

SUMMARY

ROUNDTABLE FOR BUSINESS LEADERS IN THE GCC: UNDERSTANDING AND IMPLEMENTING CORPORATE RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

17 & 18 November 2013, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates



ORGANISED BY



وزارة الخارجية
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

WITH SUPPORT OF



GLOBAL BUSINESS INITIATIVE
ON HUMAN RIGHTS

ROUNDTABLE OVERVIEW

On Sunday 17 and Monday 18 November 2013, an event entitled **Roundtable for Business Leaders in the GCC: Understanding and Implementing Corporate Respect for Human Rights** provided space for a unique **exchange among business and government leaders** in relation to this rapidly developing area of **corporate responsibility**.

The session brought together experiences of 90 individuals – from the UAE and Gulf business community and multi-national corporations, together with representatives from UAE, Gulf and international governments, civil society, and the United Nations. Companies present included **Emirates, Khansaheb Civil Engineering, Vale, Agility, Total S.A** and many more headquartered in the region and worldwide. The Roundtable was convened by the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs, supported by the Global Business Initiative on Human Rights.

“The fact that you are here today demonstrates that you care about finding ways to maximize those benefits and minimize any negative impacts for people involved with, or affected by, your business. Of course, the protection of human rights is as much a challenge for governments as it is for businesses. And it is an ongoing one for all of us – new contexts and new opportunities will always emerge that we need to address. This is true of the UAE as it is of any country. This is important work and like much important work, it will never be fully done. But governments and businesses, working together where necessary, can make a difference”

Dr. Abdul Rahim Al Awadhi, Assistant Minister for Legal Affairs, UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs



“Social expectations regarding business have shifted. The Guiding Principles ensure that we speak the same language and find solutions so that people are treated with respect and dignity, and that we know what to expect of government and business”

Dr Alexandra Guaqueta, Member, UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights

ROUNDTABLE OBJECTIVES

The Roundtable aimed to:

- Convene a committed group of business representatives from the GCC region to discuss corporate action around the corporate responsibility to respect human rights
- Demonstrate the business benefits of integrating respect for human rights into operations, products and services

- Introduce the UN Guiding Principles, and tools and resources to assist businesses in their human rights journey
- Explore common human rights challenges that businesses face around the world
- Share business experiences and approaches to implementing corporate respect for human rights in policies, processes and systems

"Total adopted its Code of conduct in 2000, and is on a journey to improve business processes on human rights. We have identified the workplace, local communities and security as key human rights areas for us. We have developed a human rights internal guide, taken steps to embed human rights within the responsible departments, completed ethical assessments, undertaken training. We have developed a human rights roadmap, a precise plan that will help us embed this further. We will continue on this journey, and continue to view this as an opportunity for Total - an opportunity for the business to attract business partners who want to work with companies who have robust policies and practices."

Mr Philip Jordan, Chairman of the Ethics Committee, Total

ROUNDTABLE FOCUS

The Roundtable was conducted through plenary and through small group dialogues, and focused on:

- The UN Framework and Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights
- Corporate challenges, experiences and practices from diverse sectors and countries
- Identifying and understanding human rights impacts and responses: workplace rights and vulnerable groups; gender and business; employee engagement; customers and human rights; natural resources, society and security
- The need for shared responsibilities of non-business and business actors regarding sustainable business
- Integration into corporate policies, processes and management systems
- Ways forward

"At Vale, we started small and simple, and then gained momentum. In 2007, we had no human rights team, no budget, but we knew that as a first step Vale needed a human rights policy, independent of the Code of Conduct, that would be specific to the mining industry. We looked at the UN Framework on business and human rights, and then all of the international standards, the extractive industry's' benchmarks, and into other company's policies - and then drafted the company's human rights policy. The policy was discussed with all departments to improve the policy and get their support, and then it was delivered to the Executive Directors of the Board. That validated the importance of the subject and centralized a discipline that was spread out in different departments. Now we have a corporate team, focal points, a budget, governance structures, and a strategy for our due diligence implementation"

Liesel Filgueiras, General Manager Human Rights, Indigenous Communities, Vale Volunteer Program and International Community Relations, Vale



CONVENERS



وزارة الخارجية
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs represents the foundations of UAE society and serves as its window to the outer world, communicating the thoughts and vision of the UAE leadership, asserting the values of human brotherhood, and calling for lifting the suffering of humans. The Ministry promotes the importance of attaining global peace and amicably resolving disputes through dialogue.



GLOBAL BUSINESS INITIATIVE
ON HUMAN RIGHTS

The Global Business Initiative on Human Rights (GBI) exists to advance human rights in a business context around the world. The underlying vision is a global community of corporations from all sectors knowing and showing that they respect the dignity and rights of the people they impact and interact with. From a business perspective this supports an enhanced approach to global leadership and risk management, and can provide access to markets, customers and capital. GBI is led by a core group of 18 major corporations headquartered in Asia, Europe, Latin America, Middle East, North Africa and North America. GBI works in collaboration with the UN Global Compact Office and is supported by the Swiss Government.

The GBI work plan is organised into two parallel tracks: First, Member Peer Learning creates a safe space for the 18 GBI companies to share practices, challenges and innovations with peers focused on respecting human rights in practice and implementation of the UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights. Second, Global Business Outreach focuses on awareness-raising and capacity building for business in diverse regions of the world, particularly in emerging and developing markets.

For more information visit: www.global-business-initiative.org

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