



DEBATE

Bruno LAFONT, Chairman & CEO of Lafarge Group

Thank you very much. The speeches were very lively and touched on the heart of the subject. I was very impressed by Mrs Robinson's speech and I want to ask her a quick question. How is it possible to implement this governance or these Ruggie principles in a practical way?

Mary ROBINSON, Former President of Ireland, President of the Mary Robinson Foundation

I think this is a really good question because we need to go sector by sector. I loved that idea of looking for the respect of each of the stakeholders. I think that is a very good way of putting it. In a way, we now need governments to take their responsibility. This is the first time in human rights law, if you like, and this is soft law, that governments have been found to be directly responsible. They have a duty, which is heavier than the need to respect of corporations, and rightly so.

John Ruggie is quite adamant that what corporations have to do is not just a 'Do no harm' idea, but a due diligence. If you have a long supply chain, you have to know what is happening in your supply chain and show that you have some kind of internal procedure as part of your corporate long-term approach. I think we are going to see now a number of ways in which the UN itself will be active. There is a working group that has been established by the Human Rights Council and that working group will begin the process sector by sector, I would say, in bringing those guidelines to a more practical implementation.

Companies will be vital to this. They will have to be the stakeholders that actually drive the process, to a certain extent. As I was listening to both of you, it is good to hear corporate leaders with such a sense of responsibility, but when I go to poor countries or poor parts of countries, business is very often not the friend. Business damages the environment. Business pollutes the water. Business takes the land with no compensation. We must bring these corporate responsibility ideas and corporate sustainability ideas to small and medium-sized corporations in a way that is accessible to them.

I was on the board of the United Nation's Global Compact for a number of years and there are about 70 networks of the Global Compact in different countries. They involve small and medium-sized companies and they probably will be a vehicle through which the Ruggie principles can become more operationalized. It is a very interesting challenge, but what interests me is that we have gone to a new phase now. We have a standard. We have soft law and it is a question of operationalizing it.

Bruno LAFONT, Chairman & CEO of Lafarge Group

Could you tell us a little bit more about the Global Compact experience? In a way, it is a first attempt to gather companies, and we have been very close to this experiment, so I know about it. It is typically a case where implementation is meeting some limits, and not only because companies are reluctant - it is because sometimes the way companies and governments or companies and NGOs are holding discussions is not fully appropriate or fully contributive to the right approach. We see the difference of cultures, not between emerging countries, but within the developed world.



Mary ROBINSON, Former President of Ireland, President of the Mary Robinson Foundation

I agree. I was serving in the United Nations when Kofi Annan launched the Global Compact. The first two principles are to uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and not be complicit in its violation and you have core labour standards, environmental standards, and the last one was to tackle corruption. It is voluntary and it fits more the profile of traditional corporate social responsibility. It is an incentive to companies to sign up to the Global Compact and also trade unions and NGOs are members of the Global Compact, but it is particularly companies and to post the progress that they are making.

However, the posting of progress is quite weak. You do not have to post under each of the principles, so you could be doing well in environment and badly in labour rights. For that reason, there has been a sense that it could be strengthened.

The Ruggie principles take a completely different approach. I do not know how many of you are familiar with the Human Rights Council. It is a very difficult body at times. It divides hugely on issues. In particular, issues relating to the Middle East can become very politicised. It very rarely acts as strongly as it has acted on these principles by endorsing them. It was an incredible piece of work by Professor John Ruggie. In my work with realising rights, we strongly supported him. He consulted so widely with all stakeholders that he got agreement on the framework three years ago and then he was asked to draw up guiding principles.

He drew up guiding principles and they were endorsed by the Human Rights Council last June, and now there is a working group to help to flesh out how they are to be operationalized. It will take quite a long time, I think, because they are quite transformative, but if they can be implemented, it will make a huge difference.

Bruno LAFONT, Chairman & CEO of Lafarge Group

I have a question for Narayana just before we give the floor to the room. You have heard all our discussions. How do you see India and Indian companies adhering to these new trends and to these Ruggie principles? How will this be implemented in a country like India? For companies like ours, it is a huge issue, not just because of human rights, but because of competitiveness. It is clear that if governments raise the bar and implement it, then you have much fairer competition and a level playing field.

Narayana MURTHY, President and Founder of Infosys Technologies Limited

I think there are many, many Indian companies, including mine, which are part of Global Compact. I was on the board for several years. As Mrs Robinson pointed out, human rights are the most important aspect of Global Compact. Similarly, given that - today - we live in a highly interconnected world, given that there are lots of multinationals operating in India, given that Indian corporations operate as multinationals outside, the universally accepted, highly-desirable principles of good behaviour become very well known in any country. It does not matter what part of the world you are in.

