



Using the business case for companies to respect human rights to drive change

Date: Tuesday 15 November

Time: 13:20-14:40

Room: XX (Building E – level 3), Palais des Nations

Moderator:

- Rachel Davis, Managing Director, Shift

Speakers:

- Lord John Browne, Executive Chairman of L1 Energy
- Christine Chow, Associate Director, Hermes Investment Management
- Richard Howitt, CEO, International Integrated Reporting Council (IIRC)
- Lou Munden, Founder, TMP Systems

About the session:

Whether we sit inside a business, government, NGO, investor or other organization, we all make use of a wide variety of arguments in support of greater rights-respecting behaviour by business. Moral, ethical and legal arguments are obviously central in this context; but less attention is typically paid to the role of the “business case” – the reasons why it is in business’ own interests to respect human rights.

In part this is because of how hard it can be to quantify certain aspects of respect for human rights; and in part it is because making the business case can feel like a slippery slope towards the (clearly indefensible) position that a business should respect people only if it is in its narrow commercial interests to do so.

This session starts from the premise that there are elements of the business case that we in the business and human rights community could use more strategically, especially in combination with other arguments, to advance our agenda with specific audiences – particularly those who are sceptical.

The session will explore where we see compelling examples of a business case for companies to respect human rights, how such arguments can be deployed effectively – with which audiences and for what purposes – and when relying on the business case alone may be counterproductive or even dangerous.

The session is organized as a moderated conversation with highly experienced panellists who bring unique perspectives to this topic:

- **Lord John Browne**, the former CEO of the oil and gas company BP, an outspoken advocate of the business case for companies to engage in meaningful, and radical, ways with their stakeholders, including directly affected rights-holders;
- **Dr. Christine Chow**, who leads engagement with companies on human rights at Hermes Investment Management, and who sees on a daily basis how better management of environmental and social (including human rights) risks can lead to greater shareholder value with lower risk;
- **Richard Howitt** committed to greater business accountability for human rights in his former role as a member of the European Parliament. He is now CEO of the International Integrated Reporting Council, which focuses on getting business to see financial and non-financial performance as inextricably linked;
- **Lou Munden**, an internet industry entrepreneur and private venture capital expert, who brings his analytical skills to the challenge of quantifying environmental and social risks and is developing a ground-breaking tool for analyzing financial risks arising from disputes over land ownership in emerging economies.

The conversation will be moderated by **Rachel Davis**, Managing Director of Shift, who has published leading research into the costs of company-community conflict for extractive companies.

Useful links:

- [“Connect: How companies succeed by engaging radically with society”](#) – 2015 book by Lord John Browne with Robin Nuttall and Tommy Stadlen
- [“Costs of Company-Community Conflict in the Extractive Sector”](#) – 2014 research by Rachel Davis and Daniel Franks
- TMP Systems’ work on [land tenure](#) risk

Organisers: OHCHR and Shift