensive and geographically dispersed operations.

The GRI Framework describes the general and sector-specific content that has been identified by a wide range of stakeholders globally as generally applicable for

describing an organization's sustainability performance. The Guidelines consist of principles for defining report content and ensuring the quality of reported information as well as standard disclosures comprising performance indicators and other disclosure items. The Guidelines also include guidance on specific technical issues in reporting.

Download the Draft Sustainability Reporting Guidelines (PDF; 712 KB):

[http://www.corporate-accountability.org/eng/documents/2006/draft\\_sustainability\\_reporting\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.corporate-accountability.org/eng/documents/2006/draft_sustainability_reporting_guidelines.pdf)

-- International Finance Corporation's Policy and Performance Standards on Social & Environmental Sustainability

These Performance Standards are essential documents to help IFC and its clients manage and improve their social and environment performance through an outcomes-based approach. The desired outcomes are described in the objectives of each Performance Standard, followed by specific requirements to help clients achieve these outcomes through means that are appropriate to the nature and scale of the project and commensurate with the level of social and environmental risks (likelihood of harm) and impacts. Central to these requirements is a consistent approach to avoid adverse impacts on workers, communities, and the environment, or if avoidance is not possible, to reduce, mitigate, or compensate for the impacts, as appropriate. The Performance Standards also provide a solid base from which clients may increase the sustainability of their business operations.

Download the new IFC-Standards (PDF; 477 KB):

[http://www.corporate-accountability.org/eng/documents/2006/ifc\\_policy\\_and\\_performance\\_standards.pdf](http://www.corporate-accountability.org/eng/documents/2006/ifc_policy_and_performance_standards.pdf)

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\*\*New Papers\*\*

-- Comments to the Interim Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the Issue of Human Rights and Transnational Corporations and other Business Enterprises. By the The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)

The interim report offers an excellent diagnosis of the challenges facing transnational corporations in a globalized world, and recognized the need for an improved accountability of these actors, commensurate with the influence they exercise.

The report explores existing responses to these challenges. The FIDH shares the view that voluntary initiatives however valuable have limited applicability, as they apply to certain sectors and certain actors only, and refer to different standards. The FIDH agrees with the SRSG that the challenge for the human rights community is to make the promotion and protection of human rights a more standard and uniform corporate practice. The FIDH believes that this will be achieved through the adoption of universal standards applicable to all companies.

Download the Comments (PDF; 532 KB):

[http://www.corporate-accountability.org/eng/documents/2006/comments\\_to\\_the\\_interim\\_report\\_fidh.pdf](http://www.corporate-accountability.org/eng/documents/2006/comments_to_the_interim_report_fidh.pdf)

-- Commentaries on the interim report of John Ruggie, UN Special Representative on Business and Human Rights

The Business and Human Rights Resource Centre has filed a comprehensive webpage on commentaries on the interim report of John Ruggie, UN Special Representative on Business and Human Rights. Amongst others, contributions from Business for Social Responsibility, the Transnational Economic Law Research Center, Faculty of Law, Martin Luther University and Stratfor or the Ethical Corporation Magazine can be found there.

Visit the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre's website:

<http://www.business-humanrights.org/Categories/UNintlorgs/UNintergovernmentalorgs/UN/UNSpecialRepresentativeonb>

-- Corporate Social Responsibility as Business Strategy. By James K. Rowe

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), particularly the corporate code of conduct, has been one of global business' preferred strategies for quelling popular discontent with corporate power. Attention to CSR's historical development reveals it has flourished as discourse and practice at times when corporations became subject to intense public scrutiny. In this essay two periods of corporate crisis are outlined that account for the role codes have played in quieting public concern over increasing corporate power:

- 1) When developing countries along with Western unions and social activists were calling for a 'New International Economic Order' that would more tightly regulate the activity of Transnational Corporations (1960-1976); and
- 2) When mass anti-globalization demonstrations and high profile corporate scandals are increasing the demand for regulation (1998-Present).

Download the analysis (PDF; 248 KB):

[http://www.corporate-accountability.org/eng/documents/2005/csr\\_as\\_business\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.corporate-accountability.org/eng/documents/2005/csr_as_business_strategy.pdf)

-- Foreign Direct Investment, Development and Gender Equity: A Review of Research and Policy. UNRISD (PDF; 495 KB)

This paper provides a summary of the empirical and policy-related literature on the multifaceted relationships between gender inequalities and foreign direct investment (FDI). The literature on gender and FDI is evaluated with reference to the broader literature on FDI and economic development, new research directions are identified, and the policy implications of managing FDI for development and gender equity are discussed. The paper reviews the research on the impact of FDI on investment, productivity, trade, employment, wages and working conditions, and finds few of the straightforward conclusions that the popularity of FDI as a tool for development would seem to indicate.