Given that these things have become highly accepted and highly well known, it is imperative on the part of corporations in India and elsewhere to practise some of these because global investors are demanding it. Corporations are interacting with governments. Therefore, these practices have become very well accepted. For example, in the case of my own company, we have put all these things into our governance rules and we have created policies and mechanisms to make sure that employees have a place where they can indeed air their grievances and have them addressed.

These principles are becoming more and more popular and it is just a question of the mindset of the senior management of corporations. As long as the leadership of companies says, 'We want to do what is fair. We want to



do what is respected. We want to do what is desirable' then it becomes easy to do. The biggest problem, as I often say, is overcoming our mindset. Only those of us who can manage that will make progress.

In fact, in its new company bill, the Indian government has recommended that corporations put 2% of their net income or profits towards corporate social responsibility. I think this is wonderful. I congratulate the Indian government and the bureaucrats who have done this. They wanted it to be mandatory but due to some pressure from many corporations, I believe it is just a recommendation. Even so, I think it is a good first step.

We spend 1% of our net profits every year on corporate social responsibility activities. Our foundation addresses the basic needs of the poorest of the poor. We have built homes for the destitute, hospitals, and libraries in about 15,000 villages. We have awarded scholarships to about 20,000 youngsters in rural India. We have rehabilitated prostitutes. These initiatives have happened simply because the senior management felt that they needed to do something worthwhile.

Bruno LAFONT, Chairman & CEO of Lafarge Group

Listening to you, we have the impression that emerging country companies can do even better than developed country companies. What do you think about that?

Narayana MURTHY, President and Founder of Infosys Technologies Limited

I am a great believer in learning from anybody that does better than us. I do not look at it as emerging or developed. I look at it as people that do things better than I do, and therefore I want to learn from them. If corporations throughout the world have the attitude of learning from people who are advancing the leading edge, I believe we will all be better off.

Mary ROBINSON, Former President of Ireland, President of the Mary Robinson Foundation

One of the things that I think will be a pressure for corporations is reputation. Now that we have this common standard and the Ruggie guiding principles, I think civil society groups, human rights groups will be looking at the sustainability reports of corporations, for example. Have they carried out their due diligence from a human rights point of view? I think that is where you will get not necessarily a naming and shaming kind of reputation, but just are they actually carrying through on this global governance now in the area of corporate responsibility for human rights?

Also companies with long supply chains have a real problem about trying to enforce standards because the cheaper the product, the more likely it is that there are abuses of standards, especially labour standards. I chaired Business Leaders Initiative on Human Rights for six years, which included large companies like the Gap, Hewlett Packard, Coca Cola, who wanted to become comfortable with the human rights standards.

It helped the Gap greatly because about three years ago, there was a small factory in India, where there was a sort of sweatshop system. An NGO went in with a camera and filmed, and then it was discovered that some of their product was sold to the Gap through this long supply chain. It was all over CNN. I remember waking up one morning and seeing this and thinking, 'My poor friends in the Gap - I wonder how they are handling it?'

They actually handled it very well because they said, 'When we adopted our corporate responsibility, we said that we are concerned that it is very hard to police your supply chain. We do not always know who is supplying to us. We did not know this company was supplying. We have destroyed the products, but we are not writing off the company because that is local jobs. We are going in there to see if we can help them to satisfy a standard.' Within a week, the problem was over. Afterwards when we met again in the Business Leaders Initiative on Human Rights, the Gap said,



'We had the confidence because we knew what our responsibility was and we knew how to handle it. We were right on top of the issue.'

I think that is another reason why it is in the interests of corporations to have good practices, as you have described, and to want to be respected as corporate citizens because that is the way to avoid the pitfalls of reputational damage, which can be very severe, as we know.

Narayana MURTHY, President and Founder of Infosys Technologies Limited

I serve as the chairman of the Corporate Sustainability Committee at HSBC. There are many wonderful things that we do. First of all, we lend to people who are advancing sustainability in the world through their products and services. We have 41,000 customers who are in the business of alternate fuels, sustainability of practices and so on. The total lending is \$600 billion to them, and that represents 35% of our spending. That is truly remarkable.

