

Human Rights in a Business Context

In addition to separate opportunities to communicate with stakeholder groups, KHI holds dialogues with experts who represent the general public, a stakeholder group with which the KHI Group has little direct contact.

In fiscal 2014, we held three dialogues on the theme of human rights and business activities within the context of corporate social responsibility. These dialogues had the participation of division managers at the Head Office as well as CSR officers/managers from all corners of the Company. The dialogue setting allowed invited representatives from global human rights non-governmental organizations and CSR specialists from non-governmental organizations to speak on real issues surrounding human rights problems and to bring everyone up to speed on situations at the global level. In addition, people who have had to address global human rights issues in business commented on their experiences and perceptions. Discussions evolved from the respective topics.



Event Summary, Speaker

First Dialogue

October 24, 2013

Asako Nagai, BSR Senior Advisor (Japan)

“What’s happening right now in the world in the fields of human rights and labor?”

KHI Participants: General Manager, CSR Division; CSR managers from Head Office divisions; CSR managers from internal companies



Senior Advisor at BSR (Business for Social Responsibility), world’s largest CSR-oriented NGO
Formerly, manager of CSR division at Sony Corporation with overall responsibility for creating CSR policy and strategies, communicating with external stakeholders and overseeing supply chain management

Second Dialogue

December 5, 2013

Hideki Wakabayashi Secretary-general of Amnesty International Japan

“Human Rights in a Business Context”

KHI Participants: Kyohei Matsuoka, Senior Executive Vice President; Hiroshi Takata, Senior Executive Vice President; managers of Head Office divisions



Secretary-general of Amnesty International Japan, member of the world’s largest human rights NGO
Was responsible for social security policy and working hours scheme as executive committee member of Japanese Electrical, Electronic & Information Union, First Secretary at the Embassy of Japan, United States
Was responsible for Official Development Assistance and Japan-US alliance activities
Member of House of Councillors (Upper House), Center for Strategic and International Studies, Councilor, Senior Research Fellow of the Japan Forum on International Relations (up to present)

Third Dialogue

February 4, 2014

Hitoshi Suzuki President, Institute for International Socio-Economic Studies

“CSR in the Era of Globalization—Corporations and Human Rights”

KHI Participants: Managers of Head Office divisions



President, Institute for International Socio-Economic Studies
(Formerly, General Manager of CSR Promotion Division at NEC Corporation)

Note: Official titles are correct as of the time the respective dialogue took place.

Noteworthy Comments from Our Experts

Specify Scope of Responsibility for Dealing with Human Rights

For companies to expand their business activities globally, they must also assume a global perspective with regard to sustainability issues. Going forward, there are eight issues that are likely to become more important worldwide: health, human rights, water, economic problems, climate change, biodiversity, education, and safety and peace. Japanese companies are taking progressive steps in regard to the environment, but they lag far behind in recognizing human rights—and it may be a cultural thing—but it is a huge latent risk nonetheless. Fighting for human rights should really be an issue addressed by respective governments, but in emerging countries, the response has been too slow so companies have had to take the initiative.

But what should companies do and how far should they go in protecting human rights? Each company has to set parameters of responsibility and stay within those boundaries. More to the point, each company has to formulate its own approach and policy on human rights, evaluate the impact of such measures, and educate employees. This is vital. At the same time, if business activities can be pursued in a way that concurrently helps resolve human rights problems, that would be a huge advantage for any company.

Asako Nagai BSR Senior Advisor (Japan)

Really Be “Global Kawasaki,” An Advocate for Human Rights Worldwide

Human rights is more than just a labor issue. The disregard for human rights is the underlying cause of all sorts of problems, including those affecting the environment and community safety and security. Human rights is seen as “the inalienable rights of people to live with the respect that is due us all as human beings.” To understand human rights, it is imperative to accept this concept as part of our personal traditions and values and to promote and develop the concept based on international human rights criteria.

Companies exert effects on their surroundings through the course of business activities. Even if business activities do not directly encroach on human rights, the issue may appear somewhere along the supply chain, and today, if this happens, the company that procures raw materials or parts from that supply chain is assumed to be responsible for the problem by association. For this reason, you have to understand the notion of avoiding complicity. Top management must subscribe to this notion, and corporate efforts to mitigate human rights risks must infuse management practices.

I hope that the KHI Group will strive to be a truly “Global Kawasaki,” solving social problems through core business activities and protecting the rights of people all over the world.

Hideki Wakabayashi Secretary-general of Amnesty International Japan

The Importance of Human Rights Management based on Global Standards

The negative impact of such issues as forced labor, child labor and destruction of the environment has grown much bigger as a result of the increasing globalization of economies. Consequently, the evaluation criteria for companies now go well beyond the economic element with a widening emphasis on measures to protect the environment, strengthen governance function and contribute to society as well.

Specifically, issues such as human rights and environmental problems, particularly in developing countries where value chains are formed, are highlighted globally, and questions raised by NGOs about corporate involvement as well as lawsuits by employees are among the risks that are becoming increasingly apparent as companies pursue business opportunities in such areas.

A global company (as KHI) must recognize that “human rights” are fundamental issues within CSR, and efforts must be made to ensure human rights risk management—that is, due diligence—is up to global standards. Toward this end, the company must identify human rights risks in value chain business processes, from upstream to downstream and raise awareness of human rights issues among employees while constantly assess progress. This evaluation is to be conducted on the basis of policy on human rights and guideline including one for grievance mechanism in the event a problem arises, should be prepared. It is also vital that such policy and guidelines are disclosed inside and outside—that is, to employees and executives within the company and to the public—so that all stakeholders have a common understanding of where the company stands on prevailing issues.

Hitoshi Suzuki President, Institute for International Socio-Economic Studies

In Response

Participation was limited, but the dialogues allowed everyone to acquire a common understanding of global human rights issues and the corporate connection. Using this as a starting point, we will take another look at Group functions and businesses from the perspective of human rights involvement and promote wider awareness within our corporate house. We will also strive to reinforce human rights-related initiatives already in force.