

**PRESS RELEASE**

**What are Asia’s most critical CSR issues?**

16 June, 2008 – Awareness of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability in Asia continues to grow. But “what are the most critical issues?” remains a question being asked by companies.

Forerunners of CSR are sometimes puzzled too when they realise the complexity of the issues in the Asia context, while many others who think they are doing CSR often equate corporate philanthropy, charitable support or employee volunteerism to corporate responsibility.

CSR Asia, a rapidly emerging social enterprise with operations in Hong Kong, Singapore, Shenzhen, Kuala Lumpur and Beijing, sees the needs in the region. They have identified 24 critical issues that are defining future trends and put together the CSR Asia Summit to be held in Bangkok, Thailand in November this year.

The issues, which are organised under six key themes, are still being refined. They include the following:

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| <b>Partnerships for Sustainable Development</b>  |
| 1. Expectations from NGOs  |
| 2. From philanthropy to capacity building; and Business-NGO-development community partnerships |
| 3. Partnerships for sustainable development  |
| <b>Supply Chain Challenges</b>   |
| 4. Supply chain capacity building  |
| 5. Harmonizing codes in the supply chain   |
| 6. Bringing the environment back in the supply chain   |
| 7. Tackling human trafficking along supply chains  |
| 8. A space for women workers   |
| 9. HIV / Hepatitis B and anti-discrimination strategies  |
| <b>Community Investment, Social Innovation and Poverty Reduction</b>                           |
| 10. Engaging the private sector with the MDGs  |
| 11. Evaluating community investment  |
| 12. Microfinance and poverty alleviation   |
| 13. Community based social enterprise development  |
| 14. Creating sustainable solutions: Social enterprise and social entrepreneurship              |
| <b>The Regulatory Environment: Soft Laws and Standards</b>                                     |

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| 15. Soft laws and standards: Ethics and governance |
| 16. Principles for responsible investment          |
| 17. Tackling corruption                            |
| <b>Measuring and Monitoring CSR</b>                |
| 18. CSR reporting and communications               |
| 19. Cases in reporting                             |
| 20. Stakeholder dialogue                           |
| <b>Environment and Biodiversity</b>                |
| 21. Business responses to climate change           |
| 22. Carbon footprinting and solutions              |
| 23. The business case for biodiversity             |
| 24. Water conservation                             |

Companies and organisations who are working on their CSR agenda may use this as a checklist to adjust their priorities.

Chairman of CSR Asia, Richard Welford, noted that CSR in Asia is understood and practised differently from Europe and America. “You cannot dump a European or US model to Asia just because it is successful in those places.”

“Companies have come to us asking for Asia-specific strategies and tools to tackle their unique problems and, of course, create opportunities.”

The annual conference has been run for the sixth time already, each time with more delegates and wider topics, reflecting the growing awareness of CSR. To help delegates engage in more in-depth discussion, the organiser has highlighted four areas of concern and is hosting two pre- and two post-conference training events.

The issues are stakeholder engagement, community investment and impact measurement, supply chain management and dealing with the new social media.

“We’ve been consulting the world’s largest companies in Asia and have learnt that the challenges facing a lot of them are how they can identify and engage with stakeholders, how to push CSR policies down the supply chains, and if they have some community investment programmes in place, the benchmarking tools for measuring impact,” said Welford.

“The emergence of the social media is another interesting phenomenon we have observed in the Internet era. Back in just a few years ago, no one would have thought a disgruntled teenage customer would be able to drag down the sales figures of a multinational company tremendously. But the Internet has provided people with the ability to talk back in ways never

before imagined,” added Stephen Frost, Executive Director of the social enterprise.

“The damage to the company can be devastating. But how many of us can confidently say exactly how we can engage with this new media? CSR Asia is therefore trying to equip people with the skills to address cutting-edge issues like this to help businesses do better.”

On top of all things, CSR Asia is keen to spur companies to take bolder steps to operate more responsibly. As the conference’s theme suggests, “*CSR: The next agenda – Pushing the boundaries of environmental and social responsibility*,” the organiser seeks to make a difference.

The information -packed event will take place on 3 and 4 November at the sustainable campus of the Asian Institute of Technology, conveniently located north of Bangkok. The pre- and post-conference training events will be held on the 2nd and 5th respectively to package the summit.

For more information about the CSR Asia Summit and the training events, please visit [www.csr-asia.com/summit08](http://www.csr-asia.com/summit08) or contact Jimmy Huen, Marketing Manager, at [jhuen@csr-asia.com](mailto:jhuen@csr-asia.com) or (852) 3579 8079.

#### **About CSR Asia:**

CSR Asia is the leading provider of information, training, research and consultancy services on sustainable business practices in Asia. Operating as a dynamic social enterprise, CSR Asia occupies the unique middle ground between civil society organizations and fully commercial consultancies. This enables us to provide independent and cutting-edge services and expert insight into the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) issues facing companies in Asia. Across the region, CSR Asia builds capacity and promotes awareness of CSR in order to advance sustainable development. For more information, please visit [www.csr-asia.com](http://www.csr-asia.com).

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