Similarly, each year, we get our sustainability efforts audited by a well-known accounting company like PwC using the international standards. We measure our carbon footprint every year and we have a very aggressive target of reducing it by 10% every year. We have said that we will reduce per capita employee electrical energy consumption by as much as 1 megawatt per year. I think these are all wonderful initiatives and they receive the highest attention of the board. Therefore, I think lots of good things are happening in the world, thanks to efforts by Mary Robinson and others.

Walter STADTLER, National Defence University Foundation, Washington

I am Walter Stadler, of the National Defence University Foundation in Washington. At the beginning of these remarks, our Chair, Bruno Lafont, mentioned the millions and billions at the bottom of the pyramid. One of the reasons why they are there is that as small children, they never got the head start from their parents. This is to start the educational process before they actually started school, whatever the length of time was. Those who did have that encouragement took that throughout their lives, became much more confident, actually enjoyed school and indeed eventually did well in life. That was exactly the opposite of those who did not get that advantage.

It seems to me that corporations and business as such could encourage parents to start the educational process, with reading and starting the process of literacy as well. This could first be amongst their own employees perhaps and then it could go out into the community. It seems to me that it is not just a win-win situation, but a win-win-win situation. It benefits first and foremost children who start the process very early in life, by being more confident and being able to compete. That is a type of spirit that will last throughout their time. It also benefits the parents, because they themselves take great pride in helping to educate their own children as well, or others in the community. The companies burnish their reputations that way and get more loyal employees and whatnot. Then there are the communities out there.

It seems to me that that ability to read and write, or these days, to manipulate electrons on a display, is a human right. Certainly, there is a great deal of dignity to that. I wondered to what degree that type of process is carried out and whether it is not. Governments have a role in all of this as well, because they can encourage companies to do this type of thing through incentives. I would very much like to hear whether you know of this or what your comments on this type of process might be.

Narayana MURTHY, President and Founder of Infosys Technologies Limited

Let me talk about what some of the Indian companies and individuals are doing in the area that you talked about. I will talk about two issues. The first one involves helping children become computer literate and digitally literate. The



second is helping children learn even before they go to school. More importantly, in some of the emerging countries, it is about helping children to actually go to school.

On the first issue of making children computer literate, there have been experiments conducted in India, entitled *A Hole in the Wall*. One of the Indian IT companies made a hole in the wall in the center of the village and they put a computer monitor in that hole. It was right in the middle of a village. They asked the volunteers to just observe from a distance. On the first day, no child went near the keyboard. On the second day, a few children went and they started tapping the keyboard.

Very interestingly, these children did not know any English. However, in a matter of 15 days, on their own, without any teaching, they learned how to draw pictures. In fact, some of them learned how to use Microsoft Word, all by themselves, all because of their innovation and all because of their own curiosity.

My own company gives about 6,000 free laptops or PCs to schools every year to schools in India. We have done it for about 10 years, so we have distributed 60,000. Then our volunteers go into villages in a van and they hold mobile classes for children. They encourage them to learn.

On the issue of helping children actually attend schools, we have a very famous NGO in India called Akshaya Patra. On the one hand, we have made extraordinary progress in our GDP, in our economic development and all of that. Everybody knows that. However, at the same time, there is a part of India which has been left behind. Our Prime Minister keeps talking about inclusive growth. He wants the poorest child in the remotest part of the country to have access to decent education, decent nutrition, decent healthcare and decent shelter.

As part of this Akshaya Patra programme, many corporations, my wife and I and many others provide funding to make sure that these children have hot, nutritious meals every afternoon. It costs just USD22 a year for a child to have this meal and it is a nutritious meal. Last year, we fed 1.3 million children. This is the world's largest midday-meal scheme. We have noted that the number of children that attend schools has increased dramatically.

Bruno LAFONT, Chairman & CEO of Lafarge Group

I will try to answer the question very briefly with another question, which is very critical. I was visiting different places where Lafarge is in sub-Saharan Africa with a journalist. At some point, he asked me the question, 'Why are you paying all this money for your clinics and for your libraries? Where is the limit?' I said it is reasonable; it is because we are there today in this situation and we believe it is good for our company and good for the development of this country. However, it is true that the question is: "who should do what?". "That" is where Governments and companies need to cooperate much better.

It is hard to work together, because it is not so easy to fix the limits. Our shareholders ask us, 'Why are you doing all this?' Narayana said it is 2% of profits. What is the reason? What is the decent number? What is the role of Governments and what is the role of companies? There are many elements which have to be discussed about governance. Above all, in the end, it is a level playing field and it involves the overall peace and welfare of the world. That is what I answer.

