Professor John Ruggie  
Special Representative of the Secretary-General  
on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises  
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Palais Des Nations  
8-14 Avenue de la Paix  
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Switzerland  

13 May 2011  

Dear Professor Ruggie  


We write to express our support for the Guiding Principles.  

As a member of the United Nations Global Compact, Clifford Chance has made a commitment to embrace, support and enact, within our sphere of influence, a set of core values in the areas of human rights, labour standards, the environment and anti-corruption. Most importantly, under Principle 1 of the Global Compact, we have agreed to support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights.  

Our principles as a firm, and our professional obligations as lawyers, commit us to speak out on issues of importance. We believe that the work you have undertaken in pursuit of your mandate from the United Nations has been vitally important. In particular, you have forged an unique consensus on the mutual benefits for States, business and civil society which may result from a shared commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights.  

While noting that the Guiding Principles are not intended to be read as creating new international law obligations, nor as limiting or undermining existing legal obligations of States with respect to human rights, we appreciate and welcome your statement that "States
should not assume that businesses invariably prefer, or benefit from State inaction. Indeed, a major challenge for international business lies in identifying the standards to which they must adhere in their home States and in the States where they operate.

The 'Protect, Respect and Remedy' framework and the Guiding Principles provide immediately useful guidance to the business community and the legal profession on the steps which businesses (and their professional advisors) can and should take in pursuit of their responsibility to respect human rights. In particular, as lawyers, we have been able to use the framework and the Guiding Principles to assist our private and public sector clients to implement practical and effective measures to identify, prevent and mitigate adverse human rights impacts connected with business activities.

By introducing the concept of human rights due diligence, you have linked the corporate responsibility to respect human rights to a framework familiar to corporations and other business enterprises; assisting them to develop internal policies and processes specific to the human rights area in a systematic and operationally useful way.

We also welcome the work that you have undertaken in identifying and clarifying existing standards of corporate responsibility and accountability with regard to human rights including, for example, the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the International Finance Corporation's Environmental and Social Performance Standards. The fact that the framework and the Guiding Principles have been, and are expected to be, referred to in other standards applicable to international commerce indicates that your work has and will enjoy widespread acceptance by business, States and civil society. Through achieving consensus on the fundamental principle of the corporate responsibility to respect human rights, you have made an important contribution to achieving more effective protection of human rights internationally.

We hope that the Guiding Principles will be received positively by the Human Rights Council and we thank you and congratulate you for your achievements and efforts.

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Sweeting  
Senior Partner

David Childs  
Managing Partner