

***From Heroic ad hocism to
Systemic Change: Opening
Remarks for the “Where to from
Here: A Canadian Strategy for the
UN Principles on Business and
Human Rights?” Conference***

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Heroes and Systemic Change

- heroes: individuals/organizations that engage in impressive acts in the public interest against all odds
- the strengths & limitations of heroes
- distinction between heroic ad hocism and systemic change
 - moving from CSR & business/human rights being acts of heroic ad hocism to establishing a systematic institutional structure for same
- Short termism (individual, political, market)
- Incremental moves in the right direction
- Challenges and opportunities

The Challenge (1)

“Businesses constitute powerful forces capable of generating economic growth, reducing poverty.....**But markets work optimally if embedded within rules, customs and institutions.***Markets pose the greatest risks when their scope and power far exceed the reach of the institutional underpinnings that allow them to function smoothly.....Human rights abuses are the canary in the coal mine.*” (Ruggie)

The Challenge (2)

“The root causes of problems today lies in *governance gaps created by globalization* – **between the scope and impact of economic forces and actors and capacity of societies to manage their adverse consequences.** *How to bridge those gaps is the challenge.* (Ruggie)

The Opportunity

- Canadian “**Strategy** for UNGP implementation:” more open-ended than UNGP “National Action Plan” for same
- innovative potential roles for government, private sector, NGOs, communities, academics in building a Canadian strategy
- Canadian willingness to learn from mistakes, to strive for common ground while respecting value of criticism, differences of opinion
- Ryerson creating a “safe space” for constructive engagement on possible options

The distinctive status of the UNGPs

- UNGPs are part of global experimentalist governance framework, with important roles for state, private sector & civil society
- UNGPs are explicitly **not law**, not intended to create new international law obligations, nor limit or undermine any State legal obligations:

“The international community is still in the early stages of adapting the human rights regime to provide more effective protection to individuals and communities against corporate-related human rights harm.” (Ruggie)

Intellectual platforms for today?

- **Collaborative governance:** a process in which stakeholders representing different interests *collectively take action* to meet a public interest objective (Donahue, 2004)
- **Sustainable governance:** harnessing unique capabilities of government, private sector and civil society actors, instruments, institutions & processes to meet public interest objectives *through both collaboration and rivalrous check-and-balance approaches* (Webb, 2004, 2005)

Some key questions

- What is government doing well, what is government doing not so well, what could government be doing that it is not doing?
- Same for private sector, and civil society
- Are there opportunities to work together?
- How to optimize opportunities for constructive rivalrous check & balance mechanisms
- How can we assess effective implementation of the UNGPs?

Format of the day

- Setting the table Part I: keynotes in the morning: UN, corporate counsel, NGO (human rights & anti-bribery), industry, government perspectives
- Setting the table Part II: academic and practitioner perspectives
- Canadian strategy? Unpacking the protect, respect, redress options for Canada
- Next steps & Concluding remarks
- Banquet & Children's Rights & Business Principles/Lessons Learned presentation

We have the opportunity today to
move the Business and Human
Rights agenda to the next level!

Shall we dance?