

## **Report of the Fourth Roundtable – Civil Society Focal Point**

This two-page note offers a brief overview of the November 14-16 Montreal roundtable and parallel activities organized by civil society. As in previous roundtables, a summary report, covering both the Open Public sessions and the Issue Focus sessions, will be prepared by Stratos Inc. during the coming weeks and is expected to be posted on the Government website before the end of December. For more information please check: [http://geo.international.gc.ca/cip-pic/current\\_discussions/csr-roundtables-en.asp](http://geo.international.gc.ca/cip-pic/current_discussions/csr-roundtables-en.asp).

Members of the Coalition of Mines, a Montreal-based network, organized a public symposium, “Extractive Industries? Destructive Industries?,” to raise public awareness on the detrimental impacts of Canadian mining companies’ activities abroad. The event was very successful both in terms of substance and participation. International experts, including three guests from the Global South who were invited by the Government to participate in the Montreal in-depth policy debate, spoke about the struggles that local communities face regarding Canadian mining operations in their countries.

In addition, MiningWatch Canada organized a panel discussion following the symposium. This panel brought together community leaders from four different countries who are all struggling against INCO, a Canadian mining giant recently acquired by the Brazilian firm CVRD. These two events, which included a press conference, provided opportunities for the public and the media to hear and interview civil society experts from the South and from Canada. A DVD of the public symposium will be available soon. For more information contact André Fortin at [andrefortin@suco.org](mailto:andrefortin@suco.org).

The themes for discussion in the Montreal roundtable were *tools for assisting companies in their implementation of CSR* and *capacity building for Resource Governance in developing countries*. In addition, members of the Roundtable Steering Committee and Advisory Group further discussed the menu of draft actionable ideas that came out of the Vancouver, Toronto and Calgary roundtables.

As with previous roundtables, the Montreal event provided an opportunity for public participation. The public component was held on November 14. During the morning, two parallel sessions were held at the Holiday Inn, followed by an evening session at the Double Tree Plaza. The latter included two hours of presentations from the Canadian public followed by remarks from John Ruggie, UN special representative on Human Rights and Transnational Corporations.

John Ruggie reports that within a sample of 65 instances reported by civil society of the worst situations of alleged human rights abuses by companies, two-third of the cases involved the world’s oil, gas and mining industries. Mr. Ruggie urged Canada to show leadership in dealing with these issues, in parallel with efforts made by multilateral agencies such as the UN.

Public participation in the open sessions was excellent: a total of 63 presentations were heard throughout the three public sessions and more than 300 persons attended. The level of participation was the highest seen throughout the roundtable process. Presentations were of excellent quality and provided thoughtful recommendations for action, including many on the complex and thorny theme of host country governance. More than 15 speakers represented academia, both universities and research institutes.

While several companies registered to speak in the public session – Kimber Resources Inc., Tournigan Gold Corporation, Exploration Azimut Inc., Anvil Mining, etc – industry participation was lower than in Calgary.

Civil society went to great lengths to ensure the perspectives of affected people in the South were heard at the Montreal public sessions. Members of the Roundtable Steering Committee and Advisory Group heard testimonies from Rima Mananta, a member of the indigenous Karonsi'e Dongi community who were displaced by Canadian mining operations in Indonesia and from indigenous people in Guyana. In addition, another speaker read the letter Honduran Cardinal Rodriguez wrote to the Roundtable process urging the Canadian government to regulate the operations of Canadian companies abroad. The letter was submitted to the Roundtable and will be posted on the Government website soon.

A speaker also shared a summary of the numerous concerns and recommendations that were expressed during the public symposium, the day before. Finally, Amnesty international released a poll showing that 79 percent of Canadians believe that the Canadian Government should pass laws that require Canadian companies to respect human rights, including when they do business overseas. The poll involved 1112 respondents.

The closed session benefited from the presentations and active participation of 12 invited experts, both from Canada and overseas, including four people from the South (See October monthly update) and a lunch presentation from John Ruggie. Participants were divided in two break-out groups that ran in parallel and covered the following two themes: Host country governance capacity, with particular attention to the special challenges of conflict zones, and tools to assist the extractive sector in improving CSR performance.

In advance of the Montreal roundtable, a series of actionable ideas was drafted and shared with the invited participants. Participants discussed the draft ideas during the first day, and outcomes were reviewed by the whole group the following day. The purpose of this exercise was to assess the adequacy, rationale and feasibility of the ideas on the table and to propose new ones, if necessary. In the following weeks, members of the Steering Committee and Advisory Group will have a third look at the actionable ideas coming out of Montreal. A list of these ideas will be included in the Montreal report.

Though the Montreal roundtable was subject to media restrictions, media coverage of these issues was very good throughout the week. Several events were organized to attract media attention including press conferences, release of the Amnesty International poll and distribution of the Cardinal Rodriguez letter. In addition, a joint industry and NGO press conference was organized at the end of the closed session. Southern experts and members of the CNCA gave interviews to the media, including radio and press. Their voices were heard as far away as Abitibi and Nunavut.

In the coming months, the Steering Committee and Advisory Group will meet again to work through the Roundtable final report that will be tabled to Parliament sometime in early 2007. It will contain a summary of the open sessions and issue focus sessions and will identify key recommendations for action.