



Leading corporate law firms advise UN Special Representative on business and human rights

(New York and Geneva, 28 January 2009). Fifteen leading corporate law firms from around the world will participate in a UN-led effort to identify whether and how national corporate law principles and practices currently foster corporate cultures respectful of human rights, Professor John Ruggie, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on business and human rights, announced Wednesday.

A total of some 40 jurisdictions will be explored, chosen in order to ensure a broad geographical spread and a mix of common law, civil law and other legal traditions, as well as reflecting the expertise of the law firms involved. A list of firms and jurisdictions is provided below.

“This is extraordinarily important work,” said Ruggie. “The relationship between corporate law and human rights remains poorly understood. The willingness of so many firms to provide their services pro bono in order to expand the common knowledge base indicates that corporate law firms worldwide appreciate that human rights are relevant to their clients’ needs.”

The fifteen firms will look at a range of corporate law topics as they relate to the business and human rights context, including incorporation; directors’ duties; reporting and listing requirements; and shareholder engagement. Firms will be asked to explore not only what laws currently exist, but also how corporate regulators and courts apply the law to require or facilitate consideration by companies of their human rights impacts and preventative or remedial action where appropriate.

“Corporate law, like other policy domains that shape business practice, traditionally has been kept institutionally and conceptually separate from human rights concerns,” Ruggie continued. “Yet recent developments suggest that regulators are beginning to link corporate governance with management of social, environmental and ethical impacts, including human rights.”

At the end of the mapping project, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General will publish a compilation and analysis of the findings. In consultation with relevant stakeholders, he will then consider what recommendations to make to states and businesses. To this end, he plans to convene a multi-stakeholder expert consultation in the autumn of 2009, hosted by York University’s Osgoode Hall Law School in Toronto.

Participating law firms

- Abeledo & Gottheil: www.abeledogottheil.com.ar
- Allens Arthur Robinson: www.aar.com.au
- Amarchand & Mangaldas & Suresh A. Shroff & Co: www.chambersandpartners.com/Asia/rankings36.aspx?fid=3408&solbar=1
- Brigard & Urrutia: www.bu.com.co
- Carey & Allende: www.careyallende.com
- Clifford Chance: www.cliffordchance.com
- Cotty Vivant Marchisio & Lauzeral: www.cvml.com
- Creel, Garcia-Cuéllar, Aiza & Enriquez: www.creelmex.com.mx
- Edward Nathan Sonnenbergs: www.problemsolved.co.za
- Mah-Kamariyah & Philip Koh: www.mkp.com.my
- Mannheimer Swartling: www.mannheimerswartling.se
- NautaDutilh: www.nautadutilh.com
- Souza, Cescon-Avedissian, Barrieu & Fleisch: www.scbf.com.br
- Stikeman Elliott: www.stikeman.com
- Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP: www.weil.com

National jurisdictions that will be explored by the participating law firms

Africa: Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Liberia, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, Sudan.

Asia-Pacific: Australia, China (incl. Hong Kong), India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Singapore.

Europe & Middle East: Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom.

North America: Canada, Mexico, USA.

South America: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia.

For more information and interviews contact Professor John Ruggie (John_Ruggie@harvard.edu) or Vanessa Zimmerman (vanessa_zimmerman@ksg.harvard.edu) -- or call +1 617 418 4130.