

The Protection Project's First Regional Conference on "Corporate Social Responsibility in the Middle East"

Istanbul, Turkey
June 19 & 20, 2013

Closing Remarks and Recommendations June 20, 2013

Dr. Mohamed Y. Mattar

I am going to have the final word, which will be very brief. I want to thank all of you for really contributing to our discussion on the status of CSR in the Middle East. If you ask me what is the status of CSR in the Middle East, especially the Arab World, I would say that we are at a stage of recognition- early recognition. It's not a stage of exclusion. We understand the concept, at least in multi-national corporations, more so than local companies, but as was mentioned several times, we are talking more about how to promote CSR in local companies and family businesses. So I believe one task that we all have here is to go and educate companies, local companies, family companies, on what we mean by corporate social responsibility.

Several steps in our action plan, building upon the wonderful plan that Professor Frank Emmert had for us is, first, a publication on the best practices on corporate social responsibility. This is a series that we publish at Johns Hopkins, 100 best practices. It has to be 100, no more, no less. And we heard here yesterday and today, really, a good list of best practices. I would like all of us to be part of this publication. Look for best practices in different companies, including Microsoft- but Microsoft has too many. If I mentioned Microsoft, there would be no place for other companies to be included- But no, many best practices were mentioned. I have a good list of them. I know that everyone is waiting for lunch. I was planning for a half an hour or so, but Professor Frank took an hour. He is a good friend so I am not going to do the same, but this is something we want to work on- a publication on 100 best practices on corporate social responsibility in the Middle East. We could maybe, for example, add McDonalds because they are in the Middle East. I think this publication is something good to do.

The second is a publication that will cover the proceedings of this conference. So if you have a presentation, and you have not sent it to Elaine, please send it to Elaine. If you don't like Elaine, you can send it to Anna, and if you don't like Anna, you can send it to Meaghan. If you don't like the three of them, you can send it to me, but the problem is, I don't read. They do the reading so I would prefer it if you sent it to one of them.

The proceedings of the conference are very important. We recorded every word. Yes, the bad and the good, but it was all good. I did not hear anything bad. We recorded everything. We are going to the States, and we are going to have the transcript in one week, so I would urge those of you that have not sent us the full script of your presentation, please do. We will publish these proceedings with, of course, all of your names on it.

Thirdly, I want to emphasize our work on clinics, business clinics and law clinics on CSR. So last year, in my clinic, the international human rights clinic at SAIS, we had a CSR project. Everyone was responsible for five companies. We did the same thing that we did at Beirut Arab University. Between the two clinics, we have this very beautiful research that covered almost 200 companies, which we will publish.

For the future, we would like to see a clinic that is business oriented and, what Professor Stephen told us, covers business and law. We have already agreed with the President of Beirut Arab University- and he is my friend so I can't remember telling him something where he told me no, and of course, he also tells me what to do all of the time- In our conversation, I mentioned to the President two things: One, why don't we go to the business school, and have a course with two components. The first will cover the basics of business law, the laws that covers doing business in Lebanon and beyond, and then we will come in there and do a clinical component on corporate social responsibility.

So, for the first time, Beirut Arab University, and the faculty of Commerce and Business Administration, will entrain that new concept of a business clinic, working together with Johns Hopkins, and the law clinic already established. We want the business model because we know how important CSR means to business. So I am not sure if Professor Nehale will agree or not, but if the President says, Yes, can the Dean say, No? I don't know- In our culture, if the President says yes, we follow, but I don't know. (laughter) But no, we agree, and I think it will be an excellent honor.

Hopefully, we will move the same model to Iran at Beheshti University. You talked about economics and the law so let's merge and have a marriage between law and business, and have a business clinic focusing on CSR. In the clinic, we will do the drafting of what was mentioned here, and the code of conduct. I really like that idea. I know that there are codes all over the place, but it is nice to involve our students, and based on their study, incorporate CSR in the region- and then we have a code of conduct.

Also, we are going to do a model law on corporate social responsibility. We love model laws and I think they work. So these are the two projects we are going to work on with Beirut Arab University, and possibly others- of course, with the blessing of Dr. Nehale.

Why? Bringing everything together, the proceedings of this conference, the publication of the 100 best practices, the code of conduct, the model law, and then we will have another meeting. We plan to make this a habit. Yes, and I like habits. So our next regional conference on corporate social responsibility, I don't know where, you can help me with a place and a time, but around the eve of now- and we did this with our conference on human trafficking, making it an annual habit around November 5. This year will be our eighth annual conference. And with clinical education we are going to have the third annual conference. We had one in Jordan and one in Qatar, and now we are thinking about the third- so we will do this with CSR. We will meet once a year, discuss the status of CSR in the Middle East, and talk about these nice projects whether with Beheshti or Beirut Arab University, the code of conduct, the model law, and so on.

Finally, we want to partner with corporations. We want to, and you mentioned this several times, form academia and corporate private-public partnerships, it should really be emphasized. And I thought, perhaps throw in UNDP, and you come to us with something, and then we can engage all universities, starting with Beirut Arab University, with the help of the private sector telling us what is good and what we should be doing.

I believe, finally, yes finally, that we should put together a syllabus on CSR. As I mentioned, I taught the course twice, and I am sure one of you have taught similar course. So what we are going to do with you, including Beirut Arab University- I just like Beirut for some reason, personal reasons. Dr. Amr's father was my professor and he was the one that nominated me for the law school, so I feel loyal, grateful and so on, can I say that? I just said it- So, I want to, with the clinic, create

a syllabus. If you go to my website, and I am sure some of you did, we have 193 syllabi on human trafficking. 193, 193 professors. So if you want to develop a course on human trafficking, all you have to do is to go to our website. We have an association in the United States, and then we traveled to Columbia, and then to Amsterdam- so every professor who has something to do with human trafficking, teaching human trafficking, his course is on our website. We want to do the same thing with corporate social responsibility. So perhaps this is something we will do for the next two or three months, and then we will meet here again and discuss the syllabi, and create a model syllabus based on all of the syllabi.

A thank you note to my assistants. Elaine, I want to thank you very much. Hundreds of hours, too many emails. And Meaghan, very modest, sitting behind. And Anna of course, nothing happens without Anna's blessing and print. I want to thank my staff, and all of you. I really enjoyed myself, I had fun, and I learned, it was a learning process. The subject, at least to me, is new, maybe two years or so. So I learned here.

Two more announcements, and then I will shut up. The first is, we want to take a group picture so make sure no one leaves. The second has to do with food. After we finish, we will have lunch. And at 8:00 o'clock, the buses will leave and we will meet for dinner.

Thank you and good-bye.