

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

Istanbul, Turkey  
June 19 & 20, 2013

**Opening Remarks  
June 19, 2013**

Dr. Mohamed Y. Mattar

On behalf of The Protection Project at The Johns Hopkins University, School of Advanced International Studies, Anna Koppel, Elaine Panter, Meaghan Malloy, and I would like to welcome all of our distinguished guests to this symposium on corporate social responsibility.

At this very place, the last two or so years, we held several forums. One was on comparative divorce law. We wanted to know how people around the world end this happy thing called marriage so we had a conference on comparative law focusing on family law, especially divorce.

We also had another meeting at this very place on drafting a model law on child protection. I am a big believer in model laws- I just love them. We spent two years drafting this model law, travelling all over the place. We started in Singapore, and then we went to Costa Rica, and then Valencia, Spain, and then we came here to Turkey, and then we went to Alexandria, Egypt, and then we presented our model law to the United Nations' Committee on the Rights of the Child, which justified an excuse to visit Geneva.

We have actually finished several model laws. One was on the rights of the elderly- those who are 95 and above so you don't have to worry (laughter). And guess what, I sent the model law to the United Nations, this time, the Human Rights Council, and I got an email telling me that the United Nations is now in the process of drafting a convention of the rights of the elderly. Amazing. So for this year, and the year after, the UN will be busy taking care of somebody like myself.

Yes, I consider myself elderly. It is good news that the United Nations is in the process of drafting a law on the convention of the rights of the elderly.

A third symposium that we held, also here- we just love this hotel- we keep coming back- and we love Turkey and the Turkish people. The third was on clinical legal education. The clinical movement in the Arab World and the Middle East is very young. It basically started in Morocco in 2005. I visited the clinic there; it covered labor rights, and helped employees to file lawsuits against it employers. Unfortunately, it closed down after a year- I am afraid that every time I visit a clinic it will shut down, so I will be careful to visit your clinic in Iran- but I am happy to report to you that in almost every law school, now, there is a law clinic.

Of the law schools where we have a clinic, the largest is at Beirut Arab University. It was started a year and a half ago, and I urge you to visit. I am not the President of Beirut Arab University, but the President I sitting beside me- maybe he will invite all of you to come visit the clinic in Beirut.

But the idea of this initiative goes back to December of 2011 when I received a kind invitation from Dr. Nehale Farid Mostafa. Dr. Nehale Farid Mostafa is the Dean of the Faculty of Commerce and Business Administration at Beirut Arab University. She is with us this morning. Glad to have her. With joy and pleasure, I recognize her. And she told me, she met me one day over lunch or something because these guys at Beirut Arab University are very generous- they take care of you. She told me, why don't you come teach a course on corporate social responsibility, and I said, I'm coming.

So last December, not this one, but the one in 2011, I was in Beirut and I taught a course on corporate social responsibility, CSR. My teaching assistant was Elaine Panter- she is outside taking care of everyone. She was the one emailing you all of the time. We had 297 students. Wow, good number, and I told the President of the university, Dr. Amr Galal El Adawi, I do not want to have an exam because when I teach, and don't have exams- Dr. Frank Emmert knows that when I have an exam, I am just generous. I don't remember giving a student a B in my life, and I have been teaching for 27 years. I am an A guy or A-, and when a student is not doing very well, I give him a B+ and I cannot go to sleep that night. So we went to Beirut Arab University and the Dean, with the blessing of the President asked me what I wanted to do. I said that every student will be responsible for a corporation. We designed a questionnaire, and then the students were responsible for going to a corporate body, a corporation, and asking the following questions:

- Are you familiar with the UN Global Compact on CSR?

Who isn't? Everybody knows that thing.

- Does your corporation have a Code of Conduct recognizing the human rights of an employee?

For us, corporate social responsibility is all about human rights, nothing else.

- Do you have a policy against child labor, forced labor and labor trafficking?

That's my field. If you click my name, Mohamed Mattar, human trafficking and The Protection Project will pop up, Marina Elefante, who is in the audience today, knows that. Hopefully she will come back to the Project- she knows that our work is child labor.

The US Department of Labor publishes an annual report on products that are being manufactured by child labor and forced labor. One hundred and thirty-four products that are being manufactured all over the world, in 73 countries, are from child labor and forced labor. I am Egyptian- you can tell from my accent, yes- and we are proud of Egyptian cotton. When you go and visit Egypt, what else are you going to buy but Egyptian cotton? I usually buy my shirts and undershirts, and I bring them to my children because we live in the U.S., and I want them to walk up in the morning feeling that they are still Egyptians. But the question is, is the cotton a product of child labor or forced labor? How about fish? Rice? Diamonds? Gold? Basically, this is a question that the Department of Labor and the United Nations addresses every year- are products being manufactured through child labor forced labor, and I would add labor trafficking as well.

- How about environmental standards?
- Do you do something when you find out that one of your employees is involved in what you call corruption?

