

Dr Sorcha MacLeod, University of Sheffield (UK) **Business, Human Rights Violations and Accountability: The Role of Soft Law Initiatives**

NCCR Trade Regulation Brown Bag Series
Wednesday, 3 March 2010, 12.15 – 13.45

Anna Nussbaum Auditorium, World Trade Institute, University of Bern
Hallerstrasse 6, 3012 Bern, Switzerland

Invitation

**Dear Madam,
Dear Sir,**

It is a pleasure to invite you to the NCCR Trade Regulation Brown Bag Seminar on **‘Business, Human Rights Violations and Accountability: The Role of Soft Law Initiatives’** by Sorcha MacLeod, School of Law, University of Sheffield.

Abstract

In a 2008 report entitled ‘Protect, Respect and Remedy: A Framework for Business and Human Rights,’ the UN Secretary General’s Special Rapporteur on Business and Human Rights, John Ruggie asserted that private business actors have a “baseline” responsibility to respect human rights. Notwithstanding this pronouncement, it is clear that business entities invariably escape responsibility for their activities because the international community has been slow to put in place regulatory mechanisms which ensure their accountability for transnational misconduct, let alone provide redress for human rights violations. Nevertheless, over the past decade various organisational players have attempted to construct a variety of alternative, non-judicial mechanisms to implement and adjudicate corporate social responsibility (CSR) standards. The result has been chaotic but not entirely ineffective.

The brown bag seminar focuses on the work of Ruggie and on two key soft law responses to business misconduct: first, the UN Global Compact and secondly, the National Contact Points

(NCPs) created under the OECD Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises, and the UK NCP in particular. The question is whether such responses provide realistic methods of ensuring the protection of human rights as well as adequate redress for those on the receiving end of bad business practices. What do they contribute to the work of Special Representative Ruggie, if anything? While the international community is a long way from implementing an effective CSR strategy, both the UN and OECD soft law responses have much to contribute on a practical level and ought not to be dismissed as inferior to traditional dispute settlement mechanisms. Absent an internationally binding CSR mechanism, such responses offer a useful starting point for ensuring adherence to minimum CSR standards.

For Sorcha MacLeod's CV, please see:

<http://www.shef.ac.uk/law/staff/acstaff/macleods.html>

Please feel free to forward this invitation. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us. More information related to the event can be found at: www.nccr-trade.org/events/brownbag. Participation is free of charge, no registration is needed.

We warmly welcome you to join our seminar at the World Trade Institute!

Yours sincerely,

François Rossé

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NCCR Trade Regulation Brown Bag Seminars are informal 45-minute presentations, given by external or in-house researchers. The presentations are followed by a 45-minute Q&A session and/or group discussion. Everyone is welcome to join and, in general, it is not necessary to sign up. The Brown Bag concept comes from the US; it means that people bring their own lunch (in a brown bag...) and eat it during the presentation.