Linking Human Security and Corporate Social Responsibility:
How to Improve Japanese Contribution to the United Nations Global Compact

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Track number: 2-6 (Policy Models and Public-Private Partnerships)

Keywords: human security, corporate social responsibility, the Global Compact Japan Network, public-private partnerships

Concepts and policies of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and human security (HS) are closely related. Issue areas targeted by CSR and HS practices largely overlap: forced labor, child labor, business in zones of armed conflicts, environmental degradation, and so on. Such connection, however, has not been noticed, much less explored. This paper will elucidate the necessary link between HS and CSR in both concept and practice. It will assess how introduction of CRS into HS might contribute to enrichment of strategies and efficacy of the United Nations Global Compact (GC). As a case study, we will pay close attention to practices of Japanese government and corporations, with an aim to furthering their contribution to the GC.

CSR and HS concepts are “norm-complex,” a composite of multiple norms. CSR is made up of environment, human rights, labor rights, legal compliance, citizenship, and so on. HS consists of two freedoms, “freedom from fear” and “freedom from want.” It covers almost all threats to life and well-being of human beings such as hunger, environmental degradation, forced emigration, infectious diseases, landmines, and financial instability.

In practice, both CSR and HS constitute a “governance-complex,” a combination of various
governance mechanisms. CSR is governed by such mechanisms as governmental regulation, NGO participation, market pressure, and networks like the GC. Measures for achieving HS goals are not only confined to norm creation through formal treaties as well as political declarations. But policies and practices of the UN organs, governments, NGOs, and their partnerships are also crucial. Despite their origins, not surprisingly, the same organizations and networks often participate in the governance-complexes: the United Nations Development Program is a core member of the GC and known as an initiator of the concept of HS; the IUCN (the World Conservation Union), a member of the GC, urges us to deal seriously with “human security and environment”; participants of the UNEP Finance Initiative recognized that “the finance sector may contribute to environmental degradation as well as disrupt local communities or fuel conflicts.”

Acknowledging normative and practical links between CSR and HS provides us with significant policy implications. Especially from the Japanese perspective it will improve public and private actors’ contribution to the GC. Japanese government, though one of the champions of HS, has paid little attention to the GC. Likewise, Japanese corporations are “under-represented” therein, notwithstanding their growing interest in CSR and excellent environmental performances. Accordingly, integrating CSR into HS will probably encourage the government to support the newly-formed Global Compact Japan Network, furthering the recruitment of Japanese corporations and NGOs. In particular, we can expect a facilitating role of Japan International Cooperation Agency, under the new leadership of Sadako Ogata, former UNHCR and co-chair of Commission on Human Security. In eradicating poverty and insecurities in the world, JICA is expected to satisfy urgent requirements of promoting public-private partnerships. By linking concepts of HS and CSR, the agency will be placed as an important hub in encouraging more participation from Japanese corporations and NGOs. (494 words)