Meir SHEETRIT, Member of the Israeli Knesset for the Kadima Party

On the issue of human rights, I would like to say that I am glad about the agenda for human rights. I think a great job has been done in this area. However, the facts are very sad. After so many years of promoting human rights, half of the world is still living in very deep poverty. Billions of people in the world do not have access to clean water today. Millions of children are dying in Africa from lack of immunity and food; they are starving to death.



When we are speaking of human rights, we are far, far away from the place where we should be. This is that no-one will starve to death; no-one will die of diseases that are totally deleted in the West, in developed countries, like malaria. Malaria kills 1 million people in Africa every year; 900,000 of these are children. It could be solved very easy with immunisation and medicine which exists all over the world.

When we are speaking about corporate social responsibility, we are still far away from how much corporates can really do for the starving areas in the world. There is a big space to act. There is money that is spent in America every year just to buy toy bears towards Christmas. It is very popular. The spend is 10 times greater than the aid United States gives to Africa. It could cover 10 years of aid to Africa; this is from the money that is spent on bears.

Lastly, on the Council of Human Rights, it is very sad to see that often, people are sitting on the Council who are from countries with no human rights at all, like Iran, Syria and Libya. Libya was Chairman of this Council in Geneva and I think it was run well if I am not mistaken. It is quite weird. I say to Mrs Robinson that maybe the time has come for you and the world to take some steps. This is in order to make sure that Governments which are not keeping human rights are excluded from those Councils etc. It is quite weird that people who have no rights in these countries are trying to create human-rights policy.

Mary ROBINSON, Former President of Ireland, President of the Mary Robinson Foundation

I agree with you very much on the harsh reality of our world today in the 21st century. We have 925 million people who wake up hungry every morning and go to bed hungry and many of them are children. We have another 1 million who are under-nourished. They do not have rights to food, safe water, health, education etc. I think that the Millennium Development Goals have helped. We are now coming towards the period where they are supposed to be implemented by 2015; we are coming close to it.

I am struck by the engagement of both Governments and the corporate sector in so many areas: maternal and child health education and right to food, food-security issues. However, I still think that as we review up to 2015, we need to go much further. We should probably engage corporations more centrally in long-term planning. As has been said, corporations are usually in countries for longer than the Governments that are providing development aid. There is a need to link both.

Certainly, I would be the first to say that we are not in a good position. I served on a Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor. We concluded that there are about 4 billion people in the world, which has just reached 7 billion, who do not have access to justice and the rule of law. They depend upon neighbours and money lenders and they are in the informal sector. However, the thing that impresses me very much is that the informal sector is becoming much more organised now, with the means of communication, no more so than in India.

My fellow elder Ela Bhatt founded the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA). What they are doing, working with 1.2 million very poor women in SEWA, is extraordinary. They use clean cook stoves and all kinds of solar power, which create livelihoods. I think we can do much more to tackle the inequalities that are endemic.

As I mentioned, I have just come from the Conference on Climate. The African continent is absolutely, urgently pleading for urgent action on climate. It is undermining poor subsistence farmers. It is not the only thing, but it is definitely now there. I was in Somalia in July with Irish aid agencies. I had been there 19 years before as President of Ireland. This time, we spoke about the fact that the Horn of Africa is having the eight hottest years in succession. That greenhouse-gas warming is from our fossil-fuel based growth, which undermines the livelihoods of the poorest. There is a justice element that I hope will be taken into account, to make it more urgent.

On the second point, you are right that countries that do not have good human-rights reputations have served initially on the Human Rights Commission, which was there in my time. They are now on the smaller Human Rights Council which has been established. There are two ways to look at that. The Human Rights Council has a certain standard for



being elected to it, which the Human Rights Commission did not really have. You are supposed to commit to a human-rights course. It does not work perfectly; nothing works perfectly in the United Nations, it is that kind of body.

However, the Human Rights Council has instituted something which I think is beginning to show some interesting results. This is a rather weak universal periodic review of countries. That means that all countries come up for review on a regular basis. Last year, the United States came up for review. Countries with poor human-rights records were accusing the United States, which has excellent human-rights defenders. They are friends of mine: Mike Posner and Harold Ko.

What they did, in their very clever way, is they took note. Iran is complaining about the United States. When Iran's turn comes, we will put that back to them. Ireland was done in the same way in the last year and it was exactly the same thing. Countries are learning to watch the questions asked by countries with poor records, in order that when their turn comes, they can say, 'You accused us. Now, let us get real on this; you have a terrible record in that area.'

