



Interfaith Center on
Corporate Responsibility

Inspired by faith, committed to action

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June 13, 2005

Mr. Kofi Annan
Secretary-General
United Nations, S-3800
New York, New York 10017

Via Facsimile: 212-963-4879

Re: Selection of a Special Representative on Business and Human Rights.

Dear Mr. Secretary-General.

We, as religious and socially responsible investors, are writing in regard to the action taken at the 61st session of the Commission on Human Rights to establish a special representative to the Secretary-General in the area of business and human rights. We believe this development has great potential to move the process forward in defining human rights standards and implementation mechanisms for transnational corporations and other business enterprises.

We, the undersigned, are a part of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, a coalition of 275 religious investors from the Catholic, Jewish and Protestant communities with a combined investment total of over \$100 billion. ICCR members own shares in many transnational corporations and have pressed corporations to adopt policies on a range of social issues, including human rights, labor rights and the environment. In addition to religious institutional members, ICCR has over 30 associate members who join in company actions to promote corporate social responsibility. These institutions include socially responsible investment firms, public pension funds, union pension funds, foundations and universities.

As institutional investors who work with corporations on an ongoing basis, we welcome this development and believe that the mandate creating the position of special representative for a two-year period should build on the work already begun by the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and other United Nations initiatives. We view the "Norms on the Responsibilities of Transnational Corporations and other Business Enterprises" as the key framework to advance human rights standards and implementation mechanisms that can benefit both businesses and the communities in which they operate.

The position of special representative is crucial in moving the business and human rights process to the next level. As you consider candidates for this important position, we offer our perspective on the qualifications we believe are essential in potential candidates.

First, candidates must have a strong commitment to and understanding of human rights. Specifically, it is essential to have some experience addressing human rights as applied to business. The Commission on Human Rights' resolution mandates that the special



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representative is to address specific tasks including, to identify standards for corporate accountability, clarify such issues as the “spheres of influence” of business and “complicity,” and develop assessment tools for measuring the human rights impact of business. This requires a person to have a strong human rights background and experience in the area of business and human rights.

Second, candidates must be committed to a standards-setting process with regard to business and human rights. Today, there is a proliferation of voluntary initiatives on human rights. This development often leads to confusion about what is expected of companies and inconsistencies in behavior between companies and across nations. The UN High Commissioner on Human Rights’ report to the Commission on Human Rights concluded that “there are gaps in understanding the human rights responsibilities of business with regard to human rights.” (February 2005) These gaps need to be filled by developing clear standards and implementation measures. The special representative needs to play a leadership role in setting standards.

Third, candidates must have credibility with a variety of stakeholders and the skills to work in a collaborative, multi-stakeholder process. Potential candidates need to be able to engage business, governments, non-governmental organizations, unions and the communities impacted by business operations.

This is an important moment to take advantage of the growing interest on the part of all stakeholders. We believe the special representative could play a significant role in clarifying and promoting internationally recognized human rights standards as they apply to business. A credible multi-stakeholder process to reach broad international consensus would be of tremendous value, not just to investors seeking clear standards and indicators related to corporate human rights performance, but to communities, civil society groups, governments and companies as well.

Thank you for your attention. We look forward to working with you and the person you appoint as special representative to further the progress made to date on business and human rights.

Sincerely,

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