

Recommendations

III. Government to NGOs

Support Capacity Development and Accountability of the NGO Sector

There is much attention being paid today to the calls by NGOs for the need for external verification of corporate operations by NGOs themselves. In principle, companies interviewed are not opposed to verification of sustainability or stakeholder management systems and some are either actively engaged in the development of third-party verification systems, or already have some components in place. Regarding the role of NGOs however, concerns exist.

Corporations generally encourage movement towards more systematic sustainability management systems and stakeholder engagement management systems, and their ultimate verification by third parties (not necessarily NGOs, but indeed a mix of traditional and non-traditional stakeholders), but are opposed to immediate legislation of this practice. The sense is that immediate legislation could not be effectively implemented, and that resources would be better spend over the immediate years in building corporate, government, and NGO infrastructures to be both prepared for longer term global international law and standards, and prepared to compete and contribute in a global economy that fully factors sustainability.

Concerns Regarding the Role of NGOs – Accountability, Stakeholder Priority, Joint Responsibility

Accountability

- The perception that NGOs do not currently meet same standards of public accountability that companies must.
- When engaged by corporations, NGOs often lack capacity, expertise, and perspective to contribute significantly to solutions, and are still finding this role to be difficult.
- An increasing number of cases of NGOs putting forward their own unverified information - proven to be inaccurate - into the public domain at the expense of companies. NGOs must also be held accountable for their actions and must be prepared to be as transparent and accountable as business. Today, NGOs have public trust but are lacking in management systems to ensure credibility on the accountability front.
- For the above reasons, the companies' perspective is that NGOs themselves are not equipped for the legislation they wish to see enacted (regardless of the merit of their proposals on a long term basis).

Stakeholder Priority

- Canadian NGOs often do not directly represent the interest of stakeholders who are most directly affected or most directly affect corporate operations. Canadian companies prefer to deal directly with local actors, be they NGOs, community