

Report of the third roundtable on Corporate Social Responsibility and the Canadian Extractive Sector in Developing Countries

Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability/ Civil Society Focal Point

The purpose of this two-page note is to provide a brief overview of the third roundtable held in Calgary in October 2006. A summary report of this event, covering the Open Sessions and the Issues Focus Sessions, is being prepared by the government and will be posted on the government website in advance of the Montreal roundtable. For more information please check: http://geo.international.gc.ca/cip-pic/current_discussions/csr-roundtables-en.asp.

On October 10-12, the third in a series of four multi-stakeholder roundtables on CSR and extractive industries in developing countries was held in Calgary, Alberta. The themes for discussion in Calgary were the same as in the Toronto event but with a focus on the oil and gas industries. Both September and October roundtables were dedicated to the following themes: positive and negative incentives and instruments for implementation of CSR standards.

Over the course of two and a half days, the Calgary roundtable provided an important opportunity for public participation and in-depth policy discussions with invited experts. The Calgary event was another positive step in the National Roundtable process. As in former roundtables, the Government neither notified the Media nor was it allowed to attend the public sessions. Nevertheless, the turn out for the Open Sessions was very good: twenty eight presentations were heard throughout the two public sessions and more than 150 people attended these sessions. The level of participation was higher than Vancouver but lower than Toronto.

Members of the Roundtable Steering Committee (SC) and Advisory Group (AG) attended the open component of the roundtable to listen to the presentations. The submissions were of high quality and provided thoughtful recommendations for action. Although the speakers represented a wide range of constituencies and spoke from different experiences, their messages were very consistent. In summary, speakers from civil society called on the Canadian government to establish clear standards for companies operating abroad, to strengthen disclosure requirements including pension funds and to enact both civil and criminal legal mechanisms in case of alleged violation of human rights and environmental obligations. A recurrent theme that was raised in the public presentations was the negative social and cultural impacts of mining and oil projects on local communities and the need to identify concrete measures to tackle them. One speaker went further to describe some common strategies used by companies to divide local communities.

Several mining and oil and gas industries registered to speak in the public sessions: Encana Corp., Enbridge Inc, Sienna Gold, TVI Pacific to name a few. Fifty percent of the presentations were made either by companies or institutes associated with the sector. Many of them spoke about their best practices in the field and the need for NGO-Industry

positive relationships. One of them called for the Canadian government to endorse the UK-US voluntary principles. There was consensus on the benefits of improving reporting practices among companies, although the majority of the speakers expressed a preference for voluntary, as opposed to mandatory reporting requirements. In addition, the Canadian Council on Africa called for the government to promote investments in Africa.

The closed session benefited from presentations and the active participation of 15 invited experts, both from Canada and overseas, including three people from the South (See September monthly update). Participants (57) were divided into two break-out groups that ran in parallel and that covered 4 different themes: *'Dispute Resolution Mechanisms'*; *'Monitoring & Reporting, Market-based Incentives, Conditions to Access Non-Gov't Credit, Services'*; *'Conditions to Access Gov't Credit & Services'* and *'Legal Incentives'*.

The purpose of this exercise was to have a second, in-depth discussion on the themes mentioned above and to review the actionable ideas that came out of the Toronto roundtable. As a result of this exercise, some of the brainstorming on actionable ideas that came out of Toronto was refined, other ideas were kept as originally stated and a small group of proposals were dropped from the menu due to insufficient support. A list of all actionable ideas agreed upon in Calgary will be included in the roundtable report.

The challenge ahead is to narrow down the list of “actionable ideas” and to further develop some of these proposals before the end of the roundtable process. The expected final outcome is a menu of the highest quality actionable ideas. The Steering Committee will draw from this list in the development of its recommendation to Cabinet and ultimately to Parliament.

No parallel public event was organized in Calgary. However the Kairos-Calgary chapter convened a meeting with labour delegates to allow some exchange between groups in Calgary and Colombia. Media coverage was minimal; only one newspaper covered the event. Most of the journalists interested on these issues have decided to focus their energy on the fourth and final roundtable scheduled for November 14-16 in Montreal.

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