

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY LUNCHEON: ADVANCING CSR THROUGH CORPORATE-ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS

OPENING REMARKS AND PRESENTATION

Dr. Mohamed Mattar

Executive Director, The Protection Project

The Johns Hopkins University, School of Advanced International Studies

Thank you, Professor Ruth Wedgwood for these insightful opening remarks.

On behalf of The Protection Project at the Johns Hopkins University, School of Advanced International Studies

I would like to welcome our distinguished guests from the corporate world and academia to this luncheon on "Advancing CSR Through Corporate-Academic Partnerships."

We, here at The Protection Project, cover different areas of human rights. I can identify seven main areas of work. These are:

1. Trafficking in Persons
2. Clinical Legal Education
3. Legal Reform
4. Promotion of Religious Dialogue
5. Enhancing Capacity of Civil Society
6. Human Rights Education
7. Corporate Social Responsibility

Last June 19-20, 2013, we held in Istanbul, Turkey, the First Regional Conference on Corporate Social Responsibility in the Middle East. At the conference, we had representatives from Turkey, Iran, Qatar, Jordan, Egypt, Oman, Lebanon, the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Korea, and Italy.

Our issue was how do we define CSR and how can we promote the concept in countries of the Middle East.

And we are continuing the dialogue. Mark your calendar: On April 20-21, 2014 we will hold our Second Regional conference on Corporate Social Responsibility in the Middle East, this time in Jerash, Jordan, in collaboration with the University of Jerash.

At this conference, we will try to put together an action plan whereby we link academia with the corporate world by focusing on five main initiatives in which, I believe, academia is best suited to assist the corporate world in advancing their CSR agenda.

1. First, should we conduct research on indicators that help us understand what is a good Corporate Social Initiative? Perhaps, this would be a good venue for The Protection Project at The Johns Hopkins University to work with some of the Corporation present today.

We are publishing the 100 Best Practices on Corporate Social Responsibility. It would be a good idea to know how we define “best practices”.

2. Second, should we conduct research to find out the impact of CSR on the society as a whole? Perhaps this would be another good issue that we can address together between the Protection Project at the Johns Hopkins University and some of the corporations that are present today.

3. Third, should we encourage teaching CSR in schools and universities? Back in summer 2010, I taught a course on international business and human rights here at SAIS.

In our 2013-2014 International Human Rights Clinic, which I teach with Professor Tiffany and Julia, we are covering the link between human rights and business with a focus on production of goods and how companies observe labor rights standards.

Also in 2011, I introduced the same course with Elaine Panter at the faculty of Commerce at Beirut Arab University in Lebanon and then at Cairo University in the LLM program.

The good news is that Professor Nina Gardner is teaching a course on Business and Human Rights here at SAIS today. We need more of these courses, not only in international relations and political sciences majors but in business schools and law schools.

And that is why, on this day, September 10, 2013, I would like to announce the Association of Scholars of Corporate Social Responsibility.

Back in 2007, we launched a similar initiative in the area of combating human trafficking. If you take a look at The Protection Project website (www.protectionproject.org) you will find syllabi of every course taught on human trafficking in this country and beyond. Let us do the same with CSR.

4. Fourth, let us discuss the possibility of developing and conducting trainings for employees and other representatives of the private sector on CSR and, more broadly, human rights and business.

In this regard, we are currently compiling the first bibliography on CSR in the Middle East. The bibliography will be published as part of Volume 5 of our Journal of Human Rights and Civil Society, which will be released on November 6 of this year at The Protection Project 8th Annual Conference on Human Trafficking which will address domestic work as a form of human trafficking, in accordance with the ILO Convention 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers.

From the podium to the floor, you are all invited to our Annual Conference here in Washington DC on November 6, 2013.

5. Perhaps also, it is a good idea, as part of The Protection Project's program "Support a Fellow," that we devote part of the fellowship program to this issue of CSR. We could bring here in the U.S., fellows from, let us say, countries in the Middle East, to learn more about CSR, and bring back knowledge to the region on human rights, and sustainable development.

But today you are also invited to share with us your thoughts CSR and how to promote the concept that in the MENA Region so we can start, together, to develop the Action Plan for the Corporate-Academia Partnership in Advancing CSR.

The concept is not entirely new.

Corporate charity, donations for charitable purposes, charitable *waqf* or trust, *tzedakah*, *takaful* and *zakat* are all traditional expressions of CSR in family-based corporations.

- More recently, The Nuqul Group and the Elie Nuqul Foundation have been dedicating a percentage of their profits to the underprivileged by providing students from Jordan with academic scholarships.
- In Egypt, Care with Love was founded in 1996 to establish homes for the elderly, a rising segment of the population in the last ten years.
- In Lebanon, Muhanna Group, which is a small-enterprise, encourages its employees to volunteer paid-working time at NGOs.
- IBM Israel gives free computer programming courses to Arab and Jewish students, who then work together in order to develop learning programs for children in a local hospital.

- Aramex published, in 2007, the first corporate report entitled 'Changing Today – Protecting Tomorrow'.
- In the same year, the American University of Beirut launched the Neighborhood Initiative to address environmental problems such as a lack of green space in the community.
- And, a final example. King Saud University's College of Business Administration created the first Chair of CSR and Business Ethics in 2008.

Before I hear from you, however, let all of us hear from the experts.

It is now my honour and pleasure to pass on the microphone to our distinguished panelists:

- Professor Ruth Wedgwood, Director of the International Law and Organizations Program, at The Johns Hopkins University, School of Advanced International Studies
- Ms. Annabel Short, Programme Director, Business & Human Rights Resource Centre
- Ms. Diana Beckmann, Senior Director, Corporate Sponsorships, CARE USA
- Ms. Amy Lehr, Associate, Corporate Social Responsibility Practice Group, Foley Hoag, LLP
- Ms. Chloe B. Holderness, Managing Director, Lex Mundi Pro Bono Foundation

- Mr. Jeffrey Avina, Director of Citizenship and Community Affairs, Middle East & Africa, Microsoft, who kindly joined us for our First regional conference in Turkey and who spoke eloquently on the need for codifying CSR standards.
- Dr. Trevor Gunn, Managing Director, International Affairs, Medtronic, Inc.
- Ms. Maryann Hrichak, Cultural Mentor, TechWomen

The floor is yours.