



■ Human Rights and International Business

The March 1997 "Roundtable on Human Rights and International Business" was organized by the Faculty of Law and the International Centre at the University of Calgary. The meeting brought together businesses, NGOs and academics to discuss linkages between human rights and international business practices, including voluntary codes of conduct. Some key observations and recommendations include:

- there is a need for greater understanding among all sectors on human rights issues, including the human rights conventions to which Canada is a signatory,
- business should consider adopting voluntary codes of conduct as an effective means of protecting human rights. Such codes should also address corruption, sex tourism and child pornography,
- codes of conduct should be developed with the input of business, academics, NGOs and human rights groups. A model code should be explored within the context of APEC meetings,
- to be effective, codes of conduct should be implemented at the international level through the IMF, World Bank or WTO. Financial input for maintaining such a code should come from all sectors,
- business can reinforce human rights by promoting parallel initiatives in areas such as literacy, communications and health,
- government can play a role in facilitating fora among businesses on human rights and codes of conduct. Businesses indicated that the role of government should not involve legislation or regulation, but the provision of guidelines and incentives for protecting human rights. To be most effective, codes of conduct must be developed and adhered to voluntarily by business.

These views are informing the 1997 National Forum.

■ Women and Economic Development in Asia

The "Roundtable on Women and Economic Development in Asia" was held at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton in March 1997. Participants included academics, government officials and NGOs. Some key recommendations follow:

- the gender aspects of Canadian foreign policy should be modified to emphasize participatory development, viewing women as contributors, not clients, of the development process,
- Canada's gender policy should address job insecurity and the shrinkage of social safety nets which have a negative impact on the lives of women and children in many developing countries,
- given the increased importance of economic development, Canada's gender equality policy should emphasize equal access to capital and technology, especially within micro-credit and micro-enterprise contexts,
- gender equality in Canada's foreign policy should encompass securing equality in job opportunities, education, political participation and civil rights,
- in order to sustain the move to gender equality, Canada's foreign policy must encourage the commitment of money and other resources on (a) the direct support of women's groups, and (b) the implementation of policies and laws needed to maintain supportive socio-cultural, economic and political environments.

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