I think this is probably a better way to deal with human rights. There was a resentment in poorer countries that international human rights was always about only addressing the human-rights standards of poor countries. However, the universal periodic review was a review of all countries. I firmly believe that all countries have human-rights problems. No country is perfect. Therefore, that is a fairer way of going about it.

Manaf ALHAJERI, CEO of Kuwait Financial Center (Markaz)

My name is Manaf Alhajeri from the Kuwait Financial Centre. I have two questions and I would like to be brief. First, we have a tendency to use the words governance, democracy and human rights interchangeably, assuming that if you get one right, the others will all be right. Unfortunately, thinking in terms of the Arab Spring, this is not always the case. We have seen many instances where democracy can lead to the downgrading of many segments of society, including women and minorities.

The problem with that, using management terms, is that we talk about human rights, but as a process, we never cared about disseminating it to the various institutions in the world, both soft and hard. We always have a tendency to assume that it is linear, which takes me to the second question, to Mrs Robinson. It is on the universality of the Human-Rights Charter. I have to say that I see where Mr de Montbrial came from yesterday when he talked about values. Again, talking in terms of a process, you talk about a set of laws and stipulations, that comes from the Bretton Woods Institution of Human Knowledge. We need to be mindful that many institutions in the world think differently and they have their own sets of values. I am not saying that one is right and one is wrong, but there is definitely a mismatch between the two.

You can talk about the part of the world where I come from, which is the Middle East. I come from the oil-producing side of it. Definitely, people tend to look at the Middle East as a highly globalised region, simply by dividing the oil exports by GDP. They end up with something like 70-80%, so voila, we are a globalised region. However unfortunately, if you look at the institutions, this is far from being the case. I think there is a need to internationalise the social tissue of institutions in this part of the world. This is through having a greater and greater presence of institutions like Bretton Woods institutions, think tanks, universities and NGOs.

Mary ROBINSON, Former President of Ireland, President of the Mary Robinson Foundation

Both your questions were interesting ones and perhaps they deserve longer answers than I can give now, because I want to leave time for other question. However, you are right that there is sometimes a problem with concepts like democracy and human rights. Democracy itself is not just about voting. We heard this put rather strongly in previous sessions. It is about the rule of law; it is about the independence of the judiciary. It is about not having corruption in the police; it is about accountability of those who govern in whatever form that government takes place to their citizens.



There is a whole process and within that process, it is much more likely that the rights of minorities, the rights of women and the rights of ethnic minorities will be protected. However, it has to be fully understood. I agree that we need to disseminate this sense of the linkage between democracy in that fuller sense and the protection of human rights.

I have to say that when I was serving as High Commissioner for Human Rights, I visited countries in the Middle East. I would be speaking to the Ministers for Justice and they would say to me, 'This is a different culture here. We have our Asian culture, a different culture. Your human rights are Western rights.' This is always a big issue. I feel that one of the reasons why this stand-off occurred was precisely because of Western countries. This includes European countries, the United States and countries like Korea.

They did not take the important rights seriously enough, which we were talking about: poverty: rights to food and safe water, health, education and shelter. There was a tendency to emphasise the civil and political rights, like rights to a fair trial and no torture etc. However, what I was preaching and what I continue to talk about is the balance of the two streams of human rights. Then you have a universal picture. However, this was not what the leaders, who were effectively dictators in these countries, wanted to hear about. They were using this excuse.

However, what did those who came out on the street want? I found it hugely encouraging. I wrote a blog on the Elders' Blog website about the fact that the Arab Spring was affirming a desire. This was for human dignity, for democracy, for accountability, for tackling corruption, for jobs and for fairness in the society. I had an experience from talking to grassroots groups in every country in the world; it did not matter whether it was China or anywhere else. They wanted more human rights, in that full sense. It is very often Governments who try to say that these are Western values and Western rights.

Do not get me wrong, Thierry. I am with you in that we need to look at values in the 21st century, because there are issues that were not dealt with in the Universal Declaration. However, I still think it is an extraordinary declaration and it has got a new momentum in the guiding principles on corporate responsibility for human rights and to respect human rights. There is an obligation on Governments to protect human rights, which means that the corporations can rightly look to Government to fulfil their role and have a system of protection which is stronger. There can be a system of redress for those who have had their human rights violated.

