

Mr. Günter Verheugen  
Commissioner for Enterprise and Industry  
European Commission

24 May 2007  
Our ref: B 674

Dear Mr. Verheugen,

**Subject: Amnesty International's call for action on European Parliament's resolution on "Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): a new partnership".**

The debate on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the EU comes after a year of stalemate brought about by the Commission's Communication on CSR (COM 0249 of March 2006) which failed to address the backbone of accountability. An opportunity to overcome this impasse has been provided by the European Parliament's adoption, on 13 March 2007, of the report "Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): a new partnership".

The report acknowledges the concerns of some key stakeholders about the lack of transparency and balance of the consultation procedure, which led to a far from satisfactory *status quo* on CSR at the EU. It also proposes to move beyond "processes" towards "outcomes" through a number of specific steps that are measurable and transparent, i.e. that they are accountable. Important issues are brought forward such as the potential inclusion of social and environmental reporting alongside financial reporting, foreign direct liability of EU companies, lobbying transparency and directors having responsibility for their companies' acts.

Amnesty International considers this report as an opportunity to bring back stakeholders into an inclusive and transparent debate so that CSR in the EU can move towards compliance with international human rights law. Both governments and companies are under obligation to respect and protect human rights.

The Commission has the responsibility to pursue coherence between internal and external dimensions of EU policies: from labour and environmental safeguards to development cooperation and trade agreements. CSR should be promoted across all fields of activity and this is precisely what the European Parliament asks the Commission to do.

In the lead-up to the G8 summit under a German presidency, the relevance of CSR was highlighted in the discussions held by the G8 Labour and Employment Ministers on the social dimension of globalisation. The current presidency regards the observance and strengthening of minimum standards (core labour standards), intensification of the social dialogue, and the fostering and propagation of corporate social responsibility as possible instruments to socially shape the globalisation process in a responsible manner. Such political occasion can not, and should not, be missed to make significant progress on a responsibility shared by all.

Amnesty International calls on the Commission to propose and discuss a framework of practical measures for the governments to comply with their duty to protect in the context of CSR. At the same time, companies should be assuming direct responsibilities to respect human rights and to meet social and environmental concerns through minimum agreed standards to provide for a level playing field.

We remain committed to a meaningful discussion and we kindly request to be informed on the proposed steps to take up the European Parliament's recommendations.

Yours sincerely,



Dick Oosting  
Director  
Amnesty International EU Office

Cc: Presidency Troika  
Employment and Social Affairs Committee, European Parliament  
Human Rights Sub-committee, European Parliament