

PRESS RELEASE

EMBARGOED UNTIL 06:00AM (CET) on 3 DECEMBER 2008

PARIS – Tomorrow morning (4 December) 300 leaders from business, civil society and government will come together at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris to mark the 60th Anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at the very spot the Declaration was adopted in December 1948.

Then the world was recovering from a terrible war and a legacy of holocaust and oppression. Now the world struggles with financial, economic and environmental pressures as well as deepening mistrust and division in some cultures. It is at this time that the governments of the United Nations are asking all businesses, on every continent, to respect human rights in the context of globalisation. Now also clarity is starting to emerge about what business should or should not do. New ideas are emerging about how all sectors of society need to work together to tackle our common challenges.

"As we look back over the past 60 years of the history of human rights, there is much to celebrate but also much that remains of concern. Over recent years the business community has stepped into the debate in a real and direct way and I very much welcome this. The months and years ahead will not be easy but there is also a real opportunity to harness the entrepreneurial spirit, to create new economic opportunities around some of the environmental and social challenges that all our societies face."

- Mary Robinson, President, Realizing Rights: The Ethical Globalization Initiative (former President of Ireland)

The 300 delegates will report on what government, business, trade unions and civil society are doing to make a difference, to minimise the risk of business-related human rights abuse and to seek new opportunities. A particular focus is given to some of the key global challenges of the century: poverty, discrimination, climate change, energy, water and food – and how human rights approaches can create more sustainable change.

"The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was a call to action addressed to every person and every organ of society, to help realize the rights to which each of us is entitled simply by virtue of being human. This gathering of three hundred business and civil society experts from around the world allows us to reflect on some of the progress made so far, as well as the challenges remaining. I applaud all those who have made concrete efforts to demonstrate the kinds of things business can do, and also must not do, in order to help realize this historic quest."

- Professor John Ruggie, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Business and Human Rights

"60 years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is now widely admitted that corporations also have the responsibility to respect human rights. Time for implementation and remediation has come. It is urgent to prevent, repress and repair the business-related human rights abuses that are still occurring on a daily basis in particular in the developing world".

- Souhayr Belhassen, President, International Federation for Human Rights

"The question is no longer whether or not there is a business case for respecting human rights...it is about how does business move human rights from the periphery of Corporate Social Responsibility policy to the core of business operations..."

- Irene Khan, Secretary General, Amnesty International

Some of the keynote speakers will be available for a press briefing at the Palais de Chaillot, Paris, between **13h45 and 14h15 on 4 December**. They will also report on the outcome of a Leader's breakfast held earlier that day and on the morning's plenary discussions.

If you would like to attend please contact:

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www.anniversaryseminar.org

The events of 3-5 December are organised and supported by:

Business Leaders Initiative on Human Rights (Member companies: ABB, AREVA, Barclays, Ericsson, Gap Inc., General Electric, Hewlett Packard, National Grid, Novartis, Novo Nordisk, Newmont, Statoil, The Coca-Cola Company, Zain)

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Realizing Rights : The Ethical Globalization Initiative

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