Stewart PATRICK, Senior fellow and director of the program on international institutions and global governance at the Council of Foreign Relations (CFR)

My name is Stewart Patrick, from the Council on Foreign Relations. I have a question for President Robinson in particular. I wonder if you could address the particularly vexing question of Corporate Social Responsibility when it comes to extractive industries and whether the Ruggie principles address that sufficiently. Obviously, there have been a number of different public-private efforts to try to address these issues.

There is a transparency initiative for extractive industries and campaigns for the publishing of what you pay and what you lend. There have been Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) bribery conventions. However, too often, we see the role of companies as fomenting or encouraging bad governance and conflict dynamics in these countries. For instance, in this past week, we just had Global Witness leave the Kimberley certification process. This was quite a big blow to something that people had held up as a model for Corporate Social Responsibility. I would be interested in your reflections on these dilemmas.

Mary ROBINSON, Former President of Ireland, President of the Mary Robinson Foundation

Obviously, in asking the question, you also referenced a lot of the important steps that are being taken to try to have more responsibility in the extractive industries. I have heard John Ruggie speak quite frequently during the six years of



his mandate, first to get the framework and then to get the guiding principles. He has said that the extractive-industry sector is the most difficult. There is no doubt about that. As you say, there is the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and there is the campaign on Publish what you Pay. There is an attempt to try to have standards for the extractive industries, through investment. There are the Equator Principles and there are various things.

The Ruggie guiding principles will take their place. Efforts will be made to ensure that there is a particular focus on the extractive industries. The fact that they have a due diligence requirement and that they must start to have a human rights assessment will be taken seriously. If they publish sustainability reports, they will be scrutinised by civil society to see if they have in fact examined the issue from a human-rights perspective. However undoubtedly, this is where some of the major abuses, abuses of land, of water, of indigenous peoples, lack of transparency, corruption etc. stem from. It will be necessary.

Again, it always helps to have corporate standard bearers, who try to be respected companies in the extractive industry and set a standard. In fact, when John Ruggie was implementing the framework, by drawing up the principles, if you like, he drew on the work of the business-leaders' initiative on human rights. He also drew on other initiatives, like the Prince of Wales Initiative. He said, 'I see that these are now standards that corporations themselves are willing to be held to. He was not inventing rules that would be too much of a burden; he was trying to be as practical as possible. It is always helpful to have corporate standard bearers in particular sectors, to show what the standard should be.

M.K. NARAYANAN, Former National Security Advisor of the Prime Minister, Governor of West Bengal of India

I think I am one of the few people here who is actively in Government. I am now the Governor of the State of West Bengal, which has over 90 million people. The question is addressed to President Mary Robinson. Is there a human-rights violation when those who are producers of very crucial primary products keep raising the prices of their products every year?

India is a country of over 1 billion people. Our Prime Minister has been in his office for seven years. Our effort has always been to try to reach and maintain 10% growth. This is not because that would make us a major world power, but because that was a level we needed to ensure that people who are below the poverty line can reach that. In the last year prices of oil have gone up 11 times in 11 months. This is the biggest problem we face as an energy deficit. We have had to raise them; I am talking of missing oil.

The net result has been with regard to whatever benchmarks you have with regard to this. Whatever you might say about the corporate sector, Government has the maximum responsibility for ensuring that people live reasonably. Is there some mechanism for this? This is because I think we are going backwards? Our 8% growth is slipping because prices of primary products, particularly oil, are going up. In what I will call the corpus of human rights, with responsibilities, deficits and non-deficits, is there some way that we can maintain some kinds of checks on this? I think this amounts to human-rights violation in a far greater way than many of the other issues.

Mary ROBINSON, Former President of Ireland, President of the Mary Robinson Foundation

The point you raise is a very important one. It is not just about the price of oil; it is the price of food. In some ways, biofuels that use food products like corn drive up the price of food. That is an issue that needs to be addressed. Also, the volatility of prices makes it very difficult. There is a rapporteur on right to food, Olivier de Schutter. He has written a lot on this and he is now engaging with the G20. For the first half of 2012, Mexico will have the Chairmanship of the G20. I met Patricia Espinosa, the Foreign Minister of Mexico in Durban and she told me that they would put great emphasis on food security and green growth. The price of oil impacts on that; it is energy security as well.

However, these are probably issues that are more in the broader political domain than issues that lend themselves to a specific human-rights approach. This is unless you take a rights-based approach to all of these issues, as I do.



However, that is a longer conversation. I do agree with you that the price of core products and the price of oil rising and being very volatile makes it very hard to bring poorer communities out of poverty.

Bruno LAFONT, Chairman & CEO of Lafarge Group

Thank you very much.