When I was in Qatar, and I was talking about corruption, I was told, don't say corruption, say transparency. I said, okay. Corruption is sometimes seen as a bad word- so I am not going to say corruption, transparency will do. We want to enhance transparency

These are the questions that were on the questionnaire at Beirut Arab University, Faculty of Commerce and Business Administration- and I'm really proud of that course because that was my first encounter with corporate social responsibility.

Based upon this experience, started in Beirut, we at The Protection Project decided to expand the inquiry. We decided, why don't we move from Beirut Arab University to other parts of the Arab World and the Middle East?

So I would really like you to allow me to recognize the man behind the idea; the person with a vision. They guy behind the reform in education, including legal education, a valuable partner of The Protection Project, and a very good friend. I just love the guy. His name is Dr. Amr Galal El Adawi, and he is the President of Beirut Arab University- and it happens that he is sitting beside me. So while I have the floor, I want to recognize you and your good work and the university. We are very proud of the work that you are doing, and I just learned that they even added a course on business law. I am trying to find an excuse to go back and teach because I love Beirut so I thought business law might be another way for The Protection Project to be involved in the good work of Beirut Arab University.

I would also like to thank another person who is also driving the agenda in the Arab World, and that is Professor Frank Emmert. Professor Frank Emmert is from Indiana University Law School, and he is the Director of the LLM program that takes place in Alexandria and Cairo University for 5 years or so. Every time I meet Professor Frank- and I say that Professor Frank is very close to me- I always say that Professor Frank is the reason that I see my father because my Dad is 85, and he is living in Egypt. So every time I go to Egypt to teach, I love it.

These last two years, he has allowed me to teach a very interesting course related to our work here, and that is a course on international business and human rights. The master's program is in business law, and international business transactions, and I think it is pioneering program in the Arab World. So he allows me to teach International Business & Human Rights, and part of what I teach is, of course, corporate social responsibility.

I would also like to recognize our partners from Shahid Beheshti University, Professor Yadollah Dagar, and the delegation from Iran. I don't know all of the names, but by this time on Friday, I will. I am really happy that we have a good relationship with Iran, and congratulations on the new President- I don't know who you voted for, but this is politics and I have been told to never talk politics,

especially here. Everyone emailed me asking, are we still going to do the conference because of riots and all of that? These are not riots. These are people making a point, and it is nice to make a point as long as you are not destructive. We are all in Egypt waiting for June 30<sup>th</sup>- I predict an earthquake on June 30<sup>th</sup>. God help us. Hopefully nothing bad will happen— But we have partnered with the Iranian delegation in this initiative, and we are going to organize a conference together. Mark your calendar if you are interested. With the blessing of Iran and The Protection Project, on September 30<sup>th</sup> and October 1<sup>st</sup>, on these two days, we are going to hold a conference on Islamic waqf, charitable trusts. Dr. Yadollah Dagar approached me and asked me what do you think about a conference on Islamic waqf and charitable trust- I said I love it. We are thinking about Dubai, unless Professor Frank comes to me and tells me Egypt because I have to listen to him. We will do Dubai for two days on Islamic waqf.

We are also thinking about establishing a joint business clinic between Beheshti University and The Protection Project. The clinic at Beirut Arab University is established at the law school, but now we are thinking, how about business because we love business schools and Deans of business schools- so why don't we entertain the idea of a business clinic, a clinic that advises business executing business transactions and starting business enterprises- I think it is a good idea.

Two weeks ago, in Kuwait, we had a meeting of clinics from Kuwait International Law School, Qatar University Law School, and Sultan Qaboos Law School in Oman. With us today is Dr. Yaqoob Al Waily and Dr. Amel Abdallah, both are Assistant Deans. At the meeting, we had a competition on drafting law on the rights of domestic workers. The most recent international convention is ILO, International Labor Organization, Convention number 189 on decent work for domestic workers—I don't know if you teach it because it seems that it is never mentioned- but please, please mention number 189- So we had a competition among law clinics in the Gulf area and guess who was the winner? The law clinic at Sultan Qaboos, so from the podium, congratulations to Dr. Yaqoob and Dr. Amel. You did very well. I am sure you are proud of your students.

Today and tomorrow, we will be debating and discussing the practice of corporation social responsibility in the Middle East. We want to know something about what is happening in countries in the Middle East. Corporations, universities, the role of civil society- we are going to be ask the questions: how can we promote human rights, labor rights and environmental standards, and anti-corruption measures, and fair competition- the five pillars of corporate social responsibility? How can we promote these five pillars, including fair competition,

in countries of the Middle East? Hopefully we can design together, by tomorrow and before dinner, an action plan or strategy for the future based upon best practices, and based upon the knowledge that we will gain here. Based upon identifying gaps and omissions, and what we should be doing to promote corporate social responsibility.

We are a distinguished group of experts from many countries in the Middle East and beyond. Turkey, Iran, Canada, Lebanon, Oman, Jordan, Qatar, Germany, United Kingdom, and the United States of America. Ten countries are presenting today and tomorrow, and I am confident with this group of experts on corporate social responsibility, we will have a good time and very constructive and productive forum.

Thank you for participating and now, with great pleasure, joy and honor, I give the floor to the President of Bruit Arab University, Dr. Amr Al Adawi. The floor is all yours.