Download the analysis (PDF; 495 KB):

[http://www.corporate-accountability.org/eng/documents/2006/fdi\\_and\\_gender\\_unrisd.pdf](http://www.corporate-accountability.org/eng/documents/2006/fdi_and_gender_unrisd.pdf)

--Who's minding the store? The Business of Public, Private and Civil Actors in Zones of Conflict. By the Bonn International Center for Conversion

Business has a role to play in zones of conflict. What has become clear is that neutrality is no longer an option and that business' ancient claims to neutrality were mistaken.

This brief is hoped to aid the discussion by on the one hand providing an overview on the state of the art, and on the other hand identifying difficulties and caveats ahead.

The paper bases on the position that attention should be drawn to the concept of co-regulation - voluntary membership and mandatory compliance - including all relevant parties: usually international organisations, governments, industry and NGOs.

Download the briefing (PDF; 2,42 MB):

[http://www.corporate-accountability.org/eng/documents/2006/whos\\_minding\\_the\\_store\\_bicc\\_brief32.pdf](http://www.corporate-accountability.org/eng/documents/2006/whos_minding_the_store_bicc_brief32.pdf)

-- Governance towards responsible forest business. By IIED

This paper is for government authorities with responsibility for the forest sector. It aims to clarify what 'responsible forest business' might mean. It proposes a bigger and bolder idea of responsibility than many notions of corporate social responsibility. It suggests broader ethical consideration of what business is responsible for, who business is responsible to and over what time frame business is responsible. The paper defines responsible forest business as "compliance with the set of values and principles held by local, national and possibly even international interest groups over the period for which the impact of forest business lasts".

Download the paper (PDF; 344 KB):

[http://www.corporate-accountability.org/eng/documents/2006/responsible\\_forest\\_business.pdf](http://www.corporate-accountability.org/eng/documents/2006/responsible_forest_business.pdf)

-- The GRI's Missing Link. By the The Jus Semper Global Alliance

This essay argues that the new GRI's "G3 Sustainability Reporting Guidelines" fails, once again, to address the critical issue of living wages and relies on the same old multilateral norms that condone the corporate practice of paying misery wages in most countries in the South, despite the fact that a living wage has long been declared a human right. There is an implicit missing link in the world's pursuit of true sustainability.

Download the essay (PDF; 541 KB):

[http://www.corporate-accountability.org/eng/documents/2006/living\\_wages\\_the\\_gris\\_missing\\_link.pdf](http://www.corporate-accountability.org/eng/documents/2006/living_wages_the_gris_missing_link.pdf)

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\*\* New Links\*\*

-- Captain Hook Awards for Biopiracy

The Coalition Against Biopiracy each year chooses a "winner" of the Captain Hook Awards for Biopiracy. Furthermore it honors critics of biopiracy with the Cog Awards for Resisting Biopiracy. You can view nominations already submitted. Nominations will be approved before appearing on the site.

Visit the website:

<http://www.captainhookawards.org/nominations>

-- Jus Semper Global Alliance

The Living Wages North and South Initiative (TLWNSI) constitutes the sole program of The Jus Semper Global Alliance (TJSGA). TLWNSI is a long-term program developed to contribute to social justice in the world by achieving fair labour endowments for the workers of all the countries immersed in the global market system. It is applied through its program of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and it focuses on gradual wage equalization, for real democracy, the rule of law and living wages are the three fundamental elements in a community's quest for social justice.

Visit the Website:

<http://www.jussemp.org/>

Greetings from

Peter Fuchs (WEED) [Peter.Fuchs@weed-online.org](mailto:Peter.Fuchs@weed-online.org)

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[www.corporate-accountability.org](http://www.corporate-accountability.org) aims to facilitate the flow of information among NGOs and social movements who believe their governments, private sector and civil society need to make greater efforts to ensure the accountability of business and industry, especially Transnational Corporations, to society. It contains information about ongoing civil society campaigns on corporate accountability and about NGOs and trade unions who are active in this field. It provides comprehensive material on codes of conduct, multi-stakeholder initiatives and intergovernmental processes, as well as best and worst practice cases of corporate behaviour.

Finally, this site makes available documents and publications on corporate accountability and links to relevant research institutes and databases.

Feedback and suggestions are highly appreciated!

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The views and opinions expressed need not necessarily be those of the sponsors.

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Corporate-Accountability-News mailing list

[Corporate-Accountability-News@lists.trilos.net](mailto:Corporate-Accountability-News@lists.trilos.net)

<http://lists.trilos.net/mailman/listinfo/corporate-